Analyzing the Effects of Mindfulness Yoga on Public Librarians and Assistants

A Capstone Action Project

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Abstract

Mindfulness yoga has sparked much attention in the workplace amongst Human Resources professionals and managers for its proposed benefits of increased productivity and engagement—vital factors for the acquisition of workplace goals and objectives. Data were collected from five African-American, predominately middle-class participants to include a library manager, public librarians, and library assistants to analyze the impacts of mindfulness yoga sessions. There were three classes held one day a week for 45 minutes prior to the library’s opening. Before the sessions, pre-surveys were given and short conversations were held with each respondent to gauge health habits and identify stress-reduction techniques; the goal was to determine if stress could be managed from personal issues and working with the public that consisted of heavily populated homeless and mental case patrons. At the end of the sessions, participants were given post surveys and allowed to provide personal testimonies about their overall feelings on whether the class had a positive impact or made no difference as it pertained to their ability to manage stress, alleviate body pains, and have a heightened sense of well-being. The final outcomes showed 80% felt the classes helped them to manage stress, 60% noticed relief from bodily aches, while 80% noted good overall well-being at the conclusion of the sessions. Eighty percent stated they would be willing to participate in mindfulness yoga classes if offered at the library. Another study with more participants for a longer duration would be practical to study perceived benefits.

Keywords:

Mindfulness yoga, public librarians, stress, engagement, pain, well-being
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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction to Project

I was first introduced to mindfulness during my first semester at Claremont Lincoln University and since then I have become more curious about the practice. My major is in Organizational Leadership with a concentration in Human Resources. This field has long evolved from just being an administrative support system and now encompasses many more duties, specifically as it relates to strategic management within the realm of organizations. Productivity, morale, and engagement are common buzz words in the field and more organizations are interested with increasing in increasing these factors amongst employees. Mindfulness yoga is one outlet that organizations are exploring in an attempt to increase the prevalence of productivity, morale, and engagement in the workplace. As an employee that works in the social services realm, I have experienced stress as it relates to the day to day demands of my position and accompanying this with responsibilities and obligations in my personal life has caused me to feel very overwhelmed. As ironic as it may seem, public librarians undergo a tremendous amount of stress as well. Stressors typically are derived from homeless patrons or patrons who are suffering from a mental illness of some sort. Most librarians are not equipped to handle the type of issues that arise from these circumstances. My sister, who is a public librarian, has expressed that she always feels on edge and that she just has to be prepared for anything ranging from people having sexual intercourse between the bookshelves, someone getting stabbed in a restroom, or even birds flying around the facility. Then, in many instances, patrons are looking for employment and are in need of extensive help on the computers; however, so much time cannot be designated to one person which often leaves them feeling hopeless. In sum, she feels like a clinical social worker and this feeling seems to be shared with others in the field as expressed by Amanda Oliver (2019) in the LA Times: “To work in a library
today, one has to be a social worker, a first responder, an advocate for the underserved, and a human with very thick skin.” Each day is different which typically brings about a whole set of new and unusual experiences.

Since these issues will not be solved any time soon, public librarians have to learn how to cope under these conditions. Working in social services myself I could relate to what those in the field were experiencing to a certain degree. Many days I have to step away from my desk to get a breather because serving underprivileged clients can be taxing on both the mind and body. When my employer first introduced mindfulness yoga to the workplace, I was ecstatic to participate as I had read about the numerous benefits from the practice. Although classes were only offered once a week during the summer months, I still found them to be beneficial to the overall well-being of the organization.

I personally desire to have inner peace and saw mindfulness yoga as one way to alleviate deep inner issues within myself. Connecting with who I am and whom I desire to be also served as motivation to take on this subject as well as provide a viable solution to those who may be at odds with themselves and the world. Having experienced both stress and the benefits of mindfulness yoga, I decided to formulate my Capstone project on the effects of this practice on employees working in the library field. I saw this as an opportunity to highlight the impacts of this practice on those in the field and to further solidify research findings. Considering that employees spend a significant amount of time at work, it is imperative to have an outlet to rebalance and refocus as sometimes work problems spill over into the home front and vice versa.

**Purpose and Scope**

Be it that I am a wellness ambassador for my employer, I desire to create a work culture that is based on health promotion; however, this is not always an easy task and it takes buy-in
from those in leadership positions for efforts to be sustained. Changing a work culture is difficult because an organization’s culture consists of interweaving objectives, roles, procedures, values, attitudes and assumptions (Denning, 2011). Likewise, I assert that employees also have to demonstrate a keen interest in such efforts. To be a change agent, one has to be aware of making individual change events happen while changing underlying patterns or cultures (Ulrich, Smallwood, & Sweetman, 2008). Hence, employees have to take it upon themselves to be responsible change agents as well as starting with their health. Yet, the wellness activities chosen by an organization should be challenging but achievable across a range of employees. If staff do not feel like they can do the chosen activities this may discourage them from participating.

Yoga is a low impact physical activity that can be modified for all fitness levels which is why it is ideal for people who are not yet committed to a fitness regimen or who are just starting one. Since there are many modifications for every yoga pose, it makes it a feasible activity to take up; the goal is to see how one can go by exploring limits which makes it an ideal way to get in tune with one’s body and inner self, states Dr. Nevins (as cited in AOA 2019).

Yoga is also instrumental for its mental benefits as it helps people manage stress which can manifest itself in many ways varying from back and neck pain, sleeping problems, headaches, and an inability to concentrate; thus the practice can be vital for developing coping skills and having a better outlook on life in general, according to Dr. Nevins (as cited in AOA, 2019); furthermore, incorporating meditation and breathing techniques can advance a person’s well-being (AOA, 2019).

My desire is to see employees performing their best by having a healthy mind and body which is why I encourage employees that mindfulness yoga can be a feasible outlet to manage stress and address ailments present in the body. Ultimately, I desire to influence employees’
notions of what mindfulness yoga is and encourage them to be open-minded towards the practice. By the end of the project, I hope to demonstrate that mindfulness yoga can be instrumental in enhancing one’s well-being and relieving pain in the body which can contribute to increased productivity and engagement in the workplace. Most importantly, I want to see sustained efforts throughout the workplace and view this project as a way to influence the current narrative.

**Guiding Values and Project Significance**

The fact that more unites people than what separates us was the premise for my work. Once mankind grasps the reality that we are all connected we will be empowered to move past the obstacles and roadblocks we have created towards one another. Everyone needs the sanity of a healthy mind and a healthy body in order to fulfil their dreams and purpose. Likewise, anyone who desires to engage in this practice should not feel limited because of their age, weight, race, or gender. It is an avenue to connect with self and with others, to create a community based on a shared experience.

Studies show that about one-third of working Americans suffer from stress, as noted in the 2016 American Psychological Association Work and Well-Being Survey, and this is costing U.S. Business billions of dollars (Dasa & Brendel, 2017). If employees are stressed, they will likely become unengaged and unmotivated which would result in declining morale and productivity. If employers provide opportunities to decrease stress and allow opportunities for employees to be more aware of their health choices this will create a win-win scenario for all stakeholders (Sharkey & Barrett, 2017).
Limitations

Action research projects are limited due to the fact that most people who view action research from a traditionalist view fail to engulf themselves in what they are seeking to understand and limit themselves as an expert of knowledge (McNiff, 2014). Action research denotes what it should involve—action; however, exerted energy should not only derive from the participants. Those truly interested in finding solutions to everyday problems will find ways to get involved and delve themselves into seeking out answers that surpass theory.

This project was not without its limitations as three sessions across five participants was too small of scope to make any concrete conclusions. With more participants and more sessions, the results derived would probably have more significance. Yet, this project served as a window to see if a correlation existed between the perceived benefits of yoga and actual results.

Definitions of Terms

- **Mindfulness**—what arises when one pays intentional attention in the present moment in a non-judgmental way which is the essence of awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2012).
- **Yoga**—an ancient form of health promotion that is based on physical activity, controlled breathing, as well as relaxation techniques and meditation practices to enhance mindfulness and mind-body awareness (Mohan, 2006).
- **Meditation**—an exact technique for resting the mind and acquiring a state of consciousness unlike what it is like during the waking state as it allows for a centered experience of consciousness within; hence, this state is reached when one is no longer distracted by external stimuli and the mind is no longer serving as a distraction (Rama, 2019).
- **ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response)**—can be described as a feeling of euphoric tingling and relaxation that can arouse in people when they hear certain sounds
or watch certain videos of people doing ordinary things like brushing their hair, browsing through a magazine, or even folding towels. Sometimes, there may be someone speaking in the background; in audio clips there often exists voices of people speaking positive affirmations or will contain background noise like tapping sounds, rain, or scratching (Sleep.org, 2019).

- Emotional Intelligence- the capacity of an individual to manage and control his or her emotions while being able to control the emotions of other people as well by influencing the emotions of others (The Economic Times, 2019) through their behavior or demeanor.
Chapter 2 – Introduction to Literature Review

Many employers are attracted to the benefits of mindfulness yoga because of the perceived benefits related to increasing morale and engagement, as well as increasing productivity which helps the profit line of organizations. Just as important, employers are interested in wellness activities such as mindfulness yoga to combat stress, illness, and burnout. When these variables are present for long periods of time it is likely that workers will utilize sick days for mental and physical issues.

Yet, many argue that there is not enough research to state that mindfulness practices work completely and that it should not be an inclusive answer to the problems that are inherent in the workplace. (Dasa & Brendel, 2017). Employers have to do their due diligence in other areas to increase and maintain employee satisfaction. Having fair policies and procedures, establishing a work-life balance, and creating programs for career advancement all can aide in employee satisfaction and help to buffet stress usually associated from work (Martin, 2018). It is about balance—if the workplace strives to address the major concerns that employees have then there is a good chance that all of these elements working together can create employee satisfaction while assuring that the overarching needs of the organization are met.

In spite of the antagonism some may feel towards the practice, mindfulness yoga is becoming more and more popular in the workplace, researchers are curious to dissect the impacts it has had and continues to have on those who decide to engage in it. I went into this study wanting to know if mindfulness yoga really was substantial enough to merit the implementation of it in the workplace on an ongoing basis. Since it has gained so much popularity, I desired to research the merit behind the practice and to illustrate the facts about
mindfulness yoga in more detail. As a result, I used search terms ranging from: “Mindfulness yoga and employees”, “The stress of public librarians”, “Public librarians and yoga”, What do Human Resources say about mindfulness yoga”, “The benefits of mindfulness”, and “Managers and Yoga”. Sources for this literature review were primarily extracted from peer reviewed journal articles; databases for my search included but were not limited to Ebscohost, Alt HealthWatch, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Science Direct, Advanced Placement Source, and Academic OneFile, to name a few over a time span from July 2018 through the present.

The major themes present in this literature review consist of identifying, managing, and reducing stress; the outcomes of wellness programs that included some type of mindfulness or yoga in their programming, and the perceived benefits from management and Human Resources, especially as it relates to determining whether or not more organizations should welcome the practice for overall employee.

**Literature Review and Initial Stakeholder Dialogue**

**Identifying, Managing, and Reducing Stress**

In the 17th century, Rene Descartes, who was a French philosopher and mathematician viewed the mind and body as separate parts and concluded that the two entities should be examined and treated separately; however, that notion was dismantled by Albert Einstein who also included physical, mental, emotional and spiritual parts (Asthana & Asthana, 2012). Research conducted in the late 20th century supports the theory that all parts of the human experience are connected by the mind and the body (Asthana & Asthana, 2012). Yoga likely arrived in the Western hemisphere in the 19th century but gained much popularity in the late 20th century because of the profound benefits as being used as a valuable tool for aiding in stress
management and improving overall health and wellbeing (Asthana & Asthana, 2012). Likewise, Woodyard (2011) recognizes that when yoga made its way into the Western world it served as a way to integrate the mind and body to create union and harmony and when people commit to the practice it can improve their physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual life. Both authors recognize that the body and the mind are interrelated and that yoga can serve as a way for the two to connect seamlessly.

Many professionals from a wide range of occupations agree that stress is an element that needs to be addressed and managed. While many agree that it is an issue, all have not developed a universal way to handle the pressures of it. Grawitch, Ballard, & Erb (2015) state that organizational functioning could be improved with knowing how to recognize and manage stress which should be done holistically and not just from an individual approach. Grawitch et. al (2015) also assert that health and wellness are the most robust as it relates to research findings demonstrating that wellness activities produce positive effects on employee stress and well-being whether the activity is focused on management of diseases, employee assistance programs, or health and wellness programs. Likewise, Grawitch et. al (2015) also acknowledge that mindfulness, a secondary intervention can prove to be useful in stress management; Grace (2018) also view teachers of mindfulness and yoga as second-line treatment providers. Perhaps, an over-dependency on first-line treatments such as traditional medicinal approaches have been exhausted and are leaving people to look towards other options in an attempt to break the dependence of traditional medicine or at least supplement it with a holistic approach like yoga and mindfulness. Ginn & Henry (2003) also declare that best practices for organizations are contingent on internal characteristics of an organization and the environmental factors. Furthermore, Grawitch et. al (2015) declares this position by
suggesting that organizations assess personal deficiencies present in the employee, excessive number of demands or demands that are depleting excessively, lack of person-job fit, resources being allocated ineffectively or a deficit of skills related to resource allocation, and negative outcomes as a result of chronic stress. By looking at the bigger picture, Grawitch et al (2015) assert that it is pointless to have a wellness program without tackling work stressors that can be reduced or eliminated. According to Brendel, (2017) from *Does Mindfulness Training have Benefits*, emphasizes that businesses should take a multi-faceted approach when attempting to alleviate stress which could be done by cultivating a positive work cultures with an emphasis on social connection, work-life balance, more vacation time, and managerial and executive coaching (Dasa & Brendel, 2017). Both Grawitch and Brendel focus on the need to examine the interplay between the individual and the environment.

**The Role of Management & Human Resources in Yoga and Mindfulness Practices**

Human resources have been tasked with identifying innovative ways to boost morale, employee engagement, and productivity within the workforce while satisfying the needs of the workers. This has resulted in a juggling act in which both managerial and employee demands are expected to be met. Tonkin, Malinen, Naswell, & Kutz (2018) acknowledge constant change and uncertainty in the workplace has birthed a need for resilient employees as it relates to organizational success; however, time and financial constraints are obvious concerns but insist that the benefits will outweigh the obstacles and that organizations should research and invest in cost-effective ways to develop the psychological resources which will benefit employees and the organization. Grace (2018) also recognize mental limitations on the benefits and practicality of mindfulness in a study conducted on university students, faculty, and staff. Some of the obstacles summarized in this article included identifying an
appropriate space, not grasping how to meditate, not acquiring the benefits of meditation or getting distracted, and not feeling group support or fear of being ridiculed. To combat this, group meditation sessions were encouraged by finding ways to normalize meditation through open testimonials of opinion leaders. Also, it was noted that organizations would have to be cognizant about finding places that were conducive for meditating. Kachan, Olano, Tannenbaum, Annane, Mehta, Arheart, & Lee (2017) state that 1 in 7 workers claim enhanced work engagement after utilizing a mindfulness-based approach; these individuals can be vital in bringing about awareness of the benefits of mindfulness practices within the workplace. Kachan et. al (2017) further assert that managers should include these individuals when wanting to implement Mindfulness Based interventions. Kachan et. al (2017) also stresses that barriers such as lack of funding and lack of worktime prevent equal access to different health promotion measures; combined with individual beliefs that hinder engagement in mindfulness practices serve as hindrances and should be addressed in an attempt to make the practice available for everyone. This position mirrors the findings discovered in Grace’s publication (2018).

The Outcomes of Mindfulness and Yoga Practices in the Workplace

Work is defined as an activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result (Lexico, 2019); thus, employers are concerned with the results produced by their staff. In order for employers to have a productive staff, workers need to be mentally and physically able to carry out the duties in their positions. Mindfulness is an avenue that employees could explore to enable them to fulfill their tasks efficiently. Likewise, mindfulness can increase emotional intelligence—being able to identify, comprehend, manage and reason with one’s emotions (Cherry, 2019) and consist of five components: self-awareness, self-regulation,
motivation, empathy, and social skills (Akers & Porter, 2018). Those with high emotional intelligence perform better in their tasks (Druskat, Mount & Sala, 2013) and productivity, innovation, and emotional intelligence has been linked to mindfulness (Mars, MPhil, & Oliver (2016). These findings support that emotional intelligence can be enhanced through mindfulness and is critical in the workplace which is why it is a sought-after component amongst employers. Those with high emotional intelligence know their triggers and are successful in managing them accordingly; (Forbes Coaches Council, 2018) by doing things like taking a deep breath, getting a grab of water or taking a short walk (Forbes Coaches Council, 2018), these individuals are able to control themselves and prevent problems from escalating.

Additionally, yoga has also been shown to increase mental clarity which leads to better communication, a more functioning work team, and increased productivity (Gura, 2002). In order to be productive, the body should work well. In yoga, as individuals float from various positions while practicing deep breathing this encourages the body to relax which reduces unnecessary stress while working; practicing mindfulness allows the body to break poor postural habits while reminding the body to rest from motions that may be repetitive; this alone decreases the risk of injury (Gura, 2002). Stein et. al (2014) has acknowledged that worldwide, chronic low back pain is noted as the major culprit of disability and absenteeism from the workplace (as cited in Bhata et. al, 2015) and yoga may aid in the reduction of this pain (Bhatta et. al, 2015). For individuals who are experiencing back pain, yoga can still be used as a secondary intervention method while inducing other benefits. As reported in a study conducted by Hartfiel et. al, (2012) British local government workers reported a significant reduction in back pain, stress, and heightened well-being. Another study revealed that people expectation of pain reduction from yoga does not result in actual pain reduction after one session; out of 90 participants 67%
expected to notice a difference in their pain levels but only 36 participants actually experienced less pain as indicated by a pain provocation test (Gandi-Ferrari, et. al, 2015).

However, being mindful to think in a positive way is a viable way to change the trajectory of one’s life. Accordingly, scientist Beth Darnall demonstrated that patients surveyed at weeks 2 and 4 during a post-intervention reported significant pain relief indicated by less rumination, magnification, and helplessness on a catastrophizing pain scale after one session of cognitive behavioral therapy (Armstrong 2019). Noting the relief in this study suggests consistent positive thinking of using yoga as a method for pain reduction could probably lead to actual pain reduction if practiced on a regular basis. Hence, in order to yield any significant results in an effort to create sustainability, the practice could be better assessed if practiced on a regular basis.

**Conclusion of Literature Review**

Some of my notable sources concluded that yoga could help alleviate stress felt in the mind and body (Asthana & Asthana, 2012). Tonkin et.al (2018) shared that employees will have to be resilient in the face of changing factors in their organization while Brendel (Dasa & Brendel 2017) concluded that employers should look at various ways to increase employees’ content level and that yoga cannot be a catchall solution for the problems that are evident in the workplace. Finally, (Druskat, Mount & Sala, 2013), indicated better performance in tasks, Mars et. al (2016) identified a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and mindfulness, while (Forbes Coaches Council, 2018) acknowledged that those who have high emotional intelligence are skilled at recognizing and managing their triggers while preventing or reducing problems.
Stakeholders Perspectives

Before the project got off the ground, I wanted to get feedback about the obstacles faced by librarians as well as coping techniques if any that they use. As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, librarians in the public sector are faced with daily issues that should be handled by a social worker. In the movie, Public, illustrates many of the obstacles public sector librarians have to deal with; the librarians for this study agreed that this was indeed a true illustration of the serious issues they come up against on a daily basis. Three librarians agreed that limited resources were standing in the way of homeless people getting the help they desired to move forward while others felt that those in that predicament were not doing enough to change their circumstances. One librarian’s position who happened to be a manager held the view that the role of a librarian was to provide resources and point users in the right direction in order for them to get the help they needed while another maintained that no matter what you did to help them they were comfortable being in that position.

Nonetheless, all were experiencing stress from various sources and were open to trying mindfulness yoga. Yet, some agreed that they were experiencing stress and were required to accept this as “normal” in the workplace and quite a few of the employees had gotten immune to the conditions. Some had engaged in yoga before while others hadn’t and the consensus was the same as it related to mindfulness practices.

I decided to reach out to Kimberly Snell, member of my church and certified mindfulness yoga instructor to get general feedback on what led her to mindfulness yoga as well as results within herself and others. Ms. Snell is primarily a Christian mindfulness instructor that has been instrumental in changing Christians’ perceptions on how they view yoga which further illustrates that yoga can be what it needs to be to the individual; influential leaders endorsing deviations
from the traditional uses of yoga helps to validate its use in various settings and for people of all backgrounds.

Ms. Snell indicated that personal issues centered on depression and low self-esteem caused God to lead her to yoga—depression had caused her to be suicidal and she saw yoga as a possible solution. She reported not having a desire to do simple things like eat and felt like no one cared; during the whole ordeal only one person knew that she was not her usual self. Her routine consisted of going to work, singing in the choir, going home, and crying herself to sleep. She knew she had reached her low point when she took a bottle of pain killers along with a Kahlua and cream alcoholic drink. The next morning, she was saddened by the fact that her plan did not work.

One day as she was scrolling through the internet, she saw a Groupon ad for 10 yoga sessions for $20 and for her that was confirmation that she needed to try it out. Many of her friends were opposed to the practice due to the religions associated with it that conflicted with the principles of Christianity. Her experience from the yoga sessions did not consist of chants or chimes but involved breathing techniques against sounds of nature. Shortly, thereafter she started incorporating the Lord’s prayer to herself as she moved from pose to pose. At home, she would sing Christian songs as well during her practice.

After some time, she noticed that she felt better, was more at ease, and did not have an influx of depressive and suicidal thoughts. This change in her propelled her to want to touch as many people as possible by helping people feel a bit more at peace, be calm, and acceptive of who they were and where they were in life without complaining; ultimately she wanted people’s perception to change especially regarding things that were beyond their control by finding a way of being thankful. Also, she knew that if people grabbed hold of yoga for the physical
component, their bodies would feel better which would aid in it healing itself and bring about results such as strength, flexibility, and a reduction in pain. Moreover, she desires for others to have a quality life independent of the use of prescription medications. For her, it is essential to take care of the mind and the body in order for both components to be at its optimal best.
Chapter 3-Project Goals, Measurement, and Success Indicators

The public library branch manager was receptive to holding sessions for her staff in the library and the yoga instructor that I reached out to was eager about holding the sessions as it provided her an outlet to get more exposure. The goal was to create a safe space for employees to prepare for the workday and determine if mindfulness yoga would yield positive benefits such as a decrease in bodily ailments, a calmer mind, and a heightened mood. Each participant will be given a pre-survey, a post-survey, and have a one-on-one discussion about what they noticed within themselves as well as their general feeling about the sessions itself. In addition to these tools, the manager will be given a survey designed to capture her current thoughts on productivity and engagement levels in her staff. Success would be measured if the participant indicates that they noticed things like less back pain or finding themselves in a better mood; the differences between pre-surveys and post-surveys are designed to support personal statements from each stakeholder. I purposefully did not ask the participants if they found their jobs stressful in the pre-survey because I did not want to sway the results; consequently, this was asked during the post-survey to determine the participant’s ability to manage stress in general.

Also, I will consider the input from Ms. Snell to determine what differences she noticed from class to class; however, according to her, yoga is about the person fitting the pose and not the person trying to fit it. So, even if she noticed that a student was not able to hold a particular pose that would not necessarily equate to failure. Another indicator of success would be centered of factors such as countenance and self-reported measures the students may have shared with her. However, although I was collecting quantitative and qualitative data, the yoga instructor and I both agreed that success would rest more heavily on personal testimonies as this would create a more vivid picture of the findings.
Both the librarian manager and the yoga instructor agreed to designate four (45) minute sessions to be held between 11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. since the library opened at noon to the public. There was a mix of middle-aged African-American male and female participants with the exception of one black male in his early 30’s. There were approximately five participants but that number varied depending on which sessions they attended. These librarians service the general public in an area that is being affected by gentrification which equates to serving people from diverse backgrounds ranging from race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.
Chapter 4-Results: Evidence of Change through Project Implementation

The employees met in a small room adjacent to the main library for mindfulness yoga sessions. Before we got started, participants were asked to sign off on consent forms and complete a short pre-survey to capture people’s current health habits. There were chairs made available for those who did not feel comfortable doing the sessions on the floor. The yoga instructor provided a synopsis of the benefits of mindfulness yoga and talked about things such as clearing the mind by being in control of what and how we think and feeling less stressed and fatigue. Peaceful and serene music was played in the background as she directed us from pose to pose; she was very encouraging and provided modifications based on individual needs. There were four sessions scheduled but the last one had to be canceled due to unforeseen work obligations that arose in the library. Post-survey results and testimonials were captured approximately four weeks after the last session. Below is summary of findings from each participant captured from their experience during pre and post surveys.

Summary of Findings from Pre-Surveys

Participant 1 - Library Manager, Summary from Pre-Survey Interview:

I do not get much physical exercise outside of walking around the library, I drink approximately four through six cups of water daily and am sure to get eight hours of sleep each night. Overall, I consider myself to be healthy and I am not the type of person that gets easily stressed. I meditate and pray to relax, I do adult coloring, and listen to music. While I am aware of the health benefits of yoga, I have never done any type of yoga before. While going through the sessions, I am hoping to learn more about the breathing techniques I can use in different type of situations. If my employer was to offer wellness classes I would probably join depending upon
the hours. My employees would benefit from a wellness program but I am not certain if they would actually participate; I think their participation would be sporadic to say the least.

For the most part, I am a laid-back manager and I do not believe in micro-managing; I am willing to listen to constructive feedback and be open-minded to ideas. My staff are pretty engaged and productive at work. Believe it or not, I motivate my staff members with food and I have noticed that they seem to be in a better mood on the days that I bring food into the office. Furthermore, I encourage my staff to partake in continuous learning for self-development and to stay abreast with their skills and knowledge. I do this by sending out monthly online trainings and encourage them to look at databases at least once a week (Participant One, Personal Interview, June 25, 2019)

Participant 2 – Librarian, Summary from Pre-Survey Interview:

I try to at least walk for 30-45 minutes once or twice a week; I drink approximately six cups of water daily and get five through seven hours of sleep each night. If the job offered wellness classes I would definitely sign up. To relieve stress, I watch television and make arts and crafts from unusual materials such as paper clips, nails, etc. at least twice a month. I have done yoga before and am familiar with it as well as mindfulness practices. From the sessions, I am hoping to get on a progressive trail to better health as my health could stand for improvement (Participant Two, Personal Interview, June 25, 2019)

Participant 3 – Librarian Assistant, Summary from Pre-Survey Interview:

I do get in some physical exercise about four times a week for 30-45 minutes. I do not drink much water, only about two cups a day and I only get about three to five hours of sleep per night. If there were classes offered here, I would take part in them. When I need to relieve stress I will pray, meditate, as well as exercise, go for a walk, and dance. I also like to watch ASMR
videos and enjoy watching people eating chalk; I love the sound of it and I eat chalk occasionally as well. I also like to look at YouTube for entertainment and I listen to all genres of music. After the sessions, I want to just be able to relax my mind and get the physical portion of it too with exercise (Participant Three, Personal Interview, June 20, 2019).

**Participant 4 – Librarian Assistant, Summary from Pre-Survey Interview:**

I am not very active at all. I drink about two through four cups a day and get anywhere from five to seven hours of sleep a night. I have done yoga before but not mindfulness yoga but even if my job offered any type of wellness classes I would not join. When I want to relax, I watch ASMR videos (Participant Four, Personal Interview, June 20, 2019).

**Participant 5 – Librarian Assistant, Summary from Pre-Survey Interview:**

I don’t work out that much but I do walk occasionally. I get in about two to three cups daily and get six or more hours of sleep every night. To be honest, I have been stressed these past couple of months I have never done yoga before but I would be open to joining any type of wellness class the job may offer in the future. When I need to relax, I take a nice bubble bath. I am hoping to alleviate some of my bodily aches from doing the yoga (Participant Five, Personal Interview, June 20, 2019).

**Summary of Findings from Post-Surveys**

**Participant 1 - Library Manager, Summary from Post-Survey Interview:**

I only had a chance to attend one session but I think I did learn some good breathing techniques. Since the class has ended, my stress levels have only gone up a little due to personal issues. As far as work stress is concerned, I know that the people we serve are in need of help; so, it is my job to point people in the right direction with good resources to fulfill their needs. A
bad experience in my early career pertaining to my inability to manage stress properly at that
time, influenced me to take better care of myself and to not worry about things that were beyond
my control. The class came in handy that day because I was busy running around trying to get
things together before the library opened. I faithfully do the adult coloring while listening to jazz
and I like it because it just helps me to zone out and not think about what’s going on with the
branch. It is also a good way to connect with the community as people express ideas for other
programs to be held at the branch.

In order to get more out of the class, it would have been ideal to have it an earlier time or
even on a Saturday after the library opened but I don’t know if my staff would have shown up
too much earlier to do a class. Also, I probably would choose another setting because I found it
to be distracting due to the fact that I could look out the window and see everyone walk by. I did
like the class but I found it to be hard because I was not able to maintain the poses and I
definitely saw the need for yoga pants; however, I did not want to go through the hassle of
changing clothes. I also realized how out of shape I was, which means I need to find a physical
activity to participate in on a regular basis (Participant One, Personal Interview, August 8, 2019).

Participant 2 - Library Manager, Summary from Post-Survey Interview:

I consider this job to be stressful because of the location and meeting the needs of the
clients can be challenging as well. I am still very stressed but found the class to be helpful in
teaching me how to manage stress; yet I have not done any type of mindfulness activity since we
last met. I would like to continue practicing but I just don’t have the time right now. It would
have been nice to have more classes as I found the classes to be very relaxing. From the first
class, I was able to get some relieve from bodily aches I had been experiencing. Considering that
I have done mindfulness before in corporate America I will likely find a way to incorporate yoga as well (Participant Two, Personal Interview, August 8, 2019)

**Participant 3 - Library Assistant, Summary from Post-Survey Interview:**

I have been under a lot of stress lately but I don’t find my job stressful because I like to help people and I don’t allow myself to get too caught up in what they have going on. I am stressed out but it has nothing to do with the job, if there were more classes, I think it would have helped even more. The class did teach me to manage my stress by focusing on my breath. My body did feel better after the class but next time the room shouldn’t be so cold. If more classes become available, I would participate because I know it would help me relax. I think I would be able to talk about the benefits more had there been more classes. (Participant Three, Personal Interview, August 7, 2019)

**Participant 4 - Library Assistant, Summary from Post-Survey Interview:**

Working here is not stressful to me. When it comes to doing more classes I probably would not; it’s not really my thing because I have difficulty concentrating during mindfulness activities but I did like having the time to think and calm myself. (Participant Four, Personal Interview, August 7, 2019)

**Participant 5 - Library Assistant, Summary of Findings from Post-Survey:**

Fortunately, I have not been that stressed out lately but sometimes the work can be hectic because a lot of the patrons are homeless and have mental issues. Also, the patrons get upset if they have library fines on their account, and sometimes they demand a meeting room even if it is already booked. Yet in still I just take a deep breath and explain the rules and procedures while still trying to give good customer service. I really enjoyed the sessions because it taught me how to breathe better and the music was nice and relaxing. The pain that I was experiencing did ease
up because of the sessions and from time to time, I still do some of the stretching techniques the instructor taught us. It would have been nice to have more classes and if the library offered classes I would participate (Participant Five, Personal Interview, August 8, 2019).
Table 1: Summary of Health Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Manage Stress</th>
<th>Bodily Aches</th>
<th>Overall Wellness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>No improvement</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No improvement</td>
<td>No improvement</td>
<td>No improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Summary of responses

Participants were asked if they would join a mindfulness yoga class sponsored by employer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communication of Results to Participants

During the time the post-surveys and testimonials were collected I took that time to share differences and connections captured from each participant. The yoga instructor and I had the same goal which was to make sure that it was doable for everyone, so when the participants shared that they were able to achieve the poses that was good news. In fact, Ms. Snell informed me that many of the participants informed her that their bodily pains were easing up and she noticed that they seemed to be in a good mood when she would come and teach. One person did say that the moves were difficult and this participant attributed that to individual fitness level and concluded that more physical activity was necessary in order to see a difference.

From the post surveys, 80% agreed that it helped them manage stress better, 60% noticed alleviation of bodily aches and 80% said the class contributed to their overall well-being. Almost all of the participants indicated that they would be willing to join a mindfulness yoga class if it was available through the employer.

There seemed to be an absence of actual work-related stress with 40% indicating their jobs were stressful and 60% indicating that it was not. Some of the stressors were centered on the location (inner city area being affected by gentrification), the needs of the patrons, and just a desire to make a difference. From what I could gather, the stress was derived from just wanting to see the patrons being served in their best interests, which I note as good stress. The branch manager noted that she did not find it stressful because she felt that her job was to make resources available to those who were in need help. Another participant noted that her love for helping people prevents her from becoming stress as it related to work matters. Those who did experience stress at work said they managed it by taking a deep breath and speaking calmly
while remaining professional. I inferred whether the employees were stressed or not, they all had their ways of dealing with the clients which eluded to their level of emotional intelligence.

The majority of the employees agreed that the sessions caused them to manage stress better and most agreed that they would like to continue the practice if offered at the library. Ironically, one person gave mixed results as it was noted that it was difficult to concentrate during mindfulness activities but liked having the time to think and be calm. Another person said that time was a barrier for continuing the practice at this point. As far as physical benefits, two people noticed relief from an ongoing medical condition, one person indicated that it helped her body to feel better overall and one person felt that they needed to engage in more physical activity on a consistent basis to be able to maintain the yoga poses and gain the benefits from regular physical activity.

Assessment of Goal Achieved

By the end of the sessions, it was evident that the sessions had made a positive impact on the employees. The participants were capable of identifying their triggers and acting accordingly. Furthermore, they were introduced ways to effectively manage stress through stretching, breathing exercises, and allowing the mind to focus and think on positive things. Also, most of them were also interested in taking mindfulness yoga classes if it was to be offered in their workplace.

The purpose of this initiative was to get stakeholders to think of ways to incorporate wellness into the work day. It was found that if they were given a block of time to focus on themselves at work, they would be more likely to participate. The findings of this project will be a tangible tool for management to consider regarding wellness initiatives, specifically mindfulness yoga.
Chapter 5- Final Reflections & Recommendations: Overall Project Summary

The mindfulness yoga sessions were created to capture what impact mindfulness yoga could have on employees working in a library. As expected, many did notice an increase in their ability to manage stress levels and see a reduction in bodily pain while accounting for overall well-being. However, many noted that stress was not derived from their work which eluded to the fact that many were experiencing stress outside of work. The classes proved to play a pivotal role in helping the respondents manage stress.

Surprisingly, only 40% of the participants found their jobs stressful and 60% did not. Those who were not stressed from work may have high emotional intelligence; however, those who admitted to finding job stressful were capable of managing their emotions by employing breathing tactics and doing things like speaking calmly in order to remain calm and I gathered that most of the employees were able to perform their job duties without allowing it to overtake them. One person mentioned that the situation felt stressful because of a desire to do more which was not associated with the condition of the patrons themselves. Another factor may have been their tenure in the positions with one participant working as long as 29 years in the field. I would imagine with that much experience; one begins to develop best practices to handle the demands of various situations that may arise on a daily basis.

Also, many were open to the idea of participating in mindfulness yoga classes at work depending on the set times. No one noticed any significant difference amongst each other due to the fact that everyone did not attend all of the classes together. Also, in light of the fact that the manager only attended one session it was hard to determine any changes in her employees. Everyone agreed that if there had been more sessions, more benefits would likely have been
noticed. In addition, the scope size was limited to five participants—having at least 10 or more people to participate on a regular basis with a high show rate would have been more ideal.

As mentioned in chapter one, I desire to see people live to their best potential and view mindfulness yoga as a gateway for participants to tap into this area be it that the practice is based on concepts like quieting the mind while making the body physically strong. Since the two are connected, it is essential for both components to work efficiently. In light of the fact that the employees were open to participating was encouraging. When the participants shared with me that the moves were doable, that they felt good in their bodies, and were experiencing less stress I was more than pleased with those results. I was really inspired when one person told me they engage in the practice from time to time—that demonstrated to me that I was instrumental in planting a seed. At the moment that I partook in the classes, I felt a shared sense of community in that we were all together yet one within ourselves. Likewise, I have had a chance to reflect on how I can make a difference in the workplace through simple initiatives such as this one. Consequently, it confirmed that classes of this nature should be provided in the workplace.

As far as productivity and engagement was concerned, from the manager’s perspective, the branch manager thought that with more classes these components would improve in her employees but was unsure if they would commit to anything long-term. Some ways that she currently increases workplace satisfaction is through food. She has found this to be an easy way to boost morale and productivity. In addition, she makes it a point to let all her employees know that they have worth; this is not something that I was expecting to hear but it is good to know that managers can see the value that each worker brings to the table. Moreover, she encourages her staff to partake in various programs offered at the library and through an online learning
platform. Finally, she does not believe in micromanaging which may contribute to the non-stress factors that some of the respondents mentioned.

The points that she mentioned are well received by those in the Human Resources profession. All of these elements combined can have a positive impact in the workplace; my goal was just to add a wellness piece which coincided with the system she has in place. Offering wellness classes is a complement to an organization that runs efficiently. Creating opportunities to do this practice at work can be beneficial for employees and the overall organization as it acknowledges the human factor in all of us and allows an opportunity to rejuvenate and refocus.

In fact, when the library patrons learned that employees were taking yoga classes, they were open to the idea themselves. Sometime in the near future, I would love to see staff and patrons coming together in this type of shared initiative. This is just one of many examples of how a social community can be established and this venture may prove beneficial in staff and patrons gaining a better understanding of the needs and demands each party faces.

**Recommendations for Future Projects**

In a future study, it would be ideal to test the impact of mindfulness yoga in various work settings across a longer time span with more feedback from stakeholders to include Human Resources personnel, upper management, team leads, and subordinates. One year would be ideal as a pilot study to gauge effectiveness and commitment from employees as these efforts may prove to be imperative in creating sustainability of a wellness program. Future studies would need to measure workplace productivity, engagement, and morale in a deeper way. In addition, finding a way to effectively measure emotional intelligence may be another facet to explore.
References:


Appendix A- Ethical Guidelines

Participant Information and Consent

6/28/19

**Invitation**

You are being asked to take part in a research/dialogue project. It will explore Mindfulness Yoga on employees. It is being conducted by Shantel Walters who is studying towards a degree in Organizational Leadership with a concentration in Human Resources at Claremont Lincoln University.

**What Will Happen**

Kimber Snell, a mindfulness yoga instructor will provide 45-minute yoga sessions to library employees. Employees will participate in a post and pre-survey in order to capture healthy or unhealthy habits. In addition, employees will have an opportunity to provide testimonials about how the sessions have impacted their professional/personal lives. Lastly, managers will have an opportunity to discuss the impact the sessions have had on the workplace. At the end of the sessions, the data will be analyzed and the results will be shared in a Capstone Project. Data from this project will be shredded in one year and no later than five years.
Potential Risks/Benefits

The benefits associated with this project include having an outlet to reduce stress, alleviating body aches, and clearing the mind to enhance productivity. Minimally, the risks include bodily injury; however, this is unlikely as the exercises are extremely low impact.

Time Commitment

6/28/19 (11-11:45 am)
7/5/19 (11-11:45 am)
7/12/19 (11-11:45 am)
7/19/19 (11-11:45 am)

*Additional commitment may be asked of individuals to provide further insights regarding the sessions.

Participants’ Rights/Confidentiality

I will give priority to your interests at all times. To protect your interests in my final report, I promise the following:

- Your identity will be protected at all times in my final report unless you give me specific permission to use your name.
• You are free at any time to withdraw from the research project, whereupon I will destroy all data relating to you. I will report that a participant decided to leave the project, and reflect on ways the project might have been more conducive to all participants.

Individuals must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Cost, Reimbursement, and Compensation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You will NOT receive any compensation nor will you be asked to pay fees of any kind.

Informed Consent Signature Line

By signing below, you agree that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, and (3) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

Researcher’s Name ___________________      Date____________________

Participants Name (Printed) _______________________________

Signed ____________________      Date ____________________
Photography/Video Consent:

To enhance the findings of this project video and/or photographs may be taken.

Initial by either statement:

I consent with video and/or photographs being taken. ____________

I do not consent with video and/or photographs being taken. ____________

Follow Up After Completion of the Project

☐ I would like follow-up on this project. Please email me the final report of the CAP.

☐ Do nothing. I absolve the researchers of any obligation to contact me about this project.

NOTE: If at any time you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact the Dean of Capstone Studies at Claremont Lincoln University, Dr. Stan Ward. Please contact him by email: sward@claremontlincoln.edu, or call the university: 909-667-4400.
Appendix B

Manager Pre-Survey

Do you think your employees would benefit from a mindfulness yoga program on site? Yes or No

On a scale of 1-10 how satisfied are you with the engagement level of your employees? ____

On a scale of 1-10 how satisfied are you with the productivity level from your employees? ____

What are some ways that you keep employees engaged and boost morale and productivity?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Are you open to new ideas? Yes or No
Appendix C

Employee Wellness Pre-Survey

Do you engage in any type of physical activity? Yes or No

For how long? Less than 30 min 30-45 min 45+min

How often? 1-2X per week 2-4X per week 4X per week

Have you ever participated in any form of yoga? Yes or No

Have you ever participated in mindfulness yoga? Yes or No

On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest:

How stressed have you felt within the past 3 months? __________
Within the past 6 months? __________
Within the past year? __________
This week? __________

If your employer offered wellness classes on site, how likely are you to participate? (Please circle one)

Very Likely Somewhat Likely Not at all Likely

On a scale of 1-10 how healthy do you consider yourself? __________

How much water do you drink on a daily basis? __________

1-2 cups 2-4 cups 4-6 cups 6+cups

How much sleep do you get on a regular basis?

3-5 hours 5-7 hours 8+hours

Are you familiar with the health benefits of mindfulness yoga? Yes or No

How do you relieve stress? (Circle all that apply; if your response is not listed please write in a response)
Dance, Watch TV, Eat, Pray, Sing, Journal, take a bubble bath, Meditate, Exercise

What are you hoping to gain from the mindfulness yoga sessions?
Appendix D

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS POST SURVEY

Do you consider work as a public librarian or employee to be stressful?  Yes or No

If yes, what is it about the profession that makes it stressful?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Did the mindfulness yoga classes improve your ability to manage/reduce stress?  Yes or No

Are you likely to encourage others to engage in the practice?  Yes or No

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest what has your overall stress level been since the class ended?  

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest how would you rate the effectiveness of the class in your ability to manage/reduce stress  

Have you engaged in other mindfulness activities since the last session?  Yes or No

Would you be interested in joining a mindfulness yoga class sponsored  

If yes, what impact has it had on you?
Are you likely to continue practicing? Yes or No

Why or why not?

What did you like or dislike about the sessions?

If any, what suggestions would you have made to improve the sessions?

Have you discovered anything new about yourself since the last session?

(Physically, mentally, or emotionally) If you don’t mind sharing, what have you noticed?
What have you noticed amongst staff and patrons in general who partake in the free mindfulness and yoga sessions?