

Measuring Mindfulness among Entrepreneurs: An empirical study in India

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Abstract

Mindfulness is defined as the attentiveness that surfaces through awareness on reason, in the current moment, and non-judgmentally to the recitation of occurrence, instant by instant. It has been found to influence individual's openness to experience, attention span, and creativity. Studies in the western context, have suggested the influence of mindfulness on several facets of an entrepreneur. The present study tests the influence of demography on the level of mindfulness among entrepreneurs in the Indian context. Data is collected using the survey method, from 114 entrepreneurs in Bengaluru. Snowballing sampling technique is used to conduct the study. The 14 item Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory scale developed by Walach et al. (2006), is used to measure the level of mindfulness among the entrepreneurs. The reliability of the instrument was found to be 0.75, which is acceptable. T- test and ANOVA were employed to test the hypothesized relationships between the study variables. The current research did not find any evidence of demography on the levels of mindfulness among entrepreneurs in the Indian context. The findings of this study reaffirms the limited role of demography on the mindfulness of individuals and suggests that mindfulness can be developed using mindfulness improvement techniques irrespective of their demography. The study was cross-sectional, so the inferences about causality are limited. Future studies can collect data at different points in the career of an entrepreneur and compare the same.

Keywords- *Mindfulness, gender, age, entrepreneurs, demography.*

Introduction

According to a report in The Economic Times (2018), the funding in startup's in India has grown from USD 2 billion to USD 4.2 billion in the last two years, which reflects a growth percentage of 108%.

Increase in unemployment rates and recessions have forced the governments across the globe, to develop opportunities for self-employment. Entrepreneurship has been considered as a method of job creation. ILO report (2011) stated the importance of having an entrepreneurial workforce

and its impact on the economic prosperity of the country.

Over the years, India has developed as a business hub which has created a lot of opportunities for citizens who want to get into entrepreneurship. According to the NASSCOM report (2018), over 1200 startups emerged in 2018. These startups employee generated over 85,00 employment opportunities. The central government in India is also pushing the cause of having more entrepreneurs in the country (The Economic Times, 2016).

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Entrepreneurship is the process of creating wealth creation. One of the earliest definition of entrepreneurship considered it as, self-employment with an uncertain return (Cantillon, 1755). The modern versions of entrepreneurship include words such as innovator, creator, and leader. Some of the qualities of an entrepreneur, as described by Finger and Samwer (1998), were that of a visionary and exhibiting confidence. The entrepreneur has to face many challenges, especially in the first few years of his entrepreneurial ventures. The entrepreneur's openness to experience and attention to specifics helps him/her to overcome such challenges.

The academicians as well as, the practitioners have put in a lot effort in developing the concept of entrepreneurship.. There have been several studies investigating the variables such as the personality, psychology and the biological features, which help in developing a successful entrepreneur. The researchers developed several models which can help in predicting the success of the entrepreneurs. Carlsson et al. (2013) described entrepreneur as an important factor in the economy as they realize and explores the societal problems and tries to convert them into business opportunities. There has been substantial research in recent times studying why certain entrepreneurs get more success as compared to the rest (Baron & Henry 2010). Zunino (2013) raised a valid question of whether entrepreneurship is by "nature" or can be nurtured. The word "nature" turns the focus of research towards the personality traits or attitudes or demographics of the entrepreneurs.

Studies on mindfulness have found its influence on an individual's openness to experience, attention span, and creativity. Jeffery R. Martin (1997) defines mindfulness as *"a core psychotherapy process. It is defined as a state of psychological freedom that occurs when attention remains quiet and limber, without attachment to any particular*

point of view."

Studies have found that job-linked outcomes such as, resiliency and stress is found to be influenced by mindfulness (Weinstein and Ryan, 2011; Dane, 2011; Glomb et al., 2011). Mindfulness is also seen to influence work life balance (Allen and Kiburz, 2011).

Gilbert and Rossman (1992) stated that gender is considered as a pervasive organizer within cultures. It is also considered as a developmental process that influences an individual's beliefs, stereotypes, and behavioral expectations. Harriman (1985) stated that researches encompassing gender have found that as compared to men, women display different levels of cognition, affect and behavior considering that they experience life differently.

This paper identifies the influence of the demography of entrepreneurs on their level of mindfulness.

Following is the plan for the next few sections in the paper: The next section will describe the mindfulness literature and the rationale for the hypothesis. The research methodology will follow, which will describe the samples, instruments used and the process used to conduct the research. The analysis and discussion section will present the output of the tests conducted to test the hypothesis and the arguments behind the results. The discussion section will also include the implications of this research and scope for future research.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Mindfulness

The traces of the word "mindfulness" has been

found in the early Buddhist literature and there seems to be an agreement on this, among the academic researchers. The Buddhist literature defined mindfulness as “Keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality with self-regulation of attention and it is explained by curiosity, openness and acceptance (Hanh 1976:11; Bishop et al. 2004). The Buddhist philosophy is written in “Pali” language. “sati” is a word in Pali language which is used to explain the meaning of mindfulness in the literature. This word “sati” means the ability to stick to the present, rather than to hang on to the past.

The concept of mindfulness reached the west, where it was adopted after incorporating some changes (Feldman et al. 2007). In the current scenario, both the viewpoints, the western and the eastern are considered by researchers for their study.

Mindfulness is “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience, moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). It involves the voluntary effort on controlling one's attention to the experiences which can be both internal as well as external occurring at that point of time. The level of meditation can be improved with meditation (Baer, 2003). Walsh & Shapiro's (2006) stated that several studies have reported that the levels of mindfulness can be improved with meditation. Meditation is probably, the most accepted self-help intervention to improve mindfulness. Other than the meditation technique, there are other interventions in the mindfulness training. The mindfulness training has been found to influence the level of stress and wellbeing among individuals (Baer, 2003). Germer (2005) found positive correlation between mindfulness training and the levels of awareness, empathy and compassion among individuals. These training are also found to improve the

cognitive and behavioral flexibility (Shapiro, 2009).

Mindfulness is “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience, moment by moment” (Baer, 2003). Kabat-Zinn(1994,p.4) described mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally”. Shapiro, Carlson, and Astin (2006) developed a model of mindfulness using Kabat-Zinn(1994) definition. The model had 3 components abbreviated as IAA- intention, attention and attitude. They coined these components as the “building blocks” of mindfulness.

These components were defined as intention or “on purpose” or the reason why one is participating, “paying attention” and “in a particular way”. The fundamental of mindfulness is about attention, which is deeply rooted in the definition of mindfulness (Shapiro et al., 2006). Individual can scan the environment and recognize opportunities only when they are attentive (Elkins, 2012). “Attitude” is the last component, which describes the “how” part of mindfulness. The definition of mindfulness includes words like non-judgment and openness. Germer 2005, p.7) pointed out that by practicing an attitude of non-judgement, we develop an attitude of “acceptance”. Individuals possessing a non-judgemental attitude tend to have higher levels of empathy, which is an important ingredient in human relationships (Hick & Bien, 2008). Rogers (1980) explained empathy as the ability of the individual to understand other's feeling moment to moment. Several studies across the globe have proven the importance of mindfulness, its influence in every relationship, including business (Dahan, Doh, Oetzel, & Yaziji, 2010; Christopher & Maris, 2010)

Entrepreneurship

In earlier days, there was scanty research on entrepreneurship, mainly due to the fact that the neoclassical economists were most interested in equilibrium. Whatever little study was conducted, they were mainly coming from behavioral scientists such as McClelland (1961). Some of these researches were empirical and some were qualitative in nature. Carlsson et al. (2013) in his study questioned the factors behind economic growth and role of the entrepreneur in such a scenario. A lot of research followed after this, most of them on the tracks of behavioral research and these were basically, aimed at studying the influence of the personality traits on entrepreneurship. Gartner (1988) in his study explained the difference between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. Several studies followed which examined the relationship between personality, capability and contexts and the entrepreneurship (Agokei, 2014; Gupta, Ibrahim, Guo, & Markin, 2016). Studies around entrepreneurship helped to identify several attributes of entrepreneurs, such as vigour, confidence, freedom, and achievement orientation (Miller, 2014). One of the important attributes studied was the ability of entrepreneurs to identify opportunities (Estrin, Mickiewicz, & Stephan, 2016; Chell, 2007). Hargadon & Bechky (2006) found that mindfulness trainings can help in developing attention and creative thinking.

Mindfulness and Entrepreneurship

It is surprising to note that there is very limited study on the relationship between mindfulness and entrepreneurship. There are five important aspects of mindfulness (Langer, 1989, p.49). The first is the ability to accept and initiate novel kinds of stimuli, which is also called openness to novelty, the second is the ability to identify minor differences in different stimulus, this is termed as alertness to distinction. The third aspect is the sensitivity to

different scenarios which means, the understanding of the contexts and accordingly, customizing their tasks and abilities, the next crucial facet of mindfulness is the alertness to varied perspectives, which is the capability to think analytically, plus the last one is, being aware of the present/current environment.

Studies have revealed that mindfulness has an influence on the decision making process of individuals (Karelia/Jochen, 2014). The quality of information may be improved by increasing the goal awareness and providing the scope of having variety of information from different sources. Moreover, individuals with high level of mindfulness will be able to differentiate the different types of information such as relevant and irrelevant information (Karelaia & Jochen 2014, p163).

Considering the above mentioned points, one can assume that individuals with higher levels of mindfulness may be able to identify opportunities better than individuals with lower levels of mindfulness. They will be better equipped to take quality decisions in challenging environments. Entrepreneurs are expected to be aware of one's abilities. Corbett & McMullen (2007) in their study has identified mindfulness as one of the important states for entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs in order to start business or run their operations of business, should be aware of the challenges environment, identify the business opportunities which helps to address such challenges and then, able to filter the information to initiate a business. Athletes and artists in particular, commonly talk about "being in the zone", studies in the area of entrepreneurship (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010) found the same experience among entrepreneurs.

It is also found, those individuals who have undergone mindfulness training, have improved their level of awareness, empathy, compassion, and

the ability to self-observe (Germer, 2005). All these qualities are the desired attributes of an entrepreneur. Attention is also seen to be influenced by the level mindfulness of individuals. Successful entrepreneurs are talk about having high attention as an important ingredient of success (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010).

Baron and Ensley (2006) pointed that one of the most important attributes among entrepreneurs is the ability to recognize opportunities. They further elaborated, that mindfulness helps individuals to develop pattern recognition processes, which in turn is used to identify market related opportunities.

From the above mentioned studies one can infer the influence of the level of mindfulness among entrepreneurs. Individuals ability to judge and improved concentration is influenced by mindfulness (Baer, 2008).

There are some studies in the western context, on the influence of demography on mindfulness. There is one school of thought, which concludes that there is no relationship between age and mindfulness (Lykins & Baer, 2009; Shill & Lumley, 2002). Cresswell et al (2007) reported marginal relationship between trait mindfulness and gender. He concluded that men have higher levels of mindfulness as compared to women. Alfonso (2007) said in his research that women have different levels of adaptability and stress responsiveness as compared to men, owing to the difference in the level of mindfulness.

Culturally there are six cultural dimension differences between the eastern and western societies (Hofstede, 1991): power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, long-versus short-term orientation and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov

2010). Power distance and individualism versus collectivism have been the most evident difference between these two societies. Both these dimensions play a crucial in the relationship between employee and the organization. Collectivism refers to the level to which individual base identities on group membership (Hofstede 1991). This is found very relevant in India as it is known as a collectivist country, where protecting relationships is found to be more important than retaliating in response to violations. The power distance in India is also found to be higher and the distribution of power is approved. Societal values of developing relationships, and subordinate's respect for the senior are some of the reasons the power distance in India is found to be higher.

A lot of research on mindfulness has come from the west, but the contribution from the eastern part of the globe is still limited. The difference in the geography can influence personality of individuals or entrepreneurs. The difference might be attributed to the collectivist vs individualistic culture or the influence of religious beliefs on individuals, which is predominant in the East. As discussed above, the role of context on the performance of an entrepreneur has always been a matter of debate (Boettke & Coyne 2009; Thornton et al. 2011).

Research gap

There are a lot of studies in the western context identifying the personality of entrepreneurs. These researches have mainly concentrated on the psychology of entrepreneurs, but still there is enough research gaps. This research work extends the understanding of the psychology of the entrepreneurs and assists to identify the degree of mindfulness at different ages and across genders. This study also appends to the entrepreneurship literature on the psychology of entrepreneurs in a developing economy.

Based on the differences of the above mentioned cultural dimensions, collectivism and high power distance, this research studies the influence of demography such as age and gender on the degree of mindfulness of the entrepreneurs in the Indian context. To the best of researcher's knowledge, there is no study which has studied this relationship among entrepreneurs in the Indian context. The objective of the research is to identify the influence of age of the entrepreneurs on his/her level of mindfulness in the Indian context.

The following hypothesis is to be tested:

- H₀₁ - There is no difference in the level of mindfulness at different age among entrepreneurs.
- H₀₂. There is no difference in the level of mindfulness among male and female entrepreneurs.

The objective of this research is to understand the influence of age of the entrepreneurs on their level of mindfulness.

Methodology

The hard copy of the questionnaire was distributed

among 183 entrepreneurs in and around Bengaluru. The inclusion criteria for the selection of the samples was that the entrepreneurs must have run the business for a minimum of 2 years without break. The other inclusion criteria were that the entrepreneur should be doing full time business and is not associated with any organization as full time, part time or as consultant. The instrument was in English. The researcher explained to each of the respondents, the aim of the research and that their responses and assured the anonymity. One hundred and fourteen valid responses were collected (a response rate of 62.2 percent). Gender was coded as male (1) and female(2); and age was coded as - less than 25 years(1), 25-35 years (2), 35-45 years (3) and 45 years and above (4).

The average age of the respondents was thirty-six. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were male. Among the age groups, thirty-five percent of the is below 25 years, thirty-six between 25-35 years, twenty-three percent between 35 and 45 years and eleven percent above 45 years.

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and correlation

	Mean	Stddev	Gender	Age	Mindfulness
Gender	1.23	0.42	1		
Age	36.31	0.93	0.70	1	
Mindfulness	3.32	0.59	-.09	0.1	1

Measures

The 14 item Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory scale developed by Walach et al. (2006), was used to measure the mindfulness of the entrepreneurs. The FMI instrument is a valid and reliable questionnaire for measuring mindfulness. It is considered most suitable in generalized contexts.

The scale used for the study ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 signified “almost never” and 5 signified “almost always”. The reliability of the instrument was found to be 0.75, which is acceptable.

Statistical Tools Used

The data was analyzed by using SPSS version 22.

T –test and ANOVA was conducted to test the hypothesis.

Analysis

Hypothesis Testing

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the level of mindfulness among male and female entrepreneurs. There was not a significant difference in the levels of mindfulness among males ($M=3.25$, $SD=0.59$) and females ($M=3.32$, $SD=0.56$); $t(112)=1.02$, $p=0.31$. Therefore, we can conclude that, there is no significant difference in the level of mindfulness among male and female entrepreneurs.

The second hypothesis was tested using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). This hypothesis is intended to find the difference in the level of mindfulness among the entrepreneurs at different age groups. There was no statistically significant difference in the level of mindfulness among the different age groups as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(3,110)=0.77$, $p=.51$).

Discussion

There is increasing knowledge nowadays, about how mindfulness and mindfulness activities can help to improve the physical and mental health of individuals. Mindfulness is defined as the ability to be fully conscious of all the experiences which is felt inside the self-body and also in the outer world which includes the events and people in the environment.

As described in the literature, mindfulness has been established as an important attribute for an entrepreneur. As far as understanding the influence of demography on the level of mindfulness is concerned, there are two schools of thought- one which believes that there is no influence and other,

which has found influence of demography on the levels of mindfulness.

This study proves that there is no influence of gender on the degree of mindfulness of entrepreneurs. The results in the current research is similar to the results of Lykins & Baer (2009) where they found that there is no relationship of age on their level of mindfulness. Shill & Lumley (2002) also got similar results.

Earlier research by Cresswell et al (2002) reported marginal relationship between gender and mindfulness. The mindfulness levels of males in that study were found to be higher as compared to females. However, in the current research the mindfulness degrees of males were found to be slightly lower as compared to the females, though the difference in the means was not found to be statistically significant..

This study also found evidence there is no relationship between age of the entrepreneurs and their level of mindfulness.

These results suggest that the level of mindfulness is not gender or age specific, and it only depends on the voluntary effort of the individual to improve one's the levels of mindfulness.

Implications

Mindfulness level should be increased among entrepreneurs as it is seen to have an influence on the performance of the entrepreneur and is reflected in their business results. Earlier research has revealed that entrepreneurs having higher degrees of mindfulness are able to identify business opportunities, able to take better decisions in challenging circumstances and able to identify useful information in the environment.

The entrepreneurs themselves or their mentors or

coaches should make voluntary effort and participate in training sessions which help in increasing the levels of mindfulness of individuals. In organizations which promote intrapreneurship should also take steps in improving the mindfulness level of its employees. The most popular intervention practices to improve the level of mindfulness are Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). These practices involve applying the mindfulness skills in everyday life. Both these therapies evolved from the mindfulness theories.

Strengths, Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The researcher was able to take responses of a large number of full time entrepreneurs which is generally, considered difficult. The fact that the entrepreneurs are all from different industries adds value to the study. The occupational heterogeneity adds to the generalizability of the research. The current study was cross sectional in nature, hence the inferences pertaining to causality is limited. Future studies can collect data at different points in the career of an entrepreneur and compare the same. This study measured the influence of only two variables, age and gender on the levels of mindfulness of entrepreneurs. Future research can consider the influence of more variables such as type of industry, type of business (sole proprietorship, partnership, family business etc.), firm size, personality of the entrepreneur etc., on the level of mindfulness.

Conclusion

For centuries, mindfulness has attracted the human interest. Mindfulness is found to influence both, the personal as well as the professional life of individuals. It is also found to influence the performance of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs

should put effort to develop the levels of mindfulness. The modern day top executive coaches and mentors should also, incorporate mindfulness sessions.

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