

Enhancing Work Engagement of Organisational Behaviour Students: Can Yoga Help?

Anand N. Asthana

CENTRUM Católica Graduate Business School (CCGBS), Lima, Perú; Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), Lima, Perú (email aasthana@pucp.pe)

Abstract. Modern businesses rely on productivity of workers to gain competitive advantage. They focus on the management of human capital and seek to enhance work engagement of these workers. Institutions imparting training in organizational behaviour are mindful of the demands of the industry and seek to promote work engagement during their courses. In this research, the effectiveness of yoga and the mediating role of mindfulness was assessed using a Randomised Controlled Trial on students of Organizational Behaviour. It was found that yoga increased mindfulness of participants as also their work engagement significantly. Statistical analysis revealed that the increase in work engagement through mindfulness as also the direct increase in work engagement through yoga were significant. Three fourths of increase in work engagement came through mindfulness while the remaining one fourth came directly from yoga.

Keywords: work engagement, yoga, mindfulness, organisational behaviour education.

1. Introduction

Work engagement is a vital concept in the field of organizational behaviour and holds significant importance for students studying this subject. Work engagement refers to the level of enthusiasm, dedication, and involvement that individuals have towards their work. When students of organizational behaviour cultivate work engagement, they can benefit in several ways:

1. Enhanced learning and understanding: Work engagement among students of organisational behaviour leads to a deeper and more meaningful learning experience. Engaged students are enthusiastic about their studies, actively participate in class discussions, and take ownership of their learning. They demonstrate a genuine interest in understanding and applying organisational behaviour theories, models, and concepts, which helps them develop a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

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2. **Application of theoretical concepts:** Work engagement promotes the practical application of theoretical concepts learned in organisational behaviour courses. Engaged students are more motivated to connect classroom knowledge with real-world scenarios, allowing them to better analyse and solve organizational problems. They are more likely to seek out opportunities for internships, research projects, or experiential learning that enable them to apply organisational behaviour principles in practice.
3. **Development of critical thinking skills:** Work engagement fosters critical thinking skills among students of organisational behaviour. Engaged students actively question, analyse, and evaluate organizational phenomena and theories. They are more likely to challenge existing assumptions, seek alternative perspectives, and think critically about complex issues. This critical thinking ability allows them to make more informed decisions, generate innovative ideas, and contribute effectively to organizational problem-solving processes.
4. **Collaboration and teamwork:** Work engagement plays a crucial role in promoting collaboration and teamwork among students. Engaged students are more willing to contribute their ideas, actively participate in group projects, and effectively collaborate with their peers. They bring a positive and enthusiastic attitude to team discussions, fostering a supportive and productive team environment. This collaborative experience mirrors real-world organizational dynamics, where teamwork and collaboration are essential for achieving organizational goals.
5. **Motivation and Achievement:** Work engagement among students of Organisational Behaviour leads to increased motivation and academic achievement. Engaged students have a genuine interest in the subject matter, are more likely to set challenging goals, and exhibit a strong desire to excel academically. Their enthusiasm drives them to invest time and effort in their studies, resulting in higher levels of achievement and academic success.
6. **Personal and Professional Development:** Work engagement contributes to the personal and professional development of students studying Organisational Behaviour. Engaged students actively seek opportunities for self-improvement, such as attending seminars, networking events, or industry conferences. They are more likely to engage in extracurricular activities, join student organizations, or

pursue leadership roles, which enhance their interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, and overall employability.

7. Preparation for the Workplace: Work engagement among students of Organisational Behaviour prepares them for the realities of the workplace. Engaged students develop a strong work ethic, effective time management skills, and the ability to handle multiple responsibilities. They understand the importance of collaboration, adaptability, and continuous learning. These skills are which are critical for success in modern organizational settings (Bratton et al., 2022).
8. Future Career Prospects: Modern organisations are focussing on effective deployment of human capital (Algorta & Zeballos 2011; Boon *et al.* 2018). In these organisations, the physical capital is usually small as compared to the human capital. They need people who are able and willing to invest in their jobs psychologically by being proactive, taking initiative, collaborating well, assuming control over their professional development and committing to high standards of performance. Students need to be trained to fulfil such roles (Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry 2014). Work engagement in organisational behaviour studies can positively impact future career prospects. Engaged students develop a strong foundation of knowledge and skills that are highly valued by employers. They are better equipped to understand and navigate organizational dynamics, adapt to changing workplace environments, and contribute effectively to organisational success. This can enhance their employability and open up a wider range of career opportunities.

This research seeks to explore relationship between yoga practice and work engagement of participants in organisational behaviour courses in Albania through a non-clinical randomised control trial.

2. Defining Work Engagement

Work engagement is a recently emerged psychological concept. Though the first scholarly article on the subject came out in 1990 in the prestigious *Academy of Management Journal* (Kahn 1990), it took another decade for the topic to be picked up by others in the academia. The positive psychology movement emerged in 1998 under the leadership of Martin Seligman, the then President of the American Psychological Association (Tal 2007). Increased scientific interest in positive psychological states created an environment that made work engagement research blossom in the academia.

Like many other psychological terms, “work engagement is easy to recognise in practice yet difficult to define” (Schaufeli 2013, p. 15). It is becoming “increasingly clear that even within many organisations with a stated engagement policy, often there is no agreed definition of the term” (Shaw 2005, p. 26). The exact definition in the academic papers appears to be conjured to suit the needs of that study and not a concrete term that has observable characteristics (Welbourne & Schlachter 2014). Even with the best science and most reliable research technique, it is challenging to synthesise results since study after study uses varied definitions of employee engagement.

Recognising work engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind” Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) consider vigour, dedication, and absorption as the components of work engagement (p. 74). Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and resilience, the willingness to put forth effort in one's work, a resistance to readily becoming tired, and tenacity in the face of challenges. A deep commitment to one's work, accompanied by emotions of fervour and significance, as well as pride and inspiration, is referred to as dedication. A happy condition of total immersion in one's work, characterised by time passing swiftly and an inability to disengage from the work, is referred to as absorption. Another three-dimensional concept of engagement (May *et al.* 2004) is based on a physical component (for example, “I exert a lot of energy performing my job”), an emotional component (for example, “I really put my heart into my job”), and a cognitive component (for example, “Performing my job is so absorbing that I forget about everything else”). It is not difficult to see that these components correspond with vigour, dedication, and absorption, respectively.

3. What Is Yoga?

Yoga is an ancient practice whose history extends back thousands of years. According to UK National Health Service, “the practice originated in India about 5,000 years ago and has been adapted in other countries in a variety of ways” (NHS 2021). The two sources that are studied most by modern scholars are the ancient Indian book *Bhagawad Gita* and the *Yoga Sutras* (Goldberg 2016). *Gita*, believed to have been composed in the second half of the first millennium BC, has been translated from Sanskrit to several languages during the last four centuries and has been a popular text among commentators from various philosophical traditions over centuries (Vivekananda 1896).

Sometime between third century BC and sixth century AD, sage Patanjali compiled the *Yoga Sutras* - a tightly ordered series of aphorisms that was so remarkable and comprehensive for its time that it is often referred to as the classical yoga. The eight limbs of yoga in the *Yoga Sutra* are:

- Yama (Selfless values) Non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, self-restraint and greedlessness.