

THE EFFECT OF MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTION ON SERVICE COMMITMENT OF THE EMPLOYEES OF TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICE PROVIDER IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Dhevy Puswiartika, Universitas Tadulako
Mario Bettega, Direktorat Consumer PT Telekomunikasi
Bau Ratu, Universitas Tadulako
Misnah, Universitas Tadulako

ABSTRACT

Telecommunication service providers strive to remain committed to providing excellent service to customers in uncertain situations and changing drastically due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mindfulness can be effective in teaching employees how to increase service commitment in pandemic situations. This research aims to determine the merits of mindfulness in the service context and before it is subjected to a controlled trial. We explored the possible effects of "Don't Worry Be Mindful Intervention" to increase the telecommunication service provider's service commitment in the telecommunication service provider in Jakarta, Indonesia. The intervention "Don't Worry, Be Mindful" was developed by the researchers for the Indonesian situation based on the concept of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). We explored its effect in an exploratory pre-post design with 30 experienced members from the employees of a telecommunication service provider in Jakarta, Indonesia. The results showed that the participant's service commitment increased significantly after the "Don't Worry, Be Mindful" intervention. Furthermore, each of the employees showed higher service commitment at the posttest than at the pretest. This outcome indicated that mindfulness-based intervention is a promising tool to increase the service commitment of employees of telecommunication service providers in the less developed part of South-East countries like Indonesia.

Keywords: Employees, COVID-19 Pandemic, Mindfulness-based Intervention, Service Commitment, Telecommunication Service Provider.

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on all countries in the world. The company realized the strategy and process in the company need to be modified. The company must consider how the pandemic's progress, strength, or recurrence has affected its approach (Sinha et al., 2021). The company strives to survive and adapt to multiple changes in work (Sugiarto, 2020)

However, several industrial sectors have good opportunities and prospects to provide the best services to the community, including the health, food, e-commerce, and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) industries (Telkom, 2020). Service commitment is

needed in difficult times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a form of commitment behavior where employees display extra customer-oriented service behavior beyond their work demands, called Customer Oriented Organizational Citizenship Behavior or CO-OCB (Sulastiana, 2012) Service commitment or CO-OCB inlined with one of the company's cultures as a telecommunication service provider, "Always The Best."(Telkom, 2017).

Previously, the first author (DP) had conducted online interviews with five employees of the telecommunication service provider in Jakarta, Indonesia. The online interviews showed that the increasing demand for the internet for work and school at home during the COVID-19 pandemic has caused employees' workload to increase. The high-level job demands can increase the job stress of employees (Teoh et al., 2021) and decreased service commitment. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the employees to adapt to multiple changes in work. During this pandemic, employees are required to communicate virtually with an increasingly dense workload frequently. As a result, they become busy with their respective work activities and care less about co-workers' problems. Referring to the problems described above, the efforts needed to increase the service commitment of employees (Bloom et al., 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service commitment or Customer Oriented Organizational Citizenship Behavior (CO-OCB) improvement increases the service quality and the customer's satisfaction (Chen, 2016; Nasurdin et al., 2015; Wu & Liao, 2016). Organ et al. (2006) revealed some factors which influenced service commitment or CO-OCB. The first factor was the individual characteristics. Efforts to deal with the employees' physical, psychological, and emotional conditions can be pursued by a deeper understanding of their individual personalities (Motoda & Kimbal, 2020). The second factor which influences CO-OCB is working attitude. The third factor that influences CO-OCB is contextual factors.

In particular, related to individual characteristic factors that affect service commitment or CO-OCB, personal resources or internal resources are individuals' tendency and characteristics to believe in the self's ability to control and impact the environment positively (Hobfoll, 2002; Puswariatika et al., 2019). Mindfulness is one of the internal resources for employees who often face stressful situations and job challenges regarding customer service. Mindfulness is defined as focusing attention in a certain way on a current goal without giving judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Bishop et al., 2004).

Mindfulness research has developed in the context of the organization. The mindfulness framework showed how mindfulness affects attention and impacts cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological functions. These domains had been functionally and integrated, then impacted workplace outcomes from mindfulness, such as performance, relationships, and well-being (Good et al., 2016). Mindfulness was significantly associated with workplace outcomes, especially job performance outcomes, including task performance (Dane, 2011; Glomb et al., 2011) service commitment or Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), (Allred, 2012; Reb et al., 2013) and negatively related to the negative form of performance, namely: deviance (Reb et al., 2013).

Mindfulness can help employees better manage their thoughts, emotions, and internal distractions to deal with work challenges or unpleasant events (Long & Christian, 2015). As a result, the employees will focus more on completing work currently faced rather

than dragging on other problems that are considered irrelevant to them (Vago & David, 2012). In addition to workplace contexts, employees' characteristics can enhance employee adjustment and well-being at work and potentially buffer against unfavorable workplace climates (Schultz et al., 2015).

Mindfulness has been proposed as a capability that people can learn and develop to enhance their relationship with work experiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003) by mindfulness-based intervention as a self-regulation approach to stress reduction and emotional management (Bishop et al., 2004). In addition, those who received mindfulness-based intervention appeared to be better able to recognize thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations as they arise under frantic situations (Kersemakers et al., 2018), allowing them to respond to every situation in healthier and more adaptive ways.

RESEARCH PURPOSES

These investigations have been carried out in the West. In Eastern countries, this is still rarely applied, especially not in Indonesia. To determine the merits of mindfulness in the service context and before it is subjected to a controlled trial, we explored the possible effects of "Don't Worry Be Mindful Intervention" to increase the telecommunication service provider's service commitment in the telecommunication service provider in Jakarta, Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design was an exploratory pre-post design to see if the mindfulness-based intervention is promising enough to be subjected to a randomized controlled trial.

We used convenience sampling and included 30 employees of the telecommunication service provider in Jakarta, ten male, and 20 female employees. They had to have been in the marketing management unit for at least one year. The primary responsibilities of the marketing management unit were to make policies about marketing, support the sales process, and handling customer care.

The service commitment of employees was assessed by a 28-item CO-OCB scale (Sulastiana, 2012). The CO-OCB scale consists of the following seven aspects: helping behavior, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self-development. All items are rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The Cronbach alpha (α) for this scale was 0,945, indicating good internal consistency.

The "Don't Worry Be Mindful Intervention" is based on the concept 'Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Our focus was to increase the individual skill of the employees to become aware of physical and psychological reactions to the present moment and increase the service commitment. The intervention consisted of two sessions in two meetings of 60-120 minutes per session. Five components of mindfulness were trained (i.e., observing, describing, acting with awareness, no reactivity, and no judging (Baer et al., 2006); by psychoeducation about mindfulness intervention and mindful practices (i.e., mindful breathing and muscle relaxation). The techniques could be done in the intervention sessions and independently by participants at home.

The data was analyzed in descriptive statistics to describe the mean levels of service commitment. In addition, differences between pretest and posttest in service commitment levels were analyzed parametrically with T-Test. We used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Furthermore, the daily journals of subjects were analyzed with thematic analysis to evaluate the participants' progress (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants were permanent employees, 12 male, and 18 female, with the range of their work period between 1 and 10 years and their age between 23 and 45 years old. Based on the last education level, 7 participants had a diploma degree, 15 had undergraduate degrees, and 8 had postgraduate degrees Shows in Tables 1 & 2.

Pair 1		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Pretest KP		3.2073	30	.80546
Posttest KP		4.2503	30	.55808	.10189

Mean	Category
4,5-5	Very High
3,6-4,4	High
2,8-3,5	Moderate
1,9-2,7	Low
1-1,8	Very Low

Paired Differences		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest KP- Posttest KP	-1.043	.68677	.12539	-1.299	-.78656	-8.318	29	<.001

Fourteen participants reported that they practiced the technique of mindfulness in their daily life since the start of the "Don't worry, be mindful" intervention, according to their daily journals. For example, they practiced mindful breathing 2-3 times a day if they feel frantic in a hectic situation Shows in Table 3. As an illustration: one of the participants (subject 11) reported on her experience with mindful breathing: "At that time I was feeling

impatient and tired when I was on a hectic duty. And then I take deep breaths, and I feel a lot better. It could be a good thing to practice"

To determine the merits of mindfulness in the service context and before it is subjected to a controlled trial, we explored the possible effects of "Don't Worry Be Mindful Intervention" to increase a telecommunication service provider's employees' service commitment Jakarta, Indonesia. Our findings indicated that the "Don't Worry, Be Mindful" intervention is promising enough to start a trial because it increased the service commitment level of employees.

Overall, the service commitment level enhancement from "Moderate" to "High." This result showed that gender did not influence the stress level. In addition, all participants showed an enhancement of their service commitment level and reported that practicing mindfulness had given them a new alternative to respond to hectic work situations and stay productive on their work performance. The participants related mindfulness to taking deep breaths and to how this can be helpful for them as service employees. For example, taking deep breaths can help someone focus on being calm down and more mindful (Puswiartika et al., 2018). This result aligns with (Brown & Ryan, 2003), who stated that using mindfulness techniques is related to daily practice.

One limitation of our explorative study is the small sample size and a lack of a control group. Therefore, it is not clear if the diminishment in service commitment levels is due to our interventions or other factors such as rewards from the institution or organization, social support, teamwork, work demand, and work environment (Organ et al., 2006). Another limitation of our study is the limited duration of the intervention. Our intervention was only given at two online meetings to enable the employees to perform their activities.

For future research, we recommend using a control group and increase the sample size for more firm conclusions about the effectiveness of the "Don't Worry, Be Mindful" intervention. Also, a follow-up measurement is needed to understand the benefit of mindfulness practice in the longer term.

The study findings have several implications for employees of the telecommunication service provider. First, mindfulness-based intervention is a promising tool to increase service commitment in the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior studies of mindfulness-based intervention, including employees, who have participated in this intervention, have reported improving their ability to think clearly and remain focused and calm in frantic situations (Hafenbrack, 2017; Kersemaekers et al., 2018). Another study revealed that employees who practice mindfulness reported better coping with negative emotions, more attentive, and aware of thoughts and feelings during stressful life events (Sand, 2015; Schreiner & Malcolm, 2008). Second, many simple mindfulness techniques can be done in the employees' everyday lives without disturbing their daily work, such as mindful meditation (mindful breathing, mindful eating, mindful walking, mindful sitting), muscle relaxation, and visual guided imagery.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current results on the "Don't Worry, Be Mindful" intervention in Indonesian employees of telecommunication provider is promising for maintenance service commitment in COVID-19 pandemic situation. Still, it should be tested further in a randomized controlled design study before becoming implemented in clinical practice.

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