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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate and further clarify the process of how Norwegian companies approach mindfulness in their organizations, how the training is organized and perceived. We thoroughly studied the existing theory and present mindfulness relevance for current organizational and leadership research. Through in-depth interviews with mindfulness coaches and the representatives of the organizations where the training took place, we explored and defined five practical components of successful mindfulness implementation in an organization: (1) initiative and motives, (2) mindfulness as a concept, (3) structure of a course, (4) participant's profiles and (5) post-training feedback and evaluation.

We based our findings on participants' shared experience and the throughout research and concluded them in the form of applicable guidelines for mindfulness implementation in an organization, which can contribute to the effectiveness of the training held further as well as their expansion. We gathered some valuable insights from the interviews, which had included certain recommendations to enhance satisfaction with the course. Additionally, the topic of mindfulness is highly relevant nowadays since in times of crisis it helps to create and to maintain a healthy work environment, which is extremely important in the current coronavirus pandemic situation. Moreover, mindfulness commits to the reduction of negative consequences caused by today's economic uncertainty.

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1. Introduction

The number of organizations introducing mindfulness training courses as a tool of work performance development, focusing on the internal sources of employees, is constantly increasing (Reb & Choi, 2014). The most widely known definition of mindfulness in the scientific literature is "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). Mindfulness practices are developing employees' effectiveness and are proven to have a positive impact on work performance on both individual and organizational levels (Reb & Choi, 2014). Recent research provides evidence for the effectiveness of mindfulness training (Reb & Choi, 2014). Among reported benefits are reduced emotional exhaustion and stress-level, improved work-life balance and work performance, and increased job satisfaction, as well as concentration and attention level (Aikens, 2014). Mindfulness addresses these issues of modern work life and helps to cope with them.

However, it is further important to study the specific characteristics and steps required for a mindfulness training program to be successful in a workplace setting. The relevance of this topic is confirmed by the high level of stress, digital disturbance, general pressure employees, and leadership experience in organizational life as well as a desire to create a healthy work environment for organizations. What is more, we see the possible relevance of mindfulness for the field of leadership research due to the rapidly changing digital environment, which requires new conscious ways of leading people. Many companies are now conscious about training their employees in terms of mindfulness; however, we want to contribute to the field of research with the description of the implementation process to make it easier for other companies to execute. With our research, we investigate and bring a practical tool for companies to base on their decision about the implementation of mindfulness in organizations.

Therefore, in our master thesis, we investigate the process of how Norwegian companies approach mindfulness in organizations by interviewing mindfulness training instructors and how organizations perceive these training programs by interviewing the management of the companies where the training was conducted. We also ask people who are experienced in the field of mindfulness for organizations to share their insights. We define what mindfulness is in an organization, how the process is organized and introduced, how mindfulness

differs on an individual and collective level as well as examine the motives of mindfulness implementation.

Our research question is:

How do companies in Norway approach mindfulness in organizations?

We also describe and evaluate the process of the implementation and further compare companies' reflections with opinions of coaches, who were conducting the training. We sum up our findings in the form of practical recommendations that can contribute to the improvement of mindfulness training effectiveness.

2. Literature review

In this chapter of the master thesis, we analyze and highlight the main knowledge from the relevant literature for understanding our topic of research.

Firstly, the understanding of the term mindfulness is crucial. The idea of mindfulness training in organizations is relatively new, so it requires us to explore various approaches to the definition of mindfulness in organizations as well as developing our approach to facilitate our further investigation.

The field of mindfulness research remains the matter of ambiguity, the phenomenon of mindfulness is being defined in many research fields from different perspectives. Distinguishing between first-generation and second-generation mindfulness-based interventions can be a useful tool to structure the current knowledge about mindfulness. First generation can be defined as a spread of mindfulness influence in the western culture as a result of the exposure of Americans to Buddhism after Asian immigration in the mid-1970s. At the same time, a group of American volunteers visited Vietnam to learn and adopt knowledge about mindfulness (King & Badham, 2018a). The first-generation movements resulted in the development of instrumental mindfulness programs designed to develop a new set of skills for improving well-being and productivity such as Mindfulness-based stress relief programs, or MBSR which we cover later (King & Badham, 2018b).

Going beyond the view of mindfulness as a means to stress reduction and increased organizational performance, second-generation mindfulness interventions in leadership capture mindfulness from a different angle. It focuses on determining the kinds of qualities and capabilities that mindfulness seeks to create and the behaviors that they require before outlining the programs that might develop such behaviors and qualities (King & Badham, 2018b). Meaning stepping aside from developing a skill to developing a quality. This approach resulted in the development of a “Wheel of Mindfulness” theoretical framework, described later.

Mindfulness, for our present purposes, is taken to be a state or quality of mind that attends to experience by giving full and proper attention to presence, context, and purpose. Two dimensions within mindfulness discussion that are

concerned to be the main. These are what mindfulness is “of” basing individual or collective phenomenon and what mindfulness is “for” basing instrumental or substantive purpose of mindfulness (King & Badham, 2018b).

Mindfulness as an instrumental experience has its focus on how individual performance or well-being might be improved through mindful practice and behaviour, known as individual mindfulness, and how sustainability and productivity of an organization might be enhanced, known as collective mindfulness. Substantive purpose of mindfulness takes place when the focus is mindful consideration of and reflection on purpose, the importance of eclipsing self-centered concerns of individuals and organizations and paying attention to the meaning of individual action and collective efforts, defined as individual and collective wisdom (Badham & King, 2019).

While analyzing the way mindfulness is interpreted in literature, it is worth starting with the definition of both individual and collective mindfulness, individual and collective wisdom and analyzing the main characteristics of each group.

2.1. What is individual mindfulness?

Individual mindfulness refers to a state of one's “*consciousness in which attention is focused on present-moment phenomena occurring both externally and internally*” (Dane, 2011, p.1000). Other researchers like Baas, Brown & Ryan and Leroy also focus on one's conscious awareness or receptive attention of the present moment and its states, events and experiences. Langer (2014, p.11) adds that *mindfulness is a state of mind that is also sensitive to context and perspective of the present moment.*

Niemec et al. (2010, p. 345) point out that in a mindfulness state an individual simply observes what is taking place. Ruedy & Schweitzer (2010, p. 73) define mindfulness as “*An individual’s awareness, both internally (awareness of their own thoughts) and externally (awareness of what is happening in their environment)*”.

Creswell & Lindsay (2014, p. 402) define mindfulness as “*Monitoring one’s present-moment experience with acceptance*”. That acceptance, “nonjudgmental attitude” or “not evaluative observation” approach can also be found in the work of such researchers as Carlson (2013, p.175), Bishop (2004) and Hulsheger (2013, p. 310). Zhang et al. (2013, p. 433) define mindfulness as “*A present-focused awareness and attention (the presence factor) with an open attitude toward ongoing events and experiences (the acceptance factor)*”.

Therefore, key definitions analysis gives us *three key points*, characterizing what is it mindfulness on the individual level:

- *Consciousness*
- *Present moment awareness*
- *Non-judgmental state*

However, in order to proceed with our research, it is important to define what mindfulness is on the corporate level and how it is perceived by theoretical research.

2.2. What is collective mindfulness?

Analysis of collective mindfulness definitions and approaches is much more complex than individual mindfulness, there are numerous reasons, but the most important is the complexity of the collective approach itself.

Hagardon and Bechky (2006, p.486) describe collective mindfulness as “*the amount of attention and effort that individuals allocate to a particular task or interaction, and, through mindful interpretation by group members of ongoing experience and the mindful generation of appropriate actions, collective cognition connects individual ideas and experiences, both redefining and resolving the demands of emerging situations*”. Other authors like Hales and Wilson focus on the level of “*alertness to the activities surrounding one's job or task*” or in other words “*ongoing scrutiny*” and “*identification of new dimensions of context to improve foresight and current functioning*”.

According to Valorinta (2009, p. 964) “*mindfulness refers to processes that keep organizations sensitive to their environment, open and curious to new information, and able to effectively contain and manage unexpected events in a prompt and flexible fashion*”.

Ray et al. (2011, p. 188) define collective mindfulness as “*a construct developed initially to describe how high-reliability organizations avoid catastrophic errors (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001), but now increasingly used to characterize organizations that pay close attention to what is going on around them, refusing to function on “autopilot”; “mindful” organizations “induce a rich awareness of discriminatory detail and a capacity for action” (Weick et al. 1999, p. 88). And this approach, which points out noticing errors and tracking small failures continues in works of Ausserhofer, Carlo, Hoy and Ndubisi, who also talk about the importance of learning from failures, interest in investigating and analyzing them and the “willingness to consider alternative perspectives” Ndubisi (2012, p. 537).*

Mu & Butler Ndubisi (2012, p. 537) describe collective mindfulness as “*An elevated state of awareness of expectations, a nuanced appreciation of the specific context, and alertness to potentially significant changes in the face of new and unprecedented situations; takes into account the specific organizational situation rather than following bandwagon effects*”. Therefore, we can see another shared research feature of collective mindfulness, which is “*maintaining capabilities for resilience, and taking advantage of shifting locations of expertise*”.

Another descriptive feature of collective mindfulness is so-called “*shared expertise*”. Barry & Meisiek (2010, p. 1505) define collective mindfulness as “*the capacity of groups and individuals to be acutely aware of significant details, to notice errors in the making, and to have the shared expertise and freedom to act on what they notice*” (Weick et al. 2000, p. 34).

Analysis of given definitions makes it possible to highlight important descriptions of *collective mindfulness*, such as:

- *Learning from past failures and preoccupation with future*
- *Ongoing awareness of what is going on around*
- *Alertness to changes and flexibility*

- *Shared collective experience*

2.3. What is individual wisdom?

Various mindfulness programs, mostly of the second-generation mindfulness interventions, go beyond instrumental present-moment practice and include the development of open awareness and focused attention as well as some elements of loving-kindness meditation (Lutz et al., 2008). It laid the foundation for identifying mindfulness with individual wisdom. Individual wisdom in the workplace takes into consideration the meaning and purpose of work and life in late modern societies and what it takes to stay up to the conditions of the attention economy. The attention economy is a construct of a new cyberspace economy where information is in abundance, and attention is a scarce and limited resource and, hence, becomes a new currency of economy (Goldhaber, 1997). Individual mindfulness can become a tool for managing the complexity of the attention economy due to the different forms of attention such as thoughtfulness, recognition, caring, love, etc.

Individual wisdom enhances thoughtful reflection on the basis and value of our presumed identities and the consideration of the anxieties and dysfunctionalities created by externally imposed subjectivities. It facilitates leaders' reflexivity, relationality, and compassion in adopting and pursuing individual and collective purposes (King & Badham, 2018b).

Individual wisdom stands upon three elements, which are the forms of workplace spirituality, critical management studies, and integrative and integral leadership (Badham & King, 2019). Workplace spirituality, for example, unlike instrumental implementation of mindfulness practice, is an approach that calls for the search for deep meaning and purpose in life and work, a sense of interconnectedness with others and the world. It attends to extending the 'awareness of present-moment' experience to remembering the existential and moral purposes of mindfulness practices and embracing a morality of kindness, compassion, gratitude, and ethical behaviour towards oneself and others (Badham & King, 2019). Additionally, mindfulness as individual wisdom has had an impact on leadership development. Being open and aware, taking a different perspective, including diversity and

reducing control have moved leadership from conventional and self-centered to ‘post-conventional’ and purpose-centered management, developing new qualities of leaders and teams (Badham & King, 2019).

To sum up, the individual wisdom approach to mindfulness promotes the focus on diminishing the sense of self-importance for the sake of the essential nature of existence and the importance of the purpose.

2.4. What is collective wisdom?

Collective wisdom considers present-day forms of socio-economic and political governance and what effect they bring in the way we shape our experiences as individuals and our collaborative efforts. The core of collective wisdom is to pay full and focused attention to the collective purpose and includes deep and joint reflection on it (King & Badham, 2018b). A key focus is to be aware of and prevent the discrepancy between short-term economic interests and long-term values of our society as well as the dangers of organizational irresponsibility (Badham & King, 2019).

Mindfulness as collective wisdom draws a link between personal social responsibility and the creation of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Mindfulness leadership has played an important role in building CSR by promoting the recognition of long-term repercussions of corporate decisions and actions, commitment to authenticity, and sustainable growth (Badham & King, 2019).

The key elements are identified as following:

- A sense of higher purpose – to develop long-term and meaningful mission and vision;
- Stakeholder integration – to take into consideration the interests of all stakeholders including environment;
- Conscious leadership – to lead based on collective values and develop social intelligence;
- Conscious culture – to fulfill the meaningful purpose.

To conclude, collective wisdom seeks to enhance consciously responsible, collaborative, and sustainable forms of governance (King & Badham, 2018a). However, it is worth mentioning that it might become a stumbling block for proponents of the capitalistic approach which has its focus on short-term economic interest.

2.5. Forms of work-related mindfulness practice

Given above, we define mindfulness on two different levels, equally essential for persons' work life. In order to approach mindful behaviour that can help individuals to cope with stress and anxiety, and affect concentration and wellbeing, it is crucial to practice mindfulness. There are several forms of work-related mindfulness practice:

- Individual practice;
- Mindfulness practices taught in educational settings;
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course;
- Corporate mindfulness programs (Reb & Choi, 2014).

We look into some of these forms, which we take as the most relevant.

By individual practice, we mean a practice of a mindful state, which does not take place at work, however, that influences individuals' working behaviour.

Commonly, individual practice facilitates the achievement of both personal and organizational goals. However, it is important to highlight that this type of practice does not set clear goals, like the higher level of task performance, related to work-life, which are imposed by an organization. It might lead to situations when personal mindfulness practice gets in the way of some of these goals. For example, an individual may become more aware of unethical behaviour at work through individual practice and raise an issue (Reb & Choi, 2014).

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program is the most commonly used practice introduced on the organizational level in many different fields, such as health care, aviation, military, and commerce. MBSR therapy is a meditation therapy, originally developed by Professor Jon Kabat-Zinn for stress management, which is being used for treating a variety of chronic diseases and disorders.

MBSR merges mindfulness meditation and yoga over an 8-week training course where participants are getting to know the techniques designed to hold one's focus in the present moment over extended periods (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout are common phenomena in modern organizations. Due to the high cost of workplace stress, organizations tend to optimize the productivity of their stress management through the MBSR program. Based on the research, the strongest outcomes are reduced levels of emotional exhaustion (a dimension of burnout), stress, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and occupational stress. Improvements are detected in terms of personal accomplishment, self-compassion, quality of sleep, and relaxation (Janssen et al, 2018).

Corporate mindfulness programs present a wide range of different practices and programs designed for desired outcomes of an organization with the approach of common and(or) unique techniques of each mindfulness instructor. Corporate mindfulness programs consist of two main types: the first one is a breath and body awareness as a basic mindfulness practice, the second are practices that can be applied at the workplace, such as mindfulness communication, meetings. Since MBSR is the most researched form of mindfulness practice, there are more experienced and qualified instructors in this field, which makes MBSR a base for various mindfulness training (Reb & Choi, 2014).

However, we can mention another type of mindfulness program, which is related to different leadership development programs, so popular today with Norwegian organizations. These programs vary greatly upon its' motives and therefore structure, but most of them will inevitably include mindfulness tools.

Transformational and authentic leadership theories are the most influential in terms of using mindfulness and its core values. Thus, taking authentic theory as an example, the term authenticity though defined in different ways still implies mindful leadership. Sartre (1966) described it as *"the absence of self-deception, which involves being true to who you are"*, and we can immediately refer to the mindfulness principle of individual mindfulness and self-awareness.

Another definition of authenticity is - *"ability to make individual choices, take responsibility for one's errors, and recognize one's drawbacks while working*

toward the fulfillment of one's potential" (Brumbaugh, 1971). Here we can see that the author talks about the attributes of collective mindfulness.

According to Kernis (2003), there are four cornerstones of authenticity:

- Awareness
- Unbiased processing
- Action
- Relational orientation.

Awareness here is to be aware of persons' motives, feelings, desires, and other self-relevant cognitions. The author describes aware leaders as being able to carry more social transactions with the environment, which is to be more effective as a leader in general. Another component is unbiased processing and it also finds reflection in what is mindfulness about. It is derived from self-awareness knowledge in terms of both self and other related observations of reality as it is. The third component of authenticity refers to the actions one takes in a way that these actions are constantly coherent with one's true self. And the last quality is relational orientation, which is striving to maintain open and fair relationships with others.

Thus, authentic leaders are self-aware, can lead themselves and others with great accuracy in terms of analysis of information provided, minimizing errors, and biases. They stay true to their own selves and do not betray their values and beliefs and that behavior benefits the whole organization as it creates credibility, trust and respect.

Based on our literature research and preliminary interviews with mindfulness instructors, there is a common starting point for mindfulness implementation in an organization. It is important to be in a dialog with an organization and adjust mindfulness practice to desired outcomes (Chaskalson, 2011). The focus can be on the reduction of a stress level, or the higher task performance, or building emotional intelligence.

What is more, Chaskalson (2011) highlights that there is one important and tricky aspect of corporate mindfulness practices which is the motivation and consistency of participants' practice. Jon Kabat-Zinn (2013), who developed MBSR, describes mindfulness as a skill that can only be developed through continuous

practice. He compares it with a muscle, meaning that mindfulness as a practice can become stronger and more flexible when we continuously work on it and challenge it. This implies that long-term benefits can only be reaped if participants keep practicing mindfulness regularly and incorporate it into their everyday life (Hülshager, 2015). However, through corporate mindfulness practice participants (employees) are imposed to be practicing on a regular basis, the success of which requires internal motivation that participants might lack.

In our master thesis, we want to focus on corporate mindfulness practice and to study deeply the process of implementation, also to define possible disadvantages through participants' reflections in order to contribute to the improved mindfulness practice on the organizational level. Given that, we assume it is important to mention the following aspect of our thesis. There is a crucial balance between the interests of an organization and the interests of an individual.

With the current surge in popularity of mindfulness training in organizations, there is a need to ensure that mindfulness practices are used for the right goals and implemented so that they benefit the participating individuals. Hülshager (2015) voices concerns that there is a risk that mindfulness interventions will be sold as a panacea to fix wellbeing, motivation, and performance-related problems in organizations without changing potentially underlying structural problems. To be able to manage organizational expectations about mindfulness interventions and to safeguard the proper use and promotion of mindfulness in organizations, Hülshager (2015) addresses three critical issues: the danger that mindfulness interventions may be seen as a quick fix; the idea that encouraging employees to engage in mindfulness practices always is a win-win situation, benefiting individuals and organizations alike; the exclusive focus on antecedents of mindfulness at the level of the individual.

2.6. Wheel of Mindfulness

Mindfulness allows organizations to handle workplace challenges of our time, however, the current mindfulness practice is dominated by an individualistic perspective in forms of developing a specific skill. Also, as it was mentioned earlier, the construct lacks a clear definition of its origin and measurable effects

that creates contestation in practice. The Wheel of Mindfulness as a generative framework captures different lenses on mindfulness and aims to determine the true nature of mindfulness and to reach conformity in this field of research (King & Badham, 2018b).

The Wheel of Mindfulness can be described as a two-rim concept, so-called inner and outer rim of the Wheel (Fig.1). Keeping the full focus on experience and paying proper attention are considered to be the common assumptions about mindfulness and, therefore, assemble an inner rim that can be presented as three 'A's: being in a state of Awareness, regulation of Attention, and an attitude of Acceptance in form of non-judgmental behaviour and compassion. The outer rim captures the nature of the experience to which we are paying proper attention to. This ring can be identified as three 'I's: Incongruity of experiential existence, Impermanence of experience and ourselves and Identification of the world in terms of our personal understanding (King & Badham, 2018a).

The described above framework acknowledges diverse views and appeals to synergy. However, in order for this approach to be a valuable contribution to the implementation of mindfulness, it is important to consider how mindfulness programs based on this framework can be constructed. The profound research has concluded that programs ought to develop capabilities of understanding (knowing that) and qualities that would apply what is known (knowing how) by moving away from building skills to developing emotional and social intelligence, compassion, and multiple-loop learning (King & Badham, 2018a). This approach highlights four forms of mindfulness in an organization and what behavioral outcomes these might bring (Fig. 2). Conversely, these accomplishments can transform an organization's path of long-term development and create meaning, purpose, and profit (King & Badham, 2018b).

2.7. Skepticism and Corporate Mindfulness

Mindfulness has already proven its effectiveness through numerous research and successful implementations in the business world. There have been many large-scale companies that are incorporating mindfulness programs and detecting significant improvements, including Apple, Intel, IBM, Sony, General Electric,

Nike, Google, IKEA, LinkedIn, McKinsey & Company, General Mills, Ford, Target, and eBay (Winter, 2016). People have improved their emotional intelligence by building skills in the following areas: self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and relationship management. However, mindfulness as a concept faces skepticism that question the value of mindfulness interventions and the ways they are implemented. (Creswell, 2017).

Mindfulness instructors seek to mitigate skepticism during sessions to prevent participants from having a mental conflict. One possible solution for decreasing skeptical behaviour about mindfulness practice in the workplace can be the reason action approach (Hartsough, n.d.). The approach states that behaviors can be altered by changing the intention of action by giving salient, usable, and easy-to-understand behavioral benefits and behavioral skills (Ajzen & Albarracín, 2007). Shaping positive behavioral interventions of promoting health, which is defined as a salient benefit of mindfulness practice, leaves an actor with a decision whether to take any action or not. As a result, these interventions train employees to behave more mindfully, cope with stress and their mood as an outcome of an organization-wide mindfulness training (Ajzen & Albarracín, 2007). What is more, it is worth mentioning that human resources (HR) professionals play a vital role in how mindfulness practice is perceived in an organization. The reasoned action approach can be a useful tool first to explore if HR managers have a skeptical behavior about mindfulness training or detect others to have skeptical behaviors, and also to eliminate skepticism by promoting desired benefits as mindfulness outcomes (Hartsough, n.d.).

3. Methodology

In the following part, we identify the methodology for data gathering, regarding the method and research design that we intend to use throughout our studies, which will help us examine how Norwegian companies approach mindfulness in their organizations. Since our master thesis is aiming to bring a practical tool for the companies to base on their decision about implementation of mindfulness in their organizations, we intend to fully describe and evaluate the process of introducing mindfulness into the work environment. Moreover, we study different approaches from the leading coaches in this field in Norway, summarize reflections and suggestions from the companies that experienced mindfulness training, and compare them with coaches' reflections.

3.1 Research strategy and design

In order to reach these goals, we conducted inductive qualitative research to explore the phenomena of mindful leadership that require more clarity. Inductive research enables us to generate new theories out of existing data, be flexible with modifying design components, which is sufficient for our study as there are multiple diverse perspectives on mindfulness theory.

Most inductive strategies of linking theory and research are associated with the qualitative research approach as the intention is to explore social practices, gather “deep” information and perceptions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). We pursue the same approach to deeply discover the notion of mindfulness implementation in organizations. Inductive research often takes an iterative nature, allowing for movement back and forth between theory and data, and making changes according to the changing necessity (Maxwell, 2013; Bryman & Bell, 2011). In our research, we use qualitative research methodology based on interviews as it is the most suitable for getting information to answer our research question.

Our main objectives during the interview process were:

- Identifying the main reasons why Norwegian companies use mindfulness training and what goals they are willing to achieve;

- How do they perceive the training before and after it was conducted;
- What the main obstacles are in introducing mindfulness for organizations;
- How different are these perceptions from the ones the trainers have and whether trainers and organizations reflect in the same way about the results of training conducted.

As common with quantitative analyses, various forms of interview design can be developed to obtain thick, rich data utilizing a qualitative investigational perspective (Creswell et al., 2007). For the purpose of this examination, there are three most popular formats for interview design, which are summarized by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003): (a) informal conversational interview, (b) general interview guide approach, and (c) standardized open-ended interview.

In our research we used general interview guide approach, as according to McNamara (2009), the strength of the general interview guide approach is the ability of the researcher "...to ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee; this provides more focus than the conversational approach, but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting information from the interviewee".

We also differentiate "qualitative interviews" as a data collection type in which a researcher normally uses a closed-ended research instrument to obtain quantified responses to a pre-set series of questions. Qualitative interviews typically involve a continuous dialogue between a researcher and one or more informants, which is sometimes (but not always and not obligatory) shaped by an interview guide that the researcher has prepared in advance (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

It is also important to clarify the kinds of assumptions that we make about the data generated in the course of a qualitative interview. The people involved in a qualitative interview have different starting perceptions, agendas, repertoires, experiences, backgrounds, and the data that is gathered as interviewees respond to questions and converse with the researcher cannot be seen as producing facts or timeless truths (Alvesson, 2003). Thus in our research, the data produced in an interview can best be regarded as a culturally shaped and situationally influenced the outcome of the interview process that is co-constructed by interviewers and interviewees.

3.2 Data collection

We used the standardized open-ended interview, where participants were asked identical questions, but the questions were worded so that responses were open-ended (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). That interview design enabled us during our interviews not only to have a chance to ask questions but also to change questions based on participant responses to previous questions. The questions were structured but adapting them allowed us to explore a more personal approach to each interview. This open-endedness helped the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire, and it also allowed us to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up.

The types of data interview methods generated were audio recordings from interviews and transcripts. We have conducted the first round of interviews with three mindfulness instructors to gain a general overview of how they define mindfulness, their approach to mindfulness for organizations, and the practical aspects of training.

We also created focus groups that consisted of people who experienced the same mindfulness training in organizations that instructors describe and can report on the process, results, and feedback from their perspective. In addition, we managed to interview a couple of mindfulness experts, instructors, who are working in the field of corporate mindfulness training and talk about the experience they gained throughout years of working with different organizations. The questions we posed to the participants are attached in Appendix 1.

In order to conduct interviews with instructors or focus groups, it was needed to prepare an interviewing/moderation guide to help throughout the interviewing process. This guide is basically a list of topics that you would like to cover in the interviews you conduct with instructors or focus groups. There might be a necessity to adapt and modify the interview based on how it evolves.

A consideration often raised in identifying appropriate interviews for qualitative interviews is that of “theoretical sampling” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which refers to picking informants who contrast with one another in some theoretically relevant way. In our research, we focused on two types of respondents: mindfulness trainers and companies, who went through that training, therefore, we posed the same question to both groups with small adjustments in order to get an extensive

perspective. However, they contain many similarities, which helped us to observe the information provided independently of interviewees' perceptions.

Researchers conducting qualitative interviews also need to take into consideration the size of their sample. Again, while this consideration is relevant at the planning stages of a research project, the desirable or sufficient number of interviews is impossible to determine before some interviews are conducted and analyzed. While it is generally safe to assume that a minimum of 8 to 10 interviews will be required (McCracken, 1988), it is the wisest not to make assumptions about how large a sample will suffice. The principle of "theoretical saturation" is often invoked to determine when a sufficient sample has been obtained (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This phrase refers to the idea that all concepts in a theory are well developed and no new theoretical insights about relationships between them are obtained with the analysis of additional interviews.

The data was collected through open-ended interviews, which were held either at the selected locations or via Skype. The duration of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to 55 minutes, which resulted in approximately 5 hours of the data in the form of audio recordings. The recordings were taken with the written and verbal consent of each participant. The collected data was transcribed in order to make it easier for further data analysis. Further, the data was coded and broke down into categories. The categories were analyzed closely in order to determine which of these categories are the most important and relevant for our research, categories were compared and connected. These steps of the data analysis process are essential for picking up the scent of future findings and synthesizing the key things that emerge from the research.

The final constituent in the interview design process was that of interpreting the data that was gathered during the interview process. During this phase, the researcher must make "sense" out of what was just uncovered and compile the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes (Creswell, 2003, 2007). These themes or codes are consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were common among research participants (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2007). However, in the research, we did not focus on quantitative methods as they appeared to be irrelevant in order to answer our research question.

3.3. Participants

The identity of the participants can be detected through the research since they reveal personal experiences about the particular mindfulness courses conducted by the selected instructors. All participants were willing to share their experience and be included in the research. Further, we present a short biography of each research participant.

Viggo Johansen

Viggo Johansen is one of the most experienced mindfulness instructors in Norway. He has gained knowledge in philosophy at University in Oslo as well as 3-year education in cognitive therapy. Viggo has an interesting path in mindfulness learning, he lived as a Buddhist monk from 1994 to 1998, wrote the books ("Indre stillhet - Å leve mindfulness" and "Stille vitne: mindfulness-meditasjon") about mindfulness and gained the experience in a total of over 25 years in the field of mindfulness. He is working closely with individuals and organizations on the process of change providing cognitive training, he is providing structured courses in mindfulness and mental training. He has experience in working with big organizations like Telenor Global Services, Sopra Steria and etc (VIGGO JOHANSEN, n.d.).

Ivar Vehler

Ivar Vehler, like Viggo Johansen, is a leading mindfulness instructor in Norway. Ivar is a sociologist from University in Oslo, he has also a specialization in Leadership from UC Berkeley. He has over 10 years of experience in leadership and organizational development, leads training in mindfulness for groups and public and private organizations. The highlight of his biography is a collaborative project between the Institute of Aerospace Medicine and the Sports Academy where he trained fighter pilots, helicopter pilots and over 1000 leaders in mindfulness. Vehler is the author of the book "The Eye of Hurricane - About Mindfulness and Self-Management" which was published in 2010 (Ivar Vehler, n.d.).

Lise Martens

Her company – "Martens Consulting" helped thousands of clients to come to a better life through the past 30 years, providing support, insight, assistance, and a

safe process on the road. She has experience in human resource development in both the private and public sectors, nationally and internationally. Lise works with individuals, leaders, groups, and organizations, who want to become aware of their desires, and goals, resolve blockages, and address what keeps them from getting even better. She co-founded an international business college, where her main responsibility, in addition to teaching psychology and creative writing, was to teach students how to create a good relationship with themselves and thus with others; the basis for forming healthy corporate cultures. Apart from traditional psychology, she uses such techniques as transcendental meditation, ayurvedic medicine, and resonance therapy.

Lily Chen

Lily Chen has a master's degree in Leadership and Organizational Psychology from BI Norwegian Business School. Lily used to work as a business consultant at Sopra Steria and played an important role in introducing mindfulness into the organization. Her journey and interest in mindfulness came through a yoga community at Oslo Meditation Center, where she practiced meditation and mindfulness. While working at Sopra Steria, Lily realized the importance of mindful living for such a stressful work life, which employees of a consultancy firm often experience. This thought became the motive for introducing three different mindfulness initiatives at Sopra Steria, one of which is the 8-module structured course of Viggo Johansen. Lily is sharing her experience with mindfulness from the side of the organization.

Marianne Birkeland

Marianne works for the HR department in Applenunna, and her journey towards mindfulness started 10 years before that when she worked in the Commune health department and was in charge of 600 people. After reading Ivar Vehlens' book "The hurricane's eye", she got in contact with him, and they agreed about having a mindfulness training process for the leaders of the Commune. After that, there was introduced an extended 3 years course for all the Commune leaders in different sectors of responsibility. Unfortunately, the course was not finished because of organizational changes in Commune. However, according to Marianne, because of the knowledge she had about processes she was going through it was much easier to deal with the stress. Interviewing Marianne gave an

opportunity to see the process of Ivar Vehlens' course from the companies' point of view.

Hege Christensen

Hege became a good friend of Lise Martens after she was her transcendental meditation student almost 20 years ago. After that, there was an exciting working experiment together with the biggest at that time recruiting agency in Norway – “Olsten”. Her boss at the agency back then was impressed by her personal level of effectiveness as well as the ability to focus and stress management. This is why it was decided to hold mindfulness training with Lise Martens for the whole department of about 100 people, who took it very seriously. Training took a year, during which a 20 minutes everyday meditation time slot together for the whole department. According to Hege with this experience, a lot of people changed and came closer to themselves. Moreover, she is sure that whether they use the tools given on an everyday basis or not, they help a lot.

3.4. Ethical considerations

When performing qualitative research, we have to consider potential ethical issues that may arise (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Prior to the research project, all the participants were offered a consent form where we provided information about volunteerism and the possibility of withdrawal at any time during our study, as well as information about audio recordings. Since we base our findings on shared individual experience of the respondents, therefore, the anonymity is not applicable.

Notwithstanding the limitations of what interviewees can and do say in the context of interviews, in this study we approach interviews as authoritative accounts by individuals regarding her or his own lived experience (e.g. Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989).

The intentions and data collection process were reported and approved by NSD, Norsk Senter for Forskningdata – Norwegian Center for Research Data. The collected data will be deleted upon submission of the thesis.

4. Findings

In the following section, the empirical findings from the conducted interviews are presented. The research has its aim in building a practical tool for organizations that are struggling in defining mindfulness as an instrument for company's improvement. Due to this reason, the interviews include the same set of questions about both organizational and contextual aspects of mindfulness in organizations. Both instructors and former participants of mindfulness programs contributed significantly to drawing out the key findings of the research.

The collected data was organized and structured into five different categories:

- Initiative and motives;
- Mindfulness as a concept;
- Structure of the course;
- Participants' profiles;
- Post-training feedback and evaluation.

Initiative and motives define where the idea of introducing mindfulness in an organization is coming from and what the common impulses are that drive an initiator, or an organization as a whole, to invite a professional in the field of mindfulness. Mindfulness as a concept identifies the way mindfulness is presented in an organization, what it accepts, what context it brings, and what it aims to achieve. The structure of the course covers the organizational aspects of a mindfulness program, which were defined as common in the result of data collection. Participants' profiles draw a conclusion of what groups are commonly formed for a mindfulness program, what is the optimal size of a group for a program, and describing the most and less motivated participants. Lastly, the post-training feedback and evaluation part describes the interviewees' feedback on the implementation of mindfulness in an organization, recommendations for the improvement of the process, as well as way of mindfulness evaluation. The short overview of the findings part of our research is presented in the form of the table below.

No	Name of the category	Content of the category
1	Initiative and motives	Initiative Motives
2	Mindfulness: Introduction, context, perception	Mindfulness and stress Mindfulness and brain science The introduction of mindfulness: how and why Perception of mindfulness
3	Structure of the course	Theoretical part Practical part
4	Participants profiles	Group organization level The group size Motivation and engagement
5	Post-training feedback and evaluation	Follow up support Participants feedback Course evaluation

4.1. Initiative and motives

When talking about mindfulness implementation in Norwegian companies it is worth starting to research from the beginning – the moment of decision making and define who is the one, who first comes with an idea of training and what are the initial motives of that activity. We wanted to include questions regarding the person, who takes initiative and compare that information both from trainers and company representatives. Six interviews gave us a very clear vision of a person, who is usually taking initiative and there was no deviation in interpretation. However, primary motives were described by respondents differently. Hence, we decided to analyze these two categories separately.

4.1.1. Initiative

We were very interested in defining the person, who takes initiative in introducing mindfulness to the companies. We have assumed there might be a pattern, which

will help us to further focus on whether there should be a certain level of management involved, or initiative is concentrated in a certain department.

We began our questionnaire by asking about the initiative person and 100% of interviewees agreed in describing that person as the one, who was at some point interested himself in mindfulness techniques on a personal level:

*“Often the initiative person is **someone who has a kind of relation or they have been in touch with mindfulness some way or another.** Some years ago, there might be more companies that had an interest in mindfulness, and they went online and searched for the options. And there were not many, [...]” (Ivar Vehler).*

All of the respondents, who presented another side of the process – the company, which had a training also agreed that it was them, who were excited about the mental growth and mindfulness and by being a role model in terms of their conscious behavior or being willing to share the knowledge they initiated the process of introducing mindfulness to their organizations.

“That was me, because earlier from almost 7 years back I have been manager in the health department in this Commune, so I was in charge of 600 people. Few years ago, I received Ivars’ book “The hurricanes’ eye”, from one of my colleagues, the one I know from youth - we grew up together. Because he knew I am the one who might be interested, so after reading Ivars’ book I got in contact with him, and we agreed about having a process for the leaders” (Marianne Birkeland).

Another finding of the person, who is commonly responsible for introducing mindfulness is his leadership position in the company. Most of the respondents agreed that it is the HR department, who is most interested and motivated, and they have enough organizational and persuasive power to bring something new in terms of education and, moreover, mental techniques to the Company.

However, in some cases described in interviews the power was even higher, since it could be CEO, who is curious about mindfulness, after getting to know meditation techniques:

*“[...] sometimes it's HR I was contacted by and if they contact me they do it because they have some kind of relation to it. **Sometimes it is the top**”*

management and then of course that's the best you know if it comes from the top" (Viggo Johansen).

The common finding about mindfulness course initiative is that high management level engagement and interest in course is of great importance:

I think that top management was very positive to this kind of initiative. I think one key takeaway that he wanted me to summarize why this kind of worked out and it has to be that HR was a very important part of the top management. So, we had support from Human Resources on this matter, because the director, she was also in charge of an HR part so it was easier for me to introduce this when HR had this executive level or strategic level at the company (Lily Chen).

4.1.2. Motives

As previously discussed, the initiative of introducing mindfulness to Norwegian organizations is most likely to come from the upper level of organization, from the leaders, who are themselves somehow connected with mindfulness and see the benefits for the organization as a whole, while using mindfulness techniques:

"At that time the level of stress in the Company was very intense, we used to work at a high speed and my boss was impressed and with all that workload I was being able to cope with stress better with meditation. Need to have balance in life – that's what meditation teaches you. Manage stress level" (Hege Christensen).

Apart from stress level, which is usually connected with the benefits of mindfulness, respondents also mentioned leaders' development and empowering, coaching, and self-confidence. Work-life balance or in other words self-management is also mentioned by respondents, both trainers, and course initiatives:

"It is just a common problem today, everybody notices it, a lot of different things is hiding behind this label, you have to do a recovery, everyone is able to recover, you can actually find work life balance, very often I use the term self-management, I usually call it "mindfulness and self-management" and sometimes I even say that "mindfulness is self-management" (Viggo Johansen).

“ [...] Oh, if you have a stressful job, then your thoughts are everywhere, right, you tend to multitask and there are so many things going on so, for me having mindfulness was a way to sort my thoughts while I was working during stressful days, also for me to know that job is a part of life that is not [...] you know, sometimes, when you think of a job as your whole life [...] if anything fails in whatever I am doing in job then my life kind of fails, you know these kind of thoughts (Lily Chen).

4.2. Mindfulness as a concept

It is a very challenging task to define mindfulness as a concept, especially in the context of organizational development. What mindfulness gives companies and why it is important were the key concern for the research field, it explains the numerous papers on the effectiveness of mindfulness for concentration, productivity, wellbeing and stress levels (Reb & Choi, 2014). Previous research papers are result-based, they touch upon measurement, evaluation, and numbers. However, we aim to produce a context-based research paper and define how instructors work with organizations and their problems, how the concept of mindfulness can have an impact on people, how instructors address the significance of mindful living, what explanations instructors use to attract mindfulness into people's lives.

4.2.1. Mindfulness and stress

As we mention in the previous section, the most common application of mindfulness is the reduction of stress-level at work, companies name it as an initial motive for inviting a mindfulness coach. The analysis of the conducted interviews revealed how stress is connected to our mental health and how mindfulness copes with it. Stress is caused by the fact that people find themselves in the grip of their own thoughts, feelings, and emotions and people tend not to divide themselves from the activity in the mind:

«Our mind is active all the time and what people have said within mindfulness for thousands of years - “everything you think - you feel”. [...] There is so much craziness going on in the mind and all of that is in the body and, in a way, everything I feel goes back to the mind. So, we are all in nubs between our

thoughts and our emotions. And that is actually what creates most of the stress.»

(Viggo Johansen)

Mindfulness copes with stress through practice, particularly, through meditations. Meditations help participants to find discipline in the mind, be aware of thoughts and emotions, and train the ability to control them.

«During meditations you train your ability to keep your mind where you want it to be. It helps against stress because most of stress comes from undisciplined minds.

It is not really a word, it is activity in the mind and nervous system.» (Viggo Johansen)

4.2.2. Mindfulness and brain science

As the result of the data analysis, we discovered that the concept of mindfulness has a strong connection with brain functioning. Studying the brain is vital for the understanding of what causes stress in a practical way. Most of the respondents mentioned that any mindfulness program would start with the explanation of how the brain functions, what impact it has on our body, feelings, and emotions, how it is linked to stress and what role awareness and mindful practice play for releasing people's capacity.

«The first module is about the body, then emotions, then the mind and then reality as it is. » (Ivar Vehler)

«I always start with an introduction to the brain, how the brain operates, the brain on autopilot. » (Viggo Johansen)

We found the mentioning of the autopilot brain very interesting and we desired to discover how it can be applicable for organizations. The findings show that in the chase of high efficiency and productivity, employees tend to multitask, especially consulting firms where employees are usually under pressure of deadlines, working overtime in order to deliver the best result on time. Lily Chen, one of our respondents, shared her experience of working at a consultancy firm, Sopra Steria, where she saw the need for mindful practice due to the hectic and fast-paced work life. This is how she sees the role of mindfulness in the given situation:

«When you have a stressful job, then your thoughts are everywhere, you tend to multitask [...] so for me having mindfulness was a way to sort my thoughts while I

was working during stressful days. [...] Mindfulness gave me a perspective of life knowing that I am just trying to do the best of what I can do. » (Lily Chen)

From the perspective of a mindfulness coach what a brain on autopilot is, what it might cause and how it relates to multitasking can be explained in the following way:

«[...] the brain on autopilot in a modern society is a bad relation. In a workplace, when you have ten things at the same time that you actually should do, it doesn't work. Because then what the brain does is divide itself on many areas at the same time and becomes extremely inefficient and going in a stress mode, all of the energy in the brain goes to more instinctive places where it touches the prefrontal cortex. So[mindfulness means] to be able to break the autopilot and choose your task, to be able to refocus, either the brain leads you, or you lead the brain.»

(Viggo Johansen)

The findings show that our brain is a muscle that needs consistent practice. The useful instrument for taking a lead over the brain is practicing awareness or meditating. Meditation is not seen as something spiritual or religious, it is seen as a practical instrument for building awareness and mindfulness that affect your everyday life:

«Awareness is like a muscle in the brain and it registers what happens in the moment, I am aware of what happens in the moment both outside myself and within myself. If I have three thoughts at the same time and I am aware of it, then I can correct the way it goes. [...] if you are not aware, you start working with three tasks at the same time and the autopilot just fragments you. And that [awareness] is what meditation teaches you to do.» (Viggo Johansen)

The above findings conclude that mindfulness training for organizations in Norway provides profound scientific knowledge, instructors present mindfulness from a research-based point of view and show it as something practical and very much applicable in order to break the skeptical attitude of participants. In the next section, we examine how mindfulness is introduced in organizations in Norway.

4.2.3. *The introduction of mindfulness: how and why*

The analysis of the conducted interviews showed that the topic of skeptical attitude to mindfulness is very common in organizations, 100% of our respondents mentioned that misconception of mindfulness stands in the way of its successful introduction in an organization. It was mentioned that mindfulness on a collective level differs from individual mindfulness with its complexity. Employees come from different spheres and diverse experiences, with different levels of background knowledge about mindfulness. Mindfulness training in an organization aims at being relevant for most people of this diverse group.

Further, we analyze what steps people who organize the introduction of mindfulness for their companies take in order to mitigate the risk of misunderstanding among colleagues and what steps instructors take in order to help people see the relevance and application of mindfulness. Starting from the internal organizers, as we mentioned in the section above, the initiative comes from a person who is already introduced and at least slightly experienced in meditation, yoga, or mindfulness practice. Our finding shows that in order to soften resistance to mindfulness, organizers guide instructors in terms of what is relevant for an organization, they highlight the spots which organization is willing to work on and emphasize that they would rather not mention the spiritual aspect.

Mindfulness training for organizations differs from mindfulness sessions for an individual. This is the reason why instructors address how mindfulness is relevant for us as workers, humans, and organizations as a whole. All respondents mentioned that the most effective instrument for this is to present mindfulness using other words and to avoid calling it a “mindfulness training”. There are some variations:

*«I try to use another word because mindfulness is filled with so much superstition and wrong beliefs so usually, I call it **presence training or mental training** because in companies it's that kind of vocabulary they can relate to. [...] and very often I use the term **self-management** » (Viggo Johansen)*

*«I put it as **stress management course**, development of leaders, working on impact, negotiations, self-confidence» (Lise Martens)*

*«[...]not talking about the spiritual part. So, she [instructor] was talking a lot about why **mental health** is equally important as our physical health, and why*

people prioritize exercising every day and no one is actually exercising our mind.

Mindfulness is a tool to exercise your mind. » (Lily Chen)

*«The course was presented as a **transcendental meditation** – not mindfulness, let the body and mind release the stress, but be peaceful. » (Lise Martens)*

*«[...]a lot on **self-leadership**. So having control at any given time, having control of yourself, of your response and how you react to what is happening around you»
(Lily Chen)*

*«We have to **release capacity**, be more specific with the tasks and then to build it. Build mindfulness. **Be self-leading** and then you can easily lead others.»
(Marianne Birkeland)*

*«[...]and idea was to emphasize their capacity when it came to **self-leadership**. »
(Ivar Vehler)*

*«[...]and of course mindfulness program is about stress, it's about **attitude**, it's about me, relating relationships, that is **internal relationships** between what you are and what you think you are. » (Ivar Vehler)*

Self-management, self-leadership, presence, awareness, attitude, stress-management, mental health, releasing capacity, attention - all these words help to understand that mindfulness is not something abstract which is intelligible for some people, but it is a practical tool for better living of any person or employee. Our findings show that using these substitutes is a very crucial mechanism for shifting attention in favor of a proper understanding of the mindfulness concept for organizations.

What is more, many of our respondents mentioned that some people think that they know what mindfulness is about and see it as something very vague and weak, sometimes even weird. This misconception creates a skeptical and wrong attitude toward mindfulness. However, our findings show that mindfulness is a rather challenging task than a practice for weak people in need of salvation, it requires consistent exercising of our minds.

“Negative attitude to mindfulness is a misunderstand of mindfulness» (Ivar Vehler)

4.2.4. *Perception on mindfulness*

While conducting the interviews, we aimed at defining the practical purpose of mindfulness training for an organization. After studying the existing literature, we assumed mindfulness to be characterized as a practical short-term tool for dealing with stressful environments at work, increasing productivity, and concentration levels. However, our findings reveal that mindfulness in an organization presupposes its application on a deeper level. In the following section, we present our findings on what instructors are trying to achieve with their courses and what perception of mindfulness to present.

The major finding is that the focus of mindfulness purpose is directed not at finding a tool for handling concrete stressful situations, but rather at building a long-term solution to a better life where stress reduction and improved performance goes as a consequence, or an effect, of new behavioral patterns. People struggle with the same problems that are coming from our brain, the product of evolution, and most people do not know how to properly deal with them. Mindfulness is an instrument for enriching your life with a healthier mindset, becoming a more efficient employee by improving attention, active listening, and emotional intelligence. It helps employees to be present at the moment and develop the ability to respond to appearing situations rather than reacting to it.

«All the leaders who went through it describe it as they are feeling stronger themselves as a person and as leaders. That they are more confident in what they are doing. » (Marianne Birkeland)

«People can actually get a new life, [...] mindfulness is what gives you a rich life. Sometimes it can be hectic, and you have to be able to do it well. It [mindfulness] has enriched all aspects of my life and it continues to do so. In this process I discovered what is to be a human being. » (Viggo Johansen)

«There is no work-life balance, in reality everything is at the same time, you can't just eliminate all the thoughts and private life even though you are at work, so for me mindfulness is a way to adjust that, be better. » (Lily Chen)

«I usually structure the programs that they help to release potential capacities of the participants. » (Ivar Vehler)

As the result of the data analysis, we also noticed that the respondents mentioned that the tool was much easier and more pragmatic than people had assumed. Mindfulness is a key to learn self-management fast and it can be achieved through the practice of different techniques.

«My observation is that living a good life is accessible to everyone, you don't need to make an effort to do it all the way, you just need to understand a few things about how you function and change tactics a little bit. » (Viggo Johansen)

Findings show that mindfulness is a long-term solution for an organization as well. When organizations create a space for their employees to grow and improve, it leads to building engagement and dedication, which makes employees stay at their jobs. People are more willing to cooperate, express compassion and understanding, be more resilient to hectic work conditions and constantly changing environments.

«Companies that are updated about the reason science, they know that if you want people to be efficient long-term then they need breaks. » (Viggo Johansen)

In our research, we wanted to investigate what instructors try to achieve with mindfulness courses for organizations and what they are promoting as the main purpose of their work. Findings reveal that coaches work on creating a new perspective of life, of internal relationships of participants, of themselves, of their relationships with others. What is more, that being mindful means being aware that people are not their thoughts or feelings, that people can learn to step back from solving their thoughts and just be it, let thoughts and feelings come and go. Instructors aim to teach people how to become more efficient and open by living for life and not living in the head.

« It is about being yourself all the time, stay with your feelings, not like many people do – who just run away. Or there are reactions when they think it is themselves. » (Ivar Vehler)

« [...] acceptance, to be friendly and work towards yourself, talk about this non-judgment, self-love, patience, that's what you learn -to meet yourself like that and not the demands, with all your fears. » (Viggo Johansen)

Lastly, our findings show that mindfulness is an on-going process. People tend to understand a little of this concept, recognize it inside themselves, and then it starts

to work on them gradually. The understanding of mindfulness is more of a journey than a destination.

«There is always more, there is always different. Always maturation.» (Ivar Vehler)

«I think what is important when you start on this you know to give yourself space, see that this is a natural process, to be patient, sometimes you go into your old patterns. If you are aware, it is not a problem. It is like an apple that grows, when it is mature, it falls from the tree». (Viggo Johansen)

4.3. Structure of a course

In the following section of our findings, we present the collected data about the structure of a mindfulness course. The structure of the course consists of two main blocks – theory in the form of lectures and practice in the form of different techniques and workshops.

4.3.1. Theoretical part

As we mentioned above, the theoretical part includes information about our brain, nervous system, body, emotions, attention, awareness, and acceptance, and how to deal with the patterns of our thoughts. The findings show that all mindfulness courses contain the core standard content, and additionally, all courses are being adjusted to the required needs of each particular organization. It is important for a company to share their expectation prior to the course so that instructors know what aspects of mindfulness they shall focus on.

«The effectiveness at work was her main focus, because she actually asked me What do you think we should focus on? So I was attending those courses myself in order to make sure that the content was relevant enough». (Lily Chen)

«Something like that [focusing on a particular skill] we confronted also with Airforce, who are used to working on the maximum of attention. And then our question was how to possibly improve their attention». (Ivar Vehler)

Additionally, our findings reveal that organizations, or participants of a course, find it important to use a structured and fact-based approach in introducing mindfulness as well as to avoid hectic and vague explanations:

«We, my colleagues and I, live in a very fact-based reality and every piece has to make sense or be seen from a technical and research-based point of view. And from that kind of base, he was good at explaining how the brain was working, how the body was working when we had all this stress he was talking about and how everything is related to what we do and how we react, and it was very effective for our colleagues». (Lily Chen)

«That's really important to get concrete practical situations in their everyday life both at work and at home that are stressful and difficult to handle. Then I always use these examples to explain the principles, so they can understand how those principles relate to their actual life». (Viggo Johansen)

«If you have a teacher who spends a lot of time herself to be able to explain in a convincing way, then you lost the audience already. And also sense-making, it all made sense and it was structured so that people could follow his reasoning». (Lily Chen)

4.3.2. Practical part

Our findings show that practice plays a crucial role on the way to the successful implementation of mindfulness on an individual and collective levels. It is a lot of self-practice and a lot of sharing personal experience. The following techniques were mentioned during the interviews: practicing attention, being aware and present, breathing techniques, taking breaks. However, meditation and reflection on meditation are the major practice technique on the path of mindfulness cognition. It is essential to note that instructors introduce different types of meditation.

*« [...] we had been trained with having meditation [...] 27 minutes every morning»
(Marianne Birkeland)*

«We have three meditation rooms at work, free to use for practicing transcendental meditation» (Lise Martens)

«They had a common meditation every afternoon, and everybody expressed it was the best thing they used in their life. And even when they don't use it, they know they have it and they are grateful for this tool» (Hege Christensen)

Apart from meditation practices, mindfulness instructors apply their authorial methods. For example, one of the instructors we interviewed, Ivar Vehler, shared that his course included a practical workshop based on his book “The eye of hurricane” (“Orkanens Øye”), where participants are asked to define their circles of responsibilities in order to get an overview or perspective on their leadership role.

«After they do this – and this is leadership development. And if you structure on the mindfulness course here, you make things slightly better on your everyday basis. So when I show this workshop and they actually do it, then the first phase is finished. Then they have a capacity also, they have more space, then they are in the position that their mindfulness changes start. » (Ivar Vehler)

What is more, all participants highlight that sharing experience, being ready for an open dialog and develop the ability to listen to your peers plays a significant role in practicing mindfulness even though it is a challenging task:

«And then I always insist on dialogue and then I don't give up, you have to share».
(Viggo Johansen)

«Because every time we met Ivar asked us and we had to share our experience. That was very good to do, to feel us together like team building activity».
(Marianne Birkeland)

All instructors insist on the importance of consistent and continuous self-practice. In order to provide additional support for doing so, they share materials, audio and video files or printouts for further practice.

«And they had files that Ivar recorded and used them a lot. Spotify, mobile - everywhere and I still use them a lot. So he shared them with everybody, it's like 5 min to 30 and easy to use». (Marianne Birkeland)

«I give them audio files, some things they can support, some people take video when I'm there and they are allowed to do that, then they can just keep it after and also they can use it». (Viggo Johansen)

4.4. Participants profiles

When analyzing of mindfulness trainings approach in Norwegian organizations it is important to understand general participants' profiles and particularities, which we could get from information about who are usually the ones, for whom the course is designed, how does the employees' motivation and attitude towards the course change and other interesting details, describing participants behavior.

All the interviews conducted contained several questions regarding participants' profiles, including generalization about the training group, information about the most and least motivated trainees and other details that appeared to be relevant for the research. Therefore, these answers were grouped according to the topic they highlighted.

4.4.1. Group organizational level

During the interviews, all the respondents were asked about the mindfulness course attendants' structure. There are three different approaches found. First is a leaders-only approach, when the course was held first for department leaders, who were later on responsible, but only if they wanted, for transferring the information to the lower management levels.

“[...] We agreed about having a process for the leaders. For the whole leader group: 6 major and 30 others helping them, operative” (Marianne Bireland).

However, in this particular case, it was noticed that the perception of the organizational level of engagement, where the course was given is different from the answer received from Ivar Vehler, who conducted the course and was sure that it was for the whole organization.

Nevertheless, despite the fact discussed previously the importance of the level of management involvement, there is a second approach, mentioned by 100% of the interviewed mindfulness trainers, which is to create and implement mindfulness course for the entire organization:

“Usually it is an entire organization. For me it's really important to get the management in. If the management says, we want to buy these things for the others but not for ourselves - it doesn't work, so the management has to commit to do the training and to show that they do the training, otherwise it will never catch fire in the organization. and for me it's also important that it's you can't force people to do this, you can just give them an offer, they have to make a choice, if you force mindfulness on somebody – it does not work” (Viggo Johansen).

Respondents also reported about the third approach, which is voluntary participation, when the ones employees who were interested joined only:

“The course was initially organized for the leaders only, but all the other employees were interested to follow up and with the help of HR we managed to extend the course participation” (Lise Martens).

4.4.2. The group size

It was interesting to find out whether there is a difference in the number of participants in terms of course effectiveness. The organizations interviewed differ in size and level of organizational involvement, but they agree that for the maximum take-away the size should be approximately 20-25 people, otherwise the engagement and individual level of responsibility is not enough.

“We had limited space actually, because Sopra Steria is a really huge company, we have like 10000 colleagues and so it wasn't possible ... Another key takeaway is it was more effective with smaller groups, so if it was a group of fifty or one hundred people, the effect won't be that great, because people don't feel their contribution as that important and they might not be that involved or committed ... We decided on the maximum 25 people and at the end I think we had 20 people” (Lily Chen).

That group size understanding comes from the way mindfulness courses are usually organized. As discussed before, the level of engagement is very important, as well the way people can open and share their experience in a group and tell how they feel about stress and their individual practice, and that openness is very limited due to Norwegian culture.

“I think if you have a smaller group, the chances of getting a good dialogue is much bigger. You know if you are in a big auditorium with let's say 30 up to 60 people it will not happen, people are shy” (Viggo Johansen).

4.4.3 Motivation and engagement

As mentioned before, mindfulness courses are held in various types of Norwegian organizations and participants' profiles differ greatly as well. Interviewees were asked to describe the most and least motivated participants. We wanted to understand if there is a pattern in terms of motivation and engagement and to analyze other possible obstacles organizations face when implementing mindfulness training. We asked about such obstacles both trainers and course attendants to see if there is any difference in perception and describe it if any.

In general, all of the respondents describe the group as motivated and engaged and express difficulties to generalize. However, asking more precise questions, enabled us to notice some particularities. One of them is since HR specialists are in most cases responsible for the course initiative, they stay highly motivated throughout the course and that is very beneficial for the training to succeed:

“It is mixed, it also depends a little bit on that knowledge. Because sometimes it's HR I was contacted by and if they contact me, they do it because they have some kind of relation to it (mindfulness). Sometimes it is the top management and then of course that's the best you know if it comes from the top” (Viggo Johansen).

Another insight, which gained our attention is the way the participants perception and engagement change during the course:

“I find it that people or workers in technically challenging jobs, like engineers are very interested. They are skeptical first, but then when they see logic in it, they are confident” (Ivar Vehler).

Also, some respondents mentioned that some courses differed in the number of participants in the beginning and at the end of the course as well as the level of their commitment. An interesting finding appeared during our interview with Lily Chen, she told us that during their second mindfulness course the company implemented the strategy of sharing the cost, meaning that the course was

partially paid by the company and partially by employees who wanted to attend. Our finding shows that it led to a higher level of participants' commitment and engagement during the entire mindfulness course.

“We also asked people to stay more committed through registration and the colleagues also had to pay a small amount themselves for attending a course. It is also a great way to keep them motivated when they put their own money. [...] The interesting thing is that when we introduced this payment strategy, 100% people stayed till the end of the course.” (Lily Chen)

Among the obstacles, that were appearing on the way most of respondents called skepticism:

“[...] Many of my colleagues actually asked me before they joined if it was really advanced, if it really works and they were a bit skeptical. So I said, you just come and see if it works out for you [...]” (Lily Chen)

While some of them were taking that attitude as something totally normal for a certain percentage of course participants and do not make anything to change that perception, others use specific techniques to deal with it:

“[...] When I get on stage and start talking about mindfulness, they can hear my dialect (Frederikstad) and I use it and talk very straightforward and start to say that maybe some of you want to skip now, but everything you know about mindfulness, everything you read gives you all the reasons to be skeptical. So if you now think that this club is not for me, mindfulness is not for me, I am not interested, I understand, and it's fine [...]” (Ivar Vehler).

Mindfulness trainers refer to this skepticism as misunderstanding what mindfulness truly is, sort of biases because there are too many publications in the media by people, who do not know how to interpret and communicate that term. Therefore, all of them agree that it should be presented in a right and clear way.

4.5. Post-training feedback and evaluation

The last part of our research question was to understand what happens after the course is finished. Among the most important post-training descriptions we highlighted the following: follow-up support from mindfulness teachers and its

forms, feedback, received from participants and organizations as a whole, course evaluation from both sides.

4.5.1. Follow up support

We wanted to know whether there is a follow-up course or some sort of other company promoted post-course update. Having such a powerful technique like mindfulness assumes its constant implementation as it might be relevant for both work and private life situations. One of the interviewees described that outcome with the following quote:

“After having a mindfulness course, which lasted about a year, I personally don’t know if they continued practicing it or not, but it is a very helpful tool in life to have, to know that you can always get back to it” (Hege Christensen).

All of our respondents confirmed that there was no follow-up course provided on the organizational level. Moreover, 2/3 of trainers agreed that they are not in favor of any post-training contacts with participants, because that is a sort of measurement of trainers work effectiveness and making all the aspects of knowledge clear for participants:

“I have been very radical about that when people finish with me, I don’t need them again. It’s not that I am misanthropic, I just don’t want them on my tape.... I don’t want them to follow me” (Ivar Vehler).

Another approach was providing post course support when needed:

“Yes, they could always call and we make individual arrangements. They can further attend my lectures about the brain, stuff like that. After training there are a lot of stories in my practice how people could have helped themselves” (Lise Martens).

One of the respondents also mentioned that such follow-up gives a feeling of security, safety with the further journey through mindfulness.

However, general practice is to provide companies with audio files, or videos of sessions, so that participants can just keep using them after the course.

“I give them audio files, some things they can support, some people take video when I’m there and they are allowed to do that, then they can just keep it after and also they can use it” (Viggo Johansen).

“ [...] They had files that Ivar recorded and used them a lot. Spotify, mobile - everywhere and I still use them a lot. So he shared them with everybody, it’s like 5 min to 30 and easy to use” (Marianne Birkeland).

4.5.2. Participants feedback

According to respondents after the course, companies normally do not provide any specific feedback to mindfulness trainers, although they make internal feedback surveys in written form of just conversational among the employees, who attended the course:

“We sent out a survey after the course to see if people think it was worth doing or not, it was also a good way to measure the effects of the course [...]. So we kicked off talking about people's expectations and we tried it out for 2 months and after these 2 months we sent out a survey to get the feedback and whether we should do something similar or where we can improve and get better for the next time” (Lily Chen).

That post-course feedback bases a lot on the previous expectations and the outcomes participants were willing to get. Most often it was stress reduction and practical techniques to handle work overload and reach maximum capacity.

*“The feedback from participants normally includes mentioning better concentration, better memory, less stressed and less tired, in a long term –**more impact in negotiations for leaders- don’t stress yourself to do more**” (Lise Martens).*

Mindfulness trainers themselves describe the feedback they get from seeing the results of their work, from analyzing the course flow and listening to people sharing their experience.

“[...] Always when people have these insights, that they say wow, very often it is about how the brain is working and to see how the brain on autopilot just takes them into all these unnecessary problems. And when they see “I can stop this

now”, that's quite common because quite a few people get these insights. It's just as wonderful every time, so it's always related to some kind of discovery” (Viggo Johansen).

4.5.3. Course evaluation

The last question we were interested in is how both trainers and participants evaluate the results of the training. We received 100% agreement from both sides that it was always effective and successful.

*“It is a very positive effect when they come back and say that it is **interesting to see how the leadership has changed**, that before it was extremely childish and now I can go through difficult situations extremely differently and I am far less stressed” (Ivar Vehler).*

“I always think that training was successful, I provide them with the tool and hear a lot of positive stories, although I am a little biased” (Lise Martens).

*“The course was very successful. Because all the leaders who went through it describe it as **very positive and they are feeling stronger themselves as a person and as leader**. [...] That they are more confident in what they are doing” (Marianne Birkeland).*

All the participants agree that it is difficult to measure the effectiveness and normally despite that it is possible and there are different tools, organizations do not do that as for them it is irrelevant.

“I think it's very hard to measure yeah of course if I could go into a company and you know you could do such a big work and you could actually see if I could get the confirmation at this had an effect on the that would of course be really nice, but it wouldn't match the personal thing that “wow I discovered this, my life is much better now thank you”. You can't measure it with money” (Viggo Johansen).

However, our findings show that there is one indicator that some companies use to measure the effect of mindfulness - the number of employees on sick leave. As a result of being mindful, people tend to experience fewer burnouts or less stress that might cause health problems and weaken the immune system. Even though this feature is measurable, our respondents highlight that it takes a long time to

see the tendency, that is the reason why it is used more as a reason or an argument for promoting mindfulness to the executives, rather than a tool to measure mindfulness effect.

«Since it is still quite expensive, top management had to have the right incentives, reasons why they should support this, and also try to measure effects on sick leave for example» (Lily Chen).

«So if a colleague gets sick leave, because there are too many things to do and it is overwhelming, and it causes anxiety and depression, then the cost is higher for the management to pay. So that was my argument to use and to say that “hey, mindfulness is a good tool to introduce to colleagues as a not like for recovering but for preventing”» (Lily Chen) .

«In meetings I try to explain to them [companies] what the benefits will be. I think they can see how much it costs for a company to have one person on a sick leave. Just one person that's probably more than the whole course altogether» (Viggo Johansen).

Respondents also mentioned that giving their employees an opportunity to grow is a part of organizational culture, it motivates employees to stay in their jobs longer which reduces costs connected to recruiting and on-boarding of newcomers. What is more, mindfulness increases effectiveness and productivity, the level of engagement and motivation of employees, which reap benefits for an organization in the long run. According to our findings, mindfulness is perceived as an investment in a better future of a company and this is why the concrete measurements of effectiveness are normally more subjective than expressed in some sort of indicators.

5. Discussion

5.1. Initiative and motives

While analyzing the initiative and motives of mindfulness training in Norway we came up with several very important findings of the degree of power within an organization while implementing mindfulness. Thus, it is required for the benefits of effective training and future use of the knowledge gained for the initiator to have a leading position in an organization, be influential and motivating. After bringing the idea to action there could be the delegation of course organization functions itself to the HR department as usual. These people, who are themselves passionate about self-development and are somehow already studied and most likely using existing mindfulness techniques may have different motives for sharing those tools, but their initiative always follows the need to help others.

It appears that these findings have a strong connection with leadership theory, in part because motivation is enhanced because of a great person, who inspires and leads others. Transformational leadership theory, for example, states that leaders inspire followers to perform beyond expectations by inspiring, stimulating and developing followers to transcend their own self-interests for a higher collective purpose, mission, or vision (Bass, 1985; Howell and Avolio, 1993). However, in the case of mindfulness training we can see that the change that companies, employees are going through is aimed at “leading others through leading oneself”. We know that these kinds of transformational leadership benefits follower’s well-being, their work performance (Barling et al., 1996; Dvir et al., 2002) as well as organizational behavior in general – and these are the most common motives we found as the call to mindfulness implementation in organizations. Therefore, we assume that the more the leader's engagement to mindfulness is – the more positive effects from the training followers would achieve.

It is practically important to practice transformational leadership behaviors through training (Atwater et al., 1999; Barling et al., 1996; Dvir et al., 2002; Kelloway et al., 2000) in order to have a positive effect on the organizational environment and improve performance. Empowering leadership behavior

facilitates the understanding of the mindfulness approach and creates a stronger commitment within employees.

Our findings also give an understanding of the connection between an individual, which we consider is the starting point of consciousness changes, and collective mindfulness that follows as a sharing organizational experience.

5.2. Mindfulness as a concept

In our research we aimed at discovering mindfulness as a concept, clarifying a context in which it exists in organizations, and especially defining how it practically deals with stress and productivity levels. Our finding shows that the connection between mindfulness and stress is very complex. The effectiveness of mindfulness is described in multiple research papers - the reduction of stress, the increase of productivity and task performance, these features are the base for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program which we mention as one of the most common practices used for approaching mindfulness on the organizational level.

However, we discover that mindfulness is a long-term solution, rather than a short-term tool for improving a certain set of skills. Our findings show that mindfulness helps participants get a new perspective of life by explaining how to control the activity in their minds in an applicable way. As a result of our findings, we define mindfulness as a process of mastering a new quality of mind, where developing new skills such as active listening, attention, self-management and resilience, comes as an outcome of new behavioural patterns. These conclusions find reflection in the theory of second-generation mindfulness interventions and the notion of individual and collective wisdom where the focus lies on purpose-centered leadership through consciousness practices (King & Badham, 2018b).

Our major finding is devoted to the issue of skeptical attitude towards mindfulness practice in organizations and what steps can be taken in order to mitigate the risk of misconception. We sum up our findings in two points:

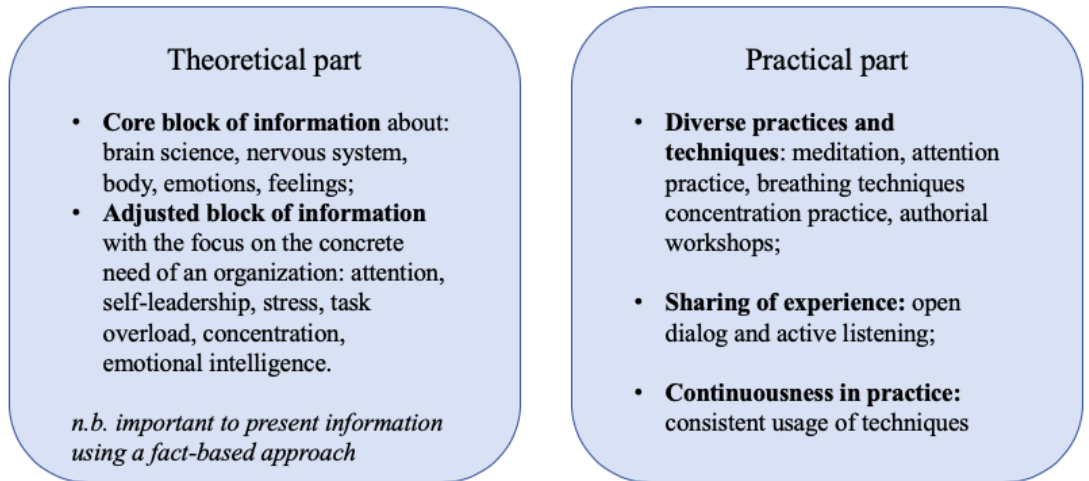
- Reach a common understanding before the start of a course - this point covers the importance of having the same perspective on the focus of mindfulness training between an organization and an instructor. An organization guides instructors in terms of what is currently relevant for an organization and which issue an organization is willing to work on; an instructor in return adjusts the program according to the guidelines.
- Use the substitutes of the word “mindfulness” for shifting attention in favor of a proper understanding of mindfulness concept for organizations - mindfulness has its roots in the Buddhism philosophy which limits the perception of it for organizations. Self-management, self-leadership, presence, awareness, attitude, stress-management, mental health, releasing capacity, attention - all these words help to make mindfulness more practical and applicable for any person or employee.

Our findings represent the reason action approach, which is described above in the theoretical section (Ajzen & Albarracín, 2007). The approach states that giving usable and specific benefits of mindfulness (or self-leadership) courses can change the intention of the action and, as a result, can mitigate the skeptical attitude.

5.3. Structure of a course

Our major findings regarding the structure of a course consist of the overview of the main practical components of mindfulness training and can be presented in the form of the figure below. It includes theoretical and practical elements as well as recommendations collected during interviews.

Structure of a mindfulness course for an organization



5.4. Participants profiles

The findings of various participants' particularities enabled us to define the optimal structure and group size, as well as to generalize about the level of engagement and motivation. Analysis of mindfulness course attendants shows there can be different approaches to the group structure: whole organization, leaders only or voluntary. Anyway it goes, all of these structures are effective and have their benefits for the organization. However, we assume that the best and most efficient way of implementing mindfulness in an organization is to target leaders first and spread the information from the top. That would benefit to create a comfortable group size of maximum 30, as according to interviewees any bigger group would result in little engagement and difficulties in sharing experience. That is especially relevant in Norwegian society as people in Norway due to their cultural features are more reserved and prefer not to be open to their colleagues.

The theory of leadership confirms our inference as transformational leadership implies that followers perceive attributed idealized influence based on the achievements and expertise of leaders (Green, 2014). According to Green, the most inspirational motivation occurs when leaders engage the hearts and minds of followers and therefore must be themselves passionate about what they want to manifest. Therefore, transformational leaders' influence the thoughts and behaviors of followers in order to create and sustain organizational success (Piccolo et al., 2012).

There is also the connection with authentic leadership, which is also a form of transformational leadership, however more balanced due to the qualities, that are the definite mindfulness training benefits, like self-awareness to be a deep understanding of self and how one interacts within a given environment and deliberation in decision-making process (Green, 2014). Moreover, which is important in describing various types of group organizational structure, it is interesting that despite that structure it is proposed that authentic relationship emerges between an authentic leader and follower Avolio et al. (2004). It is also suggested, that personal history and trigger events (in our case attending a mindfulness course) leads to emerging of mutual trust, engagement, workplace well-being, and sustainable and veritable performance (Avolio and Luthans, 2006).

5.5. Post training feedback and evaluation

Our findings considering what is happening after the training is conducted consist of the follow-up support, company feedback and general course evaluation. We came to the conclusion that all of the respondents have described the training as a successful one, but they provided different reasons. Amongst the most common were that the leadership style has changed, has developed to a more mature and self-confident, they started to be more efficient in negotiations and managed to decrease the level of stress. That was explained by the fact that mindfulness tools helped leaders to feel themselves stronger as leaders and having the tool provided growth both on personal and professional levels.

We can, therefore, see the correlation with the cornerstones of authentic leadership theory, which is based on transparency in all the tasks and actions within organization, moral and ethical principles as a product of mutual trust and integrity, balanced processing and self-awareness (Avolio, Gardner, & Walumbwa, 2007). Another attribute of authentic leadership is its aim to enhance the well-being of followers (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Thus, we have found that one of the evaluations of mindfulness programs was that the participants could know themselves, true selves better, accept themselves as they are and also give us the connection with authentic leadership. Authenticity is

the “unobstructed operation of one’s true, or core, self in one’s daily enterprise” (Kernis, 2003) and it implies constant learning and development. According to Avolio, authentic leaders are perceived to be the leaders, who” act in accordance with their core personal values and beliefs in order to build credibility and earn the respect and trust of their followers through the process of actively encouraging diverse viewpoints and building transparent and collaborative relationships with them” (Avolio, 2004).

Authentic leaders are described as the leaders striving to achieve authenticity through self-awareness and self-acceptance and we can assume that mindfulness programs at the organizations are part of authentic leaders’ growth and should be further regarded accordingly.

5.6. Relevance for organizational and leadership research

Slow down to speed up - how to lead in a digital age

Mindfulness research is of increased relevance for organizational studies since it opens up a fresh perspective on leading oneself and others. By introducing new patterns of conducting business leaders are put in place of reviewing the ways of how they lead and how their organizations operate. The digital age brings the need to constantly gain insights and listen within an organization as well as outside, which requires new skills from leaders to handle it (Khan, 2016). Leaders need to have the ability to understand and manage the abundance of information and adapt to the very complex context of contemporary organizational development (Khan, 2016). The so-called "always-on" nature of life can be the reason why leaders find themselves under ever-increasing pressures that they have to learn how to handle. The mental, physical, and psychological toll extracted by these pressures over time leads to escalating personal sacrifice and burnout.

McKee and Massimilian (2006) describe a new kind of leadership for the Digital Age as Resonant Leadership, where leaders are characterized by a high level of emotional intelligence with capacities of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Mindfulness along with hope and compassion plays an important role in building strong, trusting relationships and managing emotions productively. Mindfulness means making conscious decisions

about how to respond instead of to react to people and to situations in a way that is consistent with an individual's values. The answer lies in recognizing the destructive effects of stress power and devoting time and resources to renewal through mindfulness for the sake of long-term effectiveness (McKee & Massimilian, 2006). With our research paper, we wish to contribute to the process of mindfulness facilitation for organizational and individual development.

5.7. General recommendations

Another thing worth mentioning is the relevance of our research due to today's situation with COVID-19. It was unpredictable, and society met the pandemic being not ready for the significant changes it had to face. These changes of course influenced normal routine, crucially weakened business, but moreover, made a huge impact on peoples' mindsets. The level of digitalization and digital disturbance reached its peak.

Coronavirus pandemic was the biggest drive to changes in working conditions. Instability, because of the situation, created a lot of stress, which not all the people know how to deal with and need help to get positivity back. And despite the fact that the situation started to get better, we will experience these negative consequences for a long time.

This is why our research is very relevant and might highlight some important insights about the recommended mindfulness approach in Norwegian companies and factors impacting the further successful implementation of training. We came up with a list of ten useful recommendations.

- 1) Discover someone who will be a passionate advocate of mindfulness to build the right perception of mindfulness in your organization and empower him or her to be in charge of training.
- 2) Keep the distribution of information about mindfulness structured, fact-based, sense-making, and relevant for the followers.
- 3) Focus on long-term purpose and wellbeing instead of short-term effectiveness.
- 4) Make mindfulness techniques and tools available for future individual practice.
- 5) For leaders: be self-leading, be aware, and build emotional intelligence in order to lead others.

- 6) Avoid training groups of more than 30 people as it builds limitations for sharing experience.
- 7) Use substitutions of the word “mindfulness” for mitigating the risk of skeptical attitude to the concept. Preferably, use the following: self-leadership, self-management, presence, awareness, attitude, stress-management, mental health, releasing capacity, attention courses.
- 8) If participants’ resistance takes place, do not push but try to explain the neurologic logic behind the process described, gather feedback and make changes accordingly.
- 9) Focus on leaders’ mindfulness training first as that will facilitate further adoption within the organization as a whole.
- 10) Facilitate an open dialog and favorable environment for sharing experiences.

5.8 Limitations and future research

The first limitation of this research study concerns the study’s sample size and geographical proximity of respondents. The sample consisted of 3 independent mindfulness trainers and 3 representatives of the organizations, where the course was conducted. To gain a wider range of perspectives, our research could benefit from including a higher number of participants both trainers and organization representatives, maybe as well as increasing the number of each organizations’ representatives. This could potentially result in an even greater understanding of which aspects of the mindfulness training approach could have been improved for further implementation. Further, by only sampling from Oslo based organizations, we cannot generalize about the Norwegian companies outside the capital.

The second limitation concerns the tightness of the mindfulness community in Norway. There is not a big pool of mindfulness experts, mostly a few well-known experts who are dominating the field. This fact can be a limitation due to the biased attitude of the participants to the course due to the lack of variety. Potentially, it can be improved by attracting professionals to the field of mindfulness training and by increasing demand for it among organizations.

Apart from that, as the data collection consisted of interviews held in English, we might assume that some of the meaning of the verbal content may have been lost,

or altered, as neither we nor our respondents are native speakers and some translation might be biased. In order to avoid this conflict, it is needed to properly capture the meaning, contexts, and nuances in conversational speech, which we tried to do. However, certain elements may have been altered throughout the mutual translation process.

The last factor that impacts our research results implementation might be Norwegian culture particularities, as Norwegians habitually prefer not to share their personal experiences openly.

6. Conclusion

Mindfulness became a very popular tool for organizational development both on individual and collective levels. In our research, we defined individual and collective mindfulness as well as individual and collective wisdom. Additionally, we gave an overview of different forms of work-related mindfulness practices.

The main purpose of the thesis has been to investigate how Norwegian companies approach and perceive mindfulness training and to discover the process of implementation. Analysis of the interviews conducted confirmed the effectiveness and benefits of mindfulness training and helped to define them as well as the best way of course implementation design.

With our research paper, we discover valuable findings and sum them up in the form of easy-to-use guidelines for effective mindfulness implementation in any organization. Mindfulness is discovered to be a long-term solution for balanced and effective individual and organizational development where the reduction of stress, improved performance, and communication are taken as the outcomes of the new qualities and behavioural patterns.

Our master thesis is aimed to reduce skeptical behavior about mindfulness training by being a descriptive tool for any company, institute, or individual who desires to learn practical information about mindfulness training in organizations apart from its religious and spiritual origins.

We found our topic even more relevant as the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in high levels of stress, increased digital disturbance, and general pressure on employees. It is of great importance to create and implement new tools to support employees in a conscious and sustainable way, which is a challenge for leaders.

We successfully answered our research question: *how do companies in Norway approach mindfulness in organizations?* More, we aim our study to contribute to the field of mindfulness research, leadership, and organizational development as well as to raise awareness about the importance of mindful leadership.

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Attachments

Fig.1. The Wheel of Mindfulness

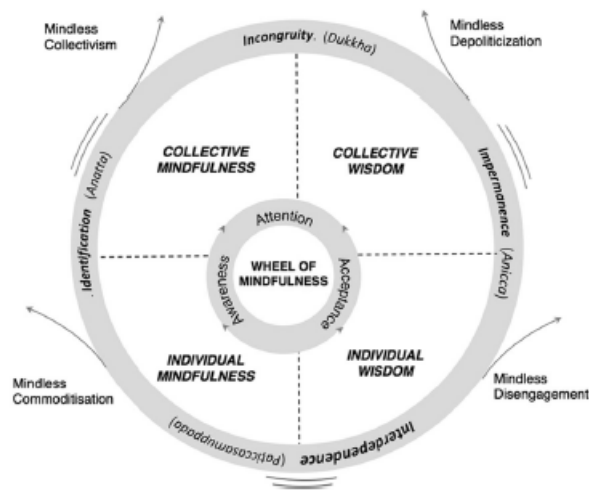


Fig. 2

Quadrants	Behavioral outcomes	Performance accomplishments
Individual mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated awareness of self, others, and complex environments Demonstrated regulation of attention and double loop reflective metacognition Demonstrated calm and equanimity in reacting to stress and attending to relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., low levels of stress e.g., select, sustain, and switch attention e.g., cooperative social relationships
Collective mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established mindful infrastructures Demonstrated mindful organizing values, behaviors and practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., low levels of accidents e.g., high levels of goal attainment in collective projects
Individual wisdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated meta-skills of self-awareness in establishing purpose and controls Demonstrated meta-abilities in self-regulating behavior based on such awareness Demonstrated meta-qualities in open, curious, and compassionate responses to challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., level of engagement with goals and direction of action e.g., rapid and effective redirection in response to unpredicted crises e.g., level of experimental initiatives and achievements
Collective wisdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated institutional reflection on organized irresponsibility and socioeconomic contradictions Established routines, practices, and structures attending to such concerns Institutionalized cultural values and power structures that acknowledge and experiment with such tensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., level of resourcing and scope of corporate social responsibility e.g., operational outcomes achieved by following principles and procedures e.g., application of values when reacting to critical tests

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Question 1

Where is the initiative coming from? Top-management/ HR

Question 2

How the motive was presented? Increase productivity/ existing problems at workplace/ reduce stress level

Question 3

Did you have a standard training program or adaptive to each company?

Question 4

The process of introducing the training to the organization - was it presented as mindfulness training? Did you specify the expecting outcomes after the training?

Question 5

How was the process of the training organized? was it for the specific level of management/ how often/ measures on the way and final measures of the result

Question 6

Who were the most/least motivated? Any support from the side of the organization?

Question 7

Obstacles on the way?

Question 8

Were the goals achieved? What was the feedback from the company?

Question 9

Did you provide any support after the training?

Question 10

How do you personally describe if the training was successful or not?