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**THE IMPACT OF A MINDFULNESS
PRACTICE ON THE EFFECTS OF
EMOTIONAL LABOR**

A Research Project
Presented to the Faculty of
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management
Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
In
Organization Development

By
Lauren Dainko
August 2022

This research project, completed by

LAUREN DAINKO

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

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Faculty Committee

Committee Chair, Darren Good

Committee Member, Terri Egan

Deborah Crowne, Dean
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management

Abstract

This study takes an explorative look at how a daily mindfulness practice influences customer service professionals. Specifically narrowing in on the ways a mindfulness practice impacts the customer service professional's experiences with emotional labor, and the efforts it takes to manage and regulate their emotional state throughout their workday. This study examines the history of both emotional labor and mindfulness, their impacts on those who engage with them, and their influence over each other.

The qualitative data used to support the research findings was gathered from two rounds of interviews from seven individuals, all of who work in customer service roles and engage directly with customers on a daily basis as the main function of their job. Interviews were conversational, using open ended questions allowing for storytelling, probing, and sharing in depth experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Once gathered, the data was analyzed and the common themes were recorded. Direct quotes from the data were presented alongside the key themes in order to highlight the common experiences of the participants.

The study concludes with a summarization of the research findings and confirms that for those working in a customer service position, the addition of a daily mindfulness practice has a direct influence over how they respond to customers, and how they manage their own emotions.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Disney World is popularly known as the “happiest place on earth.” People from all over the world travel to Disney's theme parks to partake in the magical experience: visiting Cinderella’s Castle, meeting childhood icons, and taking pictures with their favorite animated mouse. The workers at these parks play a key role in making a trip to a Disney Park an unforgettable experience and are trained to do so from day one. All new employees attend “Disney University,” where they are taught to preserve the magic no matter what (Presser, 2021). In fact, the first thing that employees learn during orientation is to maintain a friendly smile, which they are required to wear at all times—both with guests and amongst peers (Reyers & Matusitz, 2012). Employees who dress up as Disney cast members must always maintain the essence of their character regardless of what happens around them: “Miss Poppins has to stay Chim-Chim-cheery despite missing breaks” (para. 8), moreover, if an employee ever feels unsafe or experiences distress, they are taught to cross their arms as a signal for help which is the only instance when this posture is allowed (Presser, 2021).

The need to maintain and express positive emotions at all times is not exclusive to Disney employees: In many professions, workers are required to act in a similar fashion, that is, display specific demeanors or emotions when interacting with others. This act of managing emotions for a wage is known as emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). Sociologist Arlie Hochschild was the first to bring awareness to the impact of regulating emotions at work. Her greatest concern pertained to the commercialization of feelings: Hochschild argued that feelings were bought and sold in certain career paths, sometimes with dire consequences. She focused on workers in the airline industry, studying the training of flight attendants and the techniques they were taught for managing their emotions. “If they could have turned every one of us into sweet quiet

Southern belles with velvet voices like Rosalyn Carter, this is what they would want to stamp out on an assembly line” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 89). Employees were being trained to play a role and to stick to their script regardless of what was happening around them.

Researchers, scientists, and doctors have all established that a number of detrimental impacts are related to, and even caused by, the emotional stress this form of labor creates. Some of these ailments include burnout, emotional exhaustion, and—in more serious cases—cancer (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1989, 1998a; Pennebaker, 1990; Steptoe, 1993). The more negative emotions one needs to regulate on a daily basis, the greater the risk of these health concerns. Thus, the need to understand how to effectively manage emotions at work is growing in importance.

The practice of mindfulness allows one to recognize what is happening outside of and within one's self, and develop the ability to separate the self (ego, self-esteem, and self-concept) from current events, emotions, and experiences (Glomb, Duffy, Bono & Yang, 2011). In this regard, there is the potential that a mindfulness practice can have the ability to influence the potential negative impact of emotional labor. As the practitioner becomes more aware of the self and the triggers of their emotional responses their ability to garner control and awareness may grow. There is an opportunity to study the impact mindfulness has on the effects of emotional labor, especially considering that the idea of mindfulness in the workplace has been growing in popularity across many fields.

Research Objective

In light of the growing interest in mindfulness at work, the purpose of this study is to take an explorative look at the ways in which mindfulness can influence the impact of emotional labor. To this end, by focusing on a small group of workers in the service industry, who are required to interact with the public and engage in emotional labor with each contact they make,

and having them apply a week-long mindfulness practice the principal research will identify any changes on the impact of emotional labor throughout that time.

Implications of This Research

With the expectations placed on the emotions workers in the service industry are expected to display, there is an advantage in understanding the power mindfulness can have over an individual and the potential that mindfulness practices may have in how individuals experience the cost of emotional labor. Through understanding what is stirred up within oneself during an emotionally charged experience, an employee can supposedly consciously recognize their true feelings. The benefit of this research is that it can provide a better understanding of the implications a mindfulness practice can have on the overall impact of emotional labor.

Report Overview

Chapter 2 reviews the history of emotional labor and explores prior research done to understand the involved regulatory processes, the benefits of such labor, and the risks it poses. It also examines the history of mindfulness, how it is defined today, its introduction into the workplace, and the benefits and disadvantages of adopting mindfulness in a work environment. Chapter 3 outlines the research methods and data collection procedures, participant criteria, and describes the data analysis approach. Chapter 4 highlights the study findings, and Chapter 5 provides a conclusive analysis of the research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Emotional Labor

Displayed emotions take on a critical role in industries where employees are expected to act a certain way in order to effectively perform their job. This form of labor, where workers are required by their employers to display specific emotions, is defined as *emotional labor* (Rathi, 2014). Simply put, it is the act of managing one's emotions for a wage (Hochschild, 1983). This form of labor is often visible in many different industries. For instance, while those in retail sales are expected to act cheerful and friendly, those who work at funeral homes are required to exhibit a somber and reserved demeanor, whereas nurses tend to display emotions of support and empathy (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Three major studies—Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), Hochschild (1983), and Morris and Feldman (1996)—have shaped how *emotional labor* is defined, and form the foundation for most contemporary research conducted on this topic.

Defining Emotional Labor

Hochschild's Definition

The term emotional labor was coined in 1983 by sociologist Arlie Hochschild in her book *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Feeling*. She defines the concept as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (p. 7). Studying flight attendants and their interactions with passengers, she renders a stage where the passengers constitute the audience and the employees take on the role of the actors, putting on a performance to engage and delight their audience. According to Hochschild (1983), for emotional labor to exist, the workplace must comprise three components: (1) face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact; (2) requirement of the worker to produce an emotional state in the

customer; and (3) ability of the employer, through training and supervision, to exercise some control over the emotional state of their employees. Hochschild determines that an employee handles emotional regulation at work in two different ways: through deep acting, whereby one consciously modifies their feelings to express the desired emotion (Grandey, 2000), and through surface acting, whereby one feigns the required emotional response. One of the major tenets of Hochschild's (1983) study is that managing emotions at work requires a significant amount of effort and when an organization exerts control over its workers' emotions, a myriad of ripple effects can occur from the emotional strain (Grandey, 2000).

Ashforth and Humphrey's Definition

Blake Ashforth and Ronald Humphrey (1993) define emotional labor as the act of expressing socially desired emotions during service transactions. Their definition emphasizes observable behaviors rather than the personal management of feelings (Grandey, 2000). The authors believe that it is an employee's behavior toward, or compliance with, the display rules which is directly observed by the public that affects them and thus can conform to the current societal display rules without having to manage their feelings. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) further describe surface and deep acting as ways of managing one's observable emotions, similar to Hochschild's definition. However, they also include a third way of managing emotions at work: expressing genuinely felt emotions generated through interactions with customers. Focusing their study on observable behaviors, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) conclude that emotional labor can lead to a positive outcome for employees. When an employee is able to generate the desired outcome from a customer interaction they can experience increased feelings of self-efficacy and improved task effectiveness, provided that the clients interpret the emotions displayed towards them as sincere.

This definition differs from that of Hochschild's, as its focus is on observable behaviors

rather than on displayed emotions. It further emphasizes the impact of emotional labor on task effectiveness, instead of on the individual and their well-being (Grandey, 2000). Moreover, the definition also introduces the expression of spontaneous and genuinely felt emotions, in addition to deep and surface acting, as a way to manage emotions.

Morris and Feldman's Definition

In their 1996 study, J. Andrew Morris and Daniel C. Feldman focused on the dimensions of emotional labor, defining it as “the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions” (p. 987). This definition uses an interactionist model of emotion, where emotions are understood based on the understanding of the social environment. According to Morris and Feldman (1996), emotional labor consists of four dimensions: (1) frequency of appropriate emotional display; (2) attentiveness to display rules; (3) variety of emotions required; and (4) emotional dissonance generated as the result of having to express organizationally desired emotions over genuinely felt ones. The frequency at which one has to display the desired emotions, the intensity and duration of the emotional exchange, and how much one must fluctuate their emotional response determine the level of planning, control, and labor required. For example, a secretary who must be friendly with clients, express irritation at late vendors, and show encouragement and support toward their bosses has to regulate and change their demeanor more often than must a greeter at a shopping mall, therefore making more laborious efforts in managing their emotions. Morris and Feldman's (1996) definition is similar to Hochschild's (1983) and Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) in that surface and deep acting are again described as ways of managing emotions. Additionally, the authors also cite exhaustion and dissatisfaction with one's job as major side effects brought on by emotional labor.

The above three studies have been staple resources for studies on emotional labor conducted over almost 40 years and lie at the basis of most recent works, having helped shape the current definition of emotional labor today. For the purpose of this research, emotional labor is defined as the process of managing emotions during, and as a result of, interactions with customers or clients. Thus, this study focuses on professionals working within the service industry, how they manage their emotions throughout the workday, and the emotional impacts of customer interactions.

Emotional Management Strategies

As previously stated, employees manage emotions at work through either surface acting or deep acting. The former refers to the act of simulating emotions not genuinely felt, through a thoughtful presentation of verbal and nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). In an interview with Dr. Hochschild (1983: 107), a flight attendant describes managing emotions using surface acting: “I have learned not to allow my face to mirror my alarm or my fright.... I feel we could get them to believe.” Regardless of her genuine feelings, she expresses calmness in order to put her passengers at ease, thus positively utilizing surface acting. Because this strategy can involve expressing disingenuous emotions, if an individual is unable to believably express the desired demeanor, others may perceive them as showing a lack of interest in the customer experience and may question whether or not the worker is truly motivated to satisfy the needs of their clients (Groth, Hennig Thureau, & Walsh, 2009). When engaged in surface acting, where negative emotions are being suppressed, a sense of feeling fake and hypocritical can occur due to the masking of one’s true emotional state (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). The employee's lack of control over their own emotions can lead to job dissatisfaction, burnout, and even an exit from the industry (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). There are, however, differences in feelings

depending on one's role and the demeanors one is required or expected to express. In service roles, most distress arises from a battle of control between the customer and the employee (Rafaeli, 1989), however, those in roles of power such as cashiers (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988), bill collectors (Sutton, 1991), and police detectives (Stenross & Kleinman, 1989) have reported feeling pride in manipulating their emotions as these roles use emotions to gain control over an interaction (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987).

In the second strategy of emotional management, deep acting, one assumes the desired emotional state and attempts to actually feel the emotions required for a particular situation (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). When engaging in deep acting, an individual feels the emotions they want to display or modifies their current emotional state to match the desired emotion (Grandey, 2000). Hochschild (1983: 38-42) discusses two ways in which one can adopt deep acting: (a) exhorting one's feelings, whereby one attempts to evoke or suppress emotions or feelings and (b) training one's imagination, whereby one invokes thoughts, images, and memories to create the desired emotion.

In an interview with Hochschild (1983: 55), a flight attendant describes how she would handle situations where she would need to attempt to reshape negative feelings: "I may just talk to myself: 'Watch it. Don't let him get to you. Don't let him get to you.... After a while, the anger goes away.'" The use of this form of emotional management can positively influence an exchange between an employee and whomever they are engaging with, as the employee would be authentically portraying and feeling the desired emotions. It can, however, impair one's authentic self (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). According to Ashforth (1989), deep acting can lead to self-alienation, that is, losing touch with one's authentic self, through inducing an inability to recognize genuine emotion.

While surface acting concerns one's outward behavior, deep acting focuses on one's

inward emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1989). The adoption of these emotional labor strategies depends on various situational and personal factors, as different people have distinct abilities to effectively manage their emotional range (Rathi, 2014). Since some interactions can be highly emotional and taxing for some, they can also be highly demanding mentally and physically too. The use of either emotional management strategy requires the need to read situational cues. In this regard, research shows that those with high emotional intelligence tend to utilize deep acting over surface acting and by doing so are better able to understand, regulate, and express their own emotions (Lee & Ok, 2014; Grandey, 2000; and Rathi, 2014).

Impacts of Emotional Labor

Regulating emotions at work can lead to stress, job tension, dissatisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. Burnout is one of the most common stress-induced effects of emotional labor (Grandey, 2000). Hochschild (1983) describes burnout as emotional numbness that creates an inability to depersonalize work experiences, which can ultimately lead to suffering. Burnout typically starts to arise when one becomes emotionally involved in a customer interaction to an excessive level and is unable to replenish their emotions (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986). When such situations become a frequent occurrence, an employee must continually regulate their responses, and they may consequently start to experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced feelings of accomplishment (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). These feelings can lead to emotional numbness. Depersonalizing or objectifying customers in order to cope with the strain can lead to negative feelings about oneself, and their work, to the point where they start to diminish their own sense of accomplishment (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

The internal management of both emotions and stress is connected to one's physiological state of arousal involving the endocrine system (release of hormones) and the autonomic

nervous system (increased heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, skin conductance). In a state of arousal, including emotional distress, the body directs all its resources toward the current crisis facing it (Grandey, 2000). This means that the energy required for other tasks, such as focusing on the immune system, is otherwise engaged, which can lead to health issues such as high blood pressure, cancer, and heart disease (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1989, 1998a; Pennebaker, 1990; Steptoe, 1993).

Emotional labor, however, does not always have to have harmful results. Only when the frequency of negative events is high is there a need for greater emotional regulation, causing an increase in stress (Grandey, 2000). Otherwise, "by learning to read situational cues emotional labor may help employees psychologically distance themselves from unpleasant situations" (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 1001). Further, by aiding in the fulfillment of social expectations, emotional labor can increase the predictability of interactions, thus helping employees avoid embarrassing interpersonal exchanges (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Given the repetitive nature of many service encounters, where employees constantly use the same scripts when engaging with customers, one may develop a routine for managing emotions and thus reduce effort (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

When one's fight-or-flight response is activated, they are generally able to react based on their personal desires; however, at work, the response may need to be altered or suppressed, causing the estrangement of one's true response or authentic self. Emotional display rules are greater for those in service roles than for those in non-service roles, and the expectations of service vary based on the environment (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Zerbe & Falkenberg, 1989). For instance, high-end establishments face greater service expectations than fast-food restaurants. Further, those in positions of authority take control over their interactions with the public, such as police interrogators or bill collectors. While they may still have to shape their

emotions to appropriately react to a situation, their emotional modification is involuntary and far less laborious (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991). For example, Rutter and Fielding (1988) found that prison officers' need to suppress emotions in the workplace had a positive association with their overall stress, but it was also negatively linked to their overall job satisfaction. Thus, one can fairly conclude that those in positions of control feel less stress when having to regulate their emotional response than those whose positions lack that sense of dominance.

Factors

Emotions mirror one's central, salient, and valued identity. They most often are involuntarily expressed, lag behind situational cues, and are subject to environmental stressors, mood, fatigue, and other conditional factors (Thoits, 1990). Some factors that may influence how an individual copes with emotional labor include their gender, emotional awareness or intelligence, and their environment.

Gender

Gender differences have been shown to play a role in how an individual handles the impacts of emotional labor. Many researchers have noted that most service roles are performed by women, and therefore the data pool is heavily skewed toward female responses. In a 2009 study focused on gender differences in emotional management, using a sample of both male and female physicians. Lovell, Lee, and Brotheridge (2009) discovered that the women followed the pattern of displaying positive emotions and suppressing negative ones more often than did the men. The authors further found that due to gender role norms and expectations to attend to the emotional needs of others, the women showed greater rates of burnout than the men. Moreover, according to Kruml and Geddes (1998), women are also more likely to report experiencing emotional dissonance, and are more likely to feel the need to hide the negative

emotions felt whereas men are more prone to hide negative emotions due to normative display rules placed upon them (Bear, Weingart, & Todorova, 2012).

More recent studies, however, have shown varying results when it comes to the impact of emotional labor based on gender. Several studies focusing on teachers found that males exhibit higher levels of deep and surface acting than their female counterparts (Ceylan, 2017; Kadan & Aral, 2018, Yakar, 2015), whereas Baş (2012) concluded that female educators exhibited higher levels of emotional management than their male peers. In contrast, there has been research to show that gender does not generate significant differences based on gender in the performance of emotional labor (Chen, 2011).

Emotional Intelligence

The amount of effort taken to manage emotions at work can vary depending on the situation, frequency, and emotional intelligence of the concerned individual. Emotional intelligence is the ability to “recognize and understand emotions in yourself and in others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships” (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 17). It plays a key role in the process of emotional management, as it involves not just recognizing, but also understanding the range of emotions brought up within oneself and in others. Emotional intelligence requires the mental capabilities of understanding, identifying, managing, and using specific emotions, as well as unifying psychological processes for examination (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

The idea of emotional intelligence originated from the concept of “social intelligence” introduced by Edward L. Thorndike (1920). Subsequently, Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined emotional intelligence utilizing four dimensions, the first being assessment and expression of emotions within the self—the ability to recognize, perceive, and express truly felt emotions. The second dimension is appraisal and recognition of emotions in others. Within this dimension, one

is able to “easily sense and acknowledge the affective state in others and know what emotional display is appropriate” (Lee & Ok, 2014, p.179). The third dimension involves the ability to regulate emotions within the self. In this case, an individual has a decent amount of control over their emotions and temper and can also modify their emotional state and responses to others (Rathi, 2014; Lee & Ok, 2014). Finally, the fourth dimension involves the ability to use emotions to facilitate personal performance (Rathi, 2014).

Studies that have explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and the impact of emotional labor have determined that those with high levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to engage in deep acting, which has been associated with greater positive outcomes than surface acting (Rathi, 2014; Grandey, 2003). “As a physical laborer needs physical fitness to engage in physical labor, service employees need emotional intelligence to perform their jobs” (Lee & Ok, 2014, p. 179). There is some debate on whether emotional intelligence is a learned trait, part of one's inherent personality, or a combination of the two.

Organizational Factors

Environment is an important factor in understanding emotional management. The dimensions of emotional labor that Morris and Feldman (1996) introduced—frequency, level of attentiveness, intensity, and variety of emotions—all influence the emotional response required of the organization and the role. Since clients are more likely to continue doing business with organizations where they have had a positive experience, the consequence is that the more a position requires socially appropriate emotional displays, the greater the demand for these regulated emotions (Wharton & Erikson, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Further, the more welcoming an environment is, the more often an employee may have to engage with others, thus requiring more emotional stamina.

The duration of interactions also influences the amount of labor spent during customer or client interactions. Short exchanges, such as in convenience stores, usually follow a script and thus require minimal effort (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). By contrast, longer client interactions are associated with higher levels of burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). The longer an emotional display goes on, the more likely it is to become less scripted, thus requiring more attention (Hochschild, 1983). During such prolonged interactions, more information about the concerned customer or client may be learned, which could pose a larger challenge for employees in hiding their true emotions and potentially lead them to violate occupational norms (Smith, 1992).

The variety of emotional displays is another factor influencing emotional labor. The greater the variety of emotional responses, the greater will be the emotional effort required (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Positive emotional displays are used to create bonds and pleasant experiences between employees and customers; emotional neutrality is typically used to convey dispassionate authority and status; and in negative displays, anger and hostility are channeled to intimidate or subdue another (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Some roles require the use of just one or two of these types of displays; for instance, bouncers show neutral or negative emotions, while salespeople display positive ones. However, there are also other roles where all three types of emotional displays must be emphasized simultaneously. For example, a teacher may have to rapidly transition from one emotional response to the next, showing positivity for enthusiasm, negative emotions for discipline, and neutrality to maintain professionalism (Morris & Feldman, 1996). The amount of labor expended on emotional regulation depends on several factors, which should all be considered when examining the impacts of emotional labor.

Mindfulness

Rooted in Eastern spiritual traditions, particularly Buddhism, mindfulness is believed to extend back over two millennia (Brown Ryan, & Creswell, 2007; Dane, 2011; Hulsheger,

Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013). Translated from the Buddhist word “sati”—meaning “intentness of mind,” “wakefulness of mind,” and “lucidity of mind” (Davids & Stede, 1959, p. 672; Glomb, Duffy, Bono, and Yang, 2011)—mindfulness refers to a state of being wherein one brings their attention to the here and now. In this state of consciousness, one observes the present moment without judgment, evaluation, or assigning meaning (Glomb, et al., 2011).

A few key characteristics are common across the myriad definitions that have been assigned to the term (Brown et al., 2007). First, mindfulness involves receptive awareness and the registration of events both internally (feelings, thoughts, behaviors) and externally. Second, processing in a mindful state is pre-conceptual, where one simply notices what is happening without reacting to it. Third, mindfulness is a present-oriented state of consciousness where one focuses on moment-to-moment experiences without dwelling on the past or thinking about the future. Finally, it is an inherent human ability that can vary in strength depending on situations and persons.

Impact of Mindfulness-Based Practices

Many benefits have been associated with mindfulness-based practices, including a decrease in blood pressure, higher melatonin levels (an indicator of immune function), decreased sensitivity to painful stimuli and overall unpleasantness, and decreased mental health complaints (Glomb et al., 2011). Further, mindfulness has also been linked to reduced symptoms of mental, psychological, and psychiatric conditions such as anxiety, depression, and psychological distress (Glomb et al., 2011). Mindful meditators have been found to be less distracted by outside interferences (Tang, Ma, Wang, Fan, Feng, Lu, Yu, Sui, Rothbart, Fan, & Posner, 2007), even when such distractions are emotional in nature (Good, Lyddy, Glomb, Bono, Brown, Duffy, & Lazar, 2015; Allen & Kiburz, 2012).

The brain is also impacted by mindful meditation practices. The electrical signals in the

brain show an increase in alpha (a marker of relaxation and decreased amounts of anxiety), theta (reduced trait and state anxiety), and gamma (an indicator of affect regulation) activity in both long-term and novice meditators (Glomb, et al., 2011). These changes are due to the amount of heightened awareness that comes from a mindful practice, as do positive mental experiences, attentional effect, and psychological regulation (Glomb et al, 2011). Mindfulness is also associated with enhanced attentional awareness, control of attention, and attentional efficiency (Good et al., 2015).

Psychologists and medical practitioners have turned to the use of mindfulness-based techniques in therapeutic work, considering the benefits of stress reduction, heightened awareness, and attention (Glomb et al., 2011): "...mindful individuals appear to be less reactive to negative events and recover from negative emotions more quickly, that may influence collective moods and reduce emotional contagion" (Good et al., 2015, p. 14). Mindfulness practices have also been found to influence a decrease in rumination—the phenomenon of being “trapped” in a series of negative and unproductive thoughts—and help practitioners become better able to cope with stressful events (Glomb et al, 2011).

Mindfulness at Work

The many personal benefits of a mindfulness-based practice have led to growing support for bringing mindfulness into the workplace. In fact, Fortune 500 companies have begun to offer mindfulness training to their employees (Glomb et al., 2011), and such training is also popular in leadership development across the world. The use of mindfulness in the workplace has been found to have a positive correlation with task performance (Lyddy, Good, Thompson, & Stephens, 2021) and has been linked to reduced levels of employee burnout (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013). Further, mindful practices can also help promote healthy ways of relating to others in the workplace (Giluk, 2010), enabling employees to

develop new perspectives and reduce reactionary responses (Glomb et al., 2011).

When it comes to managing emotions at work, mindful employees are less likely to engage in surface acting (Lyddy et al., 2021), as mindfulness disrupts the automaticity of responses or ingrained routines that one may adopt mindlessly, through disengaging automatic thought patterns driven by emotions and schemas from past experiences (Siegel, 2007). By reducing habitual responses and bringing awareness to the current experience, mindfulness can further help one connect with their basic values and needs and cultivate self-determined behavior (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006). It is important to note, however, that when an individual uses surface acting as a way to manage emotions there is a possible dark side to mindfulness. As a person becomes more mindful or aware of their disingenuous responses and emotions, they are more likely to report a lack of self-control (Lyddy et al., 2021). Having a deeper awareness of managed emotions can cause one to have a negative response to a mindful awareness of the self.

Mindfulness and Emotions

Mindfulness can help one exert control over emotions through awareness and attention. Emotions are natural reactions, and mindfulness has the power to shape these reactions by changing how they are assessed, thus altering the lifecycle of an emotional response (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010; Wadlinger & Isaacowitz, 2011; Desbordes & Miller, 2014; Good et al., 2015). When one is able to acknowledge and assess the feelings rising within, one can better understand the source of these feelings and detach themselves from any emotional response that is generated. Mindfulness can also influence one's emotional tone, or the overall positivity or negativity of emotions (Good et al., 2015). By being mindful of the emotions arousing within themselves, an individual can exert greater control over the feelings that may negatively trigger them.

Through building one's capacity to process negative emotions within the self and in others (Tipsord, 2009; Glomb et al., 2011), mindfulness opens up one's ability to empathize with others. Empathy, or the act of interpreting life from another's point of view, allows an individual to understand and connect with different perspectives and have compassion for others (Cozolino, 2006; Glomb et al., 2011). In a mindfulness study conducted by Glomb et al. (2011), a participant noted that they mindfully changed their behavior when experiencing another in distress, steering away from judgment and reacting with kindness and compassion. Because mindfulness can help reduce negative emotions and generate positive ones, the participant was able to change their mental stance from agitation to acceptance.

Brain function is directly linked to how mindfulness evokes feelings of empathy towards others. When an individual is mindful of their current state, the brain circuits responsible for emotional regulation are activated (Davidson, 2000; Siegel, 2007; Glomb et al., 2011). In this state, the limbic system sends signals to the brain, allowing one to feel and understand the experiences and emotions of others (Glomb et al., 2011). Through the activation of the brain, mindfulness opens one's ability to create a deeper connection with others, and opens the capacity to identify with another.

Conclusion

Many professions require the use of emotional labor or the management of emotions at work. When negative emotions are routinely suppressed, they can create an undercurrent of unfavorable issues from emotional distress to burnout and health concerns. When required to control their emotions at work, most employees either suppress their genuine emotions (surface acting) or invoke and actually feel the desired emotions (deep acting). The impact of continually suppressing or reshaping emotions varies based on one's role, gender, consistency in managing negatively charged feelings, and level of emotional intelligence.

There has been growing support for bringing mindfulness into the workplace, and many organizations have used it as a way of training their leadership teams. Mindfulness allows one to be present in the here and now and not be consumed by past events or future worries. It also allows mindfulness practitioners to be more attentive to the task at hand, process their emotions, and develop a greater capacity for understanding others' perspectives. Considering the growing interest in bringing mindfulness into the workplace, a mindfulness-based practice has the potential to influence the effects of emotional labor. Thus, this study will examine the impact of a mindfulness practice on the effects of emotional labor for those working in the customer service industry.

Chapter 3

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research approach, as the impact of a mindfulness practice, as well as the effects of emotional labor, differ for each individual. Moreover, feelings, experiences, and reactions to external stimuli are all subjective. A qualitative study allows the interview format to be open, thus enabling participants to share their experiences, definitions, and reactions to their emotional management process in an in-depth conversational manner.

1. Sample

The participants were selected from several customer-centered organizations within the author's network of contacts and were required to meet several specific qualifications before being asked to join this study.

- A. The sample consisted of seven customer service professionals, of which six were female and one was non-binary, ranging from 22–52 years old, with an average age of 32 years.
- B. All the participants worked in an environment where the customers expected an exceptional level of service, where the employees were attentive to all needs and provided personalized assistance to each customer.
- C. The participants worked an average of 34 hours per week in a customer-facing role, had worked in customer service for at least one year, with an average of 10 years of experience, and were without a daily mindfulness practice

2. Procedure

The research consisted of a three-phase data collection process: baseline interview, intervention, and follow-up interview. The baseline phase involved an hour-

long, semi-structured interview during which the participants were asked a series of questions to gain an understanding of the personal and professional impact emotional labor has had on them. The participants were provided with the definitions of two key terms during the baseline phase.

1. *Emotional labor*: The process of managing emotions during, and as a result of, interactions with customers.
2. *Mindfulness*: A state of consciousness in which one is focused on the here and now, observing the present moment without judging, evaluating, or giving meaning to what is currently happening.

The interviews were conversational. This structure enabled the participants to share their stories, answer questions about personal experiences with emotional labor found in Appendix A, and allowed for further probing and clarification.

During the intervention phase, the participants were instructed to download the Headspace application and engage in a mindfulness meditation at the start of each morning throughout the week-long study. Throughout the week, the participants were asked to reflect on anything they observed about themselves, including shifts in perspective, best practices utilized, and emotions experienced following the workday and into the evening.

Directly after the intervention phase, the participants once again met with the principle researcher for a follow-up hour-long interview. During this phase, the same questions were asked as before, in the same manner as the baseline interviews, to ascertain any changes in the effects of emotional labor following a daily mindfulness practice. All the interviews were conducted through recorded phone conversations in the privacy of the participants' and the principal researchers' own homes to ensure a

safe and secure environment void of disturbances. Similarly, the participants engaged in their daily mindfulness meditation routines in their own homes to establish a stable space.

3. Analysis

The data collected from both sets of interviews were analyzed, and the key themes and overall experiences were summarized. The responses to the interview questions were categorized by similarities, and differences between participants' experiences were also noted. Data from the interviews were analyzed, and critical inputs related to best practices, challenges, and overall emotional regulation tactics and experiences were summarized.

4. Protection of the Participants

All the participants involved in this study were provided with the research description and intervention instructions, located in Appendices B and C, explaining the purpose of the research, including the voluntary nature of the study. All those who participated were kept anonymous from the entire sampling, and all names were removed from any documentation collected. The sample group also signed a consent form found in Appendix C before beginning their participation in this study, and after asking any questions, allowing the information compiled from the interviews to be used and shared with other professionals who read and review this research.

Chapter 4

Study Results

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact a mindfulness practice has on the effects of emotional labor for those working in the customer service industry. The analysis of this study found that there were several critical themes when it comes to how customer service professionals handle the strain of emotional labor both at work and at home. The data compiled also showed commonalities between the participants' experiences on the influence of a mindfulness practice over the effects of emotional labor.

Baseline Interviews

Throughout the baseline interview phase, although the responses regarding each participant's individual experiences with emotional labor in the workplace varied, the overarching themes were abundant and clear, experienced by each of the participants in this research. These prominent themes included expectations of how employees are to treat customers in the workplace, emotional labor strategies used, types of interactions with lingering effects, and customer service employees' responses towards emotional regulation. Table 1 outlines the key identified themes and includes illustrative participant responses.

Training and Guidelines

One of the common themes identified through the data analysis related to expectations of how employees should act in the workplace and their organizations' monitoring of these interactions. Although not every participant stated that they had received specific training materials on how their organization required them to act towards customers, they were all aware that the expectation was to act in a kind and welcoming manner. Four of the seven participants stated that the training materials they were provided with when they first joined their organization primarily focused on daily tasks: "Trainings focused on learning the tasks or

processes of the role and not on how to talk to or behave towards a customer.” While the remaining three participants stated that while they had received training materials related to customer interactions, these materials were centered around how to handle escalated situations, for example when a customer is upset or acting aggressively towards them.

Table 1
Baseline Interview Key Themes

Themes	Key Responses
Training and Guidelines	“I know what’s acceptable behavior and what’s not. ... I show respect.”
Emotional Regulation Strategies (Surface Acting)	“It’s like there’s a disassociation ... where you’re in the space and you’re playing a part. It’s very performative.”
Modifying Emotional Responses	“It’s like I have to ... switch between being a co-worker, a friend, a therapist. ... When a client comes in and I’m in one mode, I can feel unorganized and pretty frazzled.”
Daily Emotional State	“By 5:00 I’m like, okay, I’m ready to go. I’m tired and I just want to leave and be back [home].”
Lingering Interactions	“I would love to say that the most positive ... [interactions] have lingered the most, but that’s not true. ... The ones that are most challenging, the ones that have given me anxiety, and have given me like an adrenaline rush that makes me internally shake, are the moments that stay with me.”
Processing Emotional Interactions	“It actually helps if I talk it out and get it out because if I were to not, I think it would be still seeping in more and more.”

Regardless of whether the participants had received specific guidelines from their organization, they all expressed that they knew they are expected to treat customers in a friendly tone, not only because they directly represent their organization but also because their future within this career relies on positive customer experiences:

I always think that that's just the bottom line of the job. You treat everyone the same. You treat everyone as if they are your best friend. You allow them to feel comfortable as if they're coming into your home.

I think a part of it is society and expectations, but too because you think about money. Your livelihood is attached to the job and to the role, so you just know my next meal comes from this, so I need to be on and make sure you have a good experience.

Another theme that arose regarding expectations for customer engagement was that customer interactions are monitored or observed by both supervisors and the customers themselves. With the abundance of social media platforms and online review sites, the participants stated that any upset customer could use the Internet to share their experiences directly with the organization or the public:

You never know who could be listening in and document[ing] what happened and what you said, and there's always that level of uncertainty with how each interaction was perceived by those in the room. Anyone who gets upset by the smallest thing can post a bad review or send a message through Instagram or Google, ... and that directly impacts our business and me.

According to the participants, specific interactions are discussed during team meetings or performance reviews. At these times, the participants can share difficult interactions where they felt uncomfortable or unsure, or the supervisor can raise customer feedback or personal observations. It is during these meetings that all participants receive training related to customer interactions.

Emotional Regulation

When discussing emotional labor strategies, six of the seven participants expressed that they tend to utilize surface acting more often than deep acting, especially during negative emotionally charged customer interactions:

If someone is upset about something and is yelling at me or treating me poorly, I find myself saying what they want to hear to appease them. It's apologizing for

something even if it's a policy we have in place or validating their feelings when they are the ones that have made the mistake. I say what I need to say just to try and calm them down and end the conversation.

All the participants noted that when they engage in surface acting, they are aware when their feelings do not match those that they are conveying: "Usually I have a high pitch [tone], but then there's a different type of high pitch that's like, 'Whoa, that was so fake.' ... I can definitely sense when I'm more surface." However, the participants also shared that positive interactions, when customers are genuinely excited about something or thankful for the help that they have received, generate actual positive emotions. During these moments they express those feelings freely and authentically.

Modifying one's emotional state at work was another common theme among all the participants. Specifically, the participants expressed that shifting from one extreme emotional state or tone to another is challenging and creates feelings of frustration and fatigue:

If I had a client who was really, really mad and it was a bad experience, I definitely have to modify myself for the next customer so that I don't take that conversation over to this person and not be pleasant and not be accommodating for them. ... Some days I'll be with a customer laughing with them, and you're all excited for your next customer, and it's just like, "Oh my god, what happened?" It's really tough.

Five of the participants expressed that interacting with repeat customers creates an additional challenge because they have established a rapport and feel the need to continually match these customers' previous experiences:

I think that's probably the most challenging, having return customers because they know you and they're getting to know you more and more [with each visit]. ... It's almost easier with newer customers. They don't have anything to go by. ... You can be surface friendly and they won't know any different.

Managing Emotional State

Five of the seven participants expressed that they typically feel anxious at the start of

their workday, experiencing nervous energy thinking about prospective customer exchanges. All seven of the participants remarked on feeling fatigue by the end of the day and cited the need for personal time when they get home to unwind before being able to engage with others or begin their next task:

By 4:00 I'm pretty shot. Like, I need to go home. I need to lay down and not talk to anybody because I just talked to everybody all day long for eight hours. ... It's like you have this social battery, and all day at your job you're losing that battery, and then by the time it's the end of the day and you want more juice in your battery to go hang out with your friends, or go run an errand, or do really anything, it's just like I can't. ... When I try to and push it, it ends up being a bad evening because I'm exhausted.

Another common theme raised throughout the data collection was that the customer interactions that have lingering effects are the ones that are negative in nature, specifically interactions in which customers are upset and treat the employees disrespectfully. Each of the participants stated that they struggle to dismiss these types of interactions. The time frame, however, for how long participants hold onto these interactions varied. Two of the participants stated that when they engage in these types of interactions, they can move past them by the end of the workday. In contrast, the remaining five participants recalled dwelling on challenging interactions for weeks and sometimes having to adjust their reactions to avoid bringing the past into the present when similar experiences trigger memories from challenging interactions:

The really intense ones, when I can feel the adrenaline surging through ... it takes a while to get that chemical out of your body. It lingers, and it'll linger through the night. Sometimes I've woken up in the middle of the night thinking about it, not being able to go to bed.

The data also revealed a common thread regarding how the participants process challenging interactions. Six of the participants shared that they process these interactions by talking about them with those outside of their workplace, such as friends and family

members:

When I come home at the end of a challenging day, I find that when I talk about my day I am able to let it go in a sense. Like, I am able to process how I felt versus what I did, and in that way, I am able to express what I need to express, or what I needed to express in that moment that I wasn't able to at the time.

Follow Up Interviews

Following the intervention phase where the participants partook in a weeklong mindfulness practice, the research subjects first confirmed their daily participation in their mindfulness practice, and were asked about their experiences with emotional labor during the past week using the same script of questions. During the second round of interviews, several critical themes were again discovered: participants' overall emotional state, their reactions to customer interactions, strategies used, and overall awareness. Table 2 outlines participant responses that articulate the identified themes.

Table 2
Follow Up Interview Key Themes

Themes	Key Responses
Emotional State	“It impacted my whole day in a better way. I feel like I was able to handle work-related anxieties better overall. I was able to deal with some crazy work things where I was less frazzled [and] ... anxious.”
Awareness	“[I was] more focused on ways to not let a bad situation bother me. Even though I am frustrated about the situation at the end of the day, I realized that most of the time it's not me, it's the situation.”
Empathy	“I don't usually consider like where people are coming from and stuff when they're [rude], but I feel I was more consciously doing that [and] ... seeing things from their perspective.”
Strategies	“If I felt myself getting frustrated, I'd stop and I'd breathe, and then I'd be able to get back.”

Emotional State

Each of the participants noted that during their week engaging in the mindfulness training exercises, their emotional state at the start of the day was calm and relaxed. They also all found that they were able to carry these emotions with them throughout their day, both at work and beyond. The participants who had previously described feeling anxious at the start of their workday all shared that those feelings diminished once they began that morning's mindfulness practice:

I wasn't anxious anymore. I wasn't sitting there going, "Please let this be a good day." I was more of, "Let's do this," and I think it's because it calmed me and it gave me a sense of "You can do this." ... It really helped me with feeling less anxious.

Due to the lingering feelings of calmness, the participants all reported feeling more connected to the present moment, engaged with their customers, and rational in their responses, particularly during emotionally charged interactions:

I really felt more in control of my day. ... There'd be like mayhem all around, and I still feel like I reacted the same, but my response inside, instead of an anxious pit, it was easier for things to just blow over. ... I was able to feel aware and be rational and composed.

Besides being more present during escalated interactions, the participants also noted not having extreme emotions attached to routine interactions either:

I had pleasant conversations, and I was able to focus on our conversation instead of what was happening in my internal voice, ... not just with customers but with my co-workers too. ... I got to know people better, and we got to ... have a deeper conversation. ... I was focusing on the person there and be present.

Reactions

Following the weeklong meditation practice, every participant expressed a higher degree of connection and empathy with customers. When faced with a challenging situation, each of the participants thought more about the customer's perspective and tried to understand the root

cause of their frustration:

I felt compassion. ... It made me realize where she was coming from. Like, I don't know anything about her life, ... she must have so many different stories and painful stories that have caused her to be where she's at, and it was sort of like this letting go.

Not only were the participants able to empathize with customers, but they all also recounted detaching themselves from the negative thoughts or feelings they typically associated with these exchanges. By separating themselves from the negative exchange, interactions that would normally have caused them to feel anxious and to reflect on them throughout the day did not have the same impact; they were able to let them go immediately after the exchange:

I didn't feel like I needed to hold on to that toll. Just detached from it. ... In retrospect, that's something I would do a lot usually ... and this week I was able to just focus on more positive things.

Strategies

The participants reported utilizing techniques from their mindfulness meditations. Six of the participants consciously started using the breathing strategies they had learned during difficult moments throughout their workday:

If there ever was like a moment of a person being weird or my stress level [changed], I did a lot more breathing exercises. ... I would ground myself in my body and in my senses ... and regain clarity and reflect.

All the participants shared that their interactions with and treatment of customers remained the same as before. However, while their responses and demeanor were unchanged, they were more aware of the present moment and of themselves:

I still used the same language, but things didn't affect me as much.. ... I feel like sometimes I have a tendency to just be like, it's the biggest deal ever in my head and then I'll let it go, but this time, it was instant.

Chapter 5

Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations

Conclusion

The impacts of emotional labor discovered throughout this study reinforced many of the findings presented in the literature review. Emotional management and emotional regulation strategies were major themes discovered throughout the data collection during the baseline interview phase. For example, the participants discussed their experiences with surface acting and described feigning the desired emotional response to meet expectations; however, the participants stated that they knew they were being disingenuous and were more awake to and aware of their insincere responses.

Prior to the implementation of a week-long mindfulness practice, all the participants noted the impact of their labor in terms of high levels of stress and anxiety. During highly emotionally charged interactions, the participants' increased levels of anxiety would linger beyond the initial interaction. These occurrences impacted how they acted throughout their day and affected their thoughts, conversations, and interactions with others. They also described experiencing emotional exhaustion at the end of their workday, regardless of the level of emotional regulation they faced, and expressed the need for downtime from engaging with others. It is these types of impacts, caused from emotional labor, that can lead to employee burnout, and are all symptoms of the negative impact of emotional labor presented within the literature review.

Moreover, several major themes connected to the impact of a daily mindfulness practice found from the research was also supported by the literature review. These key data points included an increase in feelings of empathy, awareness of the present moment, and emotional responses to external stimuli. All the participants experienced instances were able to empathize

with, and thus better connect with, customers, and their emotional response was a genuine reaction to the customer interaction.

Another finding from the literature review that the data supported was that after partaking in a daily mindfulness practice, every one of the participants stated feeling more connected with the present moment. The participants communicated that they were able to avoid allowing past experiences impact their current response. They all were able to acknowledge what was occurring externally without letting it impact themselves. Even during positive interactions, all of the participants stated that they were better able to focus on the customers and engage more deeply and authentically.

Finally, the research subjects reported reduced feelings of anxiety and stress throughout their day. Following the mindfulness practice, the participants entered their day with a sense of calm that lingered throughout all their interactions, whether it was with a customer or a coworker. They were able to stay engaged, and during emotionally charged interactions, they could think more rationally, utilized breath work strategies learned from the mindfulness practice, and assist without feeling rushed or nervous.

In conclusion, the research revealed that practicing mindfulness has an overall positive impact on the effects of emotional labor. By engaging in a regular mindfulness practice, those working in the customer service industry who interact one-on-one with customers and are expected to provide exceptional service, have higher levels of empathy when engaging with clients, specifically when customers are upset or disrespectful. Employees can detach themselves from the negative responses, view the interaction from the customer's perspective, and thus remain calm and respond authentically without having to feign the desired emotional response.

After just one week of implementing a daily mindfulness practice, employees are better

able to handle the emotional toll associated with being upbeat and pleasant all day, even when working with a disgruntled client. Repeatedly engaging with customers and exerting oneself emotionally throughout the workday can be taxing; however, awareness of the present moment can enable employees to prevent negative experiences from continuously impacting their emotional state. Such employees have lower levels of anxiety and are better able to cope and think rationally throughout their workday. The calming effect a mindfulness practice has at the start of the day allows employees to be more engaged and connect more deeply with customers, creating a more positive experience for all.

Study Limitations

As discussed in the literature review, there are variations in how individuals manage their emotions based on gender norms and expectations, emotional intelligence, and their work environment. As the majority of the participants in this study identify as female the male perspective and experience was absent from this research. Also, the participants' emotional intelligence was not a part of the analysis, and their work environment was not controlled, all limiting this study's ability to manage the frequency and types of emotionally charged interactions that they each faced throughout the study.

Another limitation with the data collection arose as several of the participants faced external challenges that required them to drop out of the study, thus limiting the amount of data collected. Several interviews were rescheduled or postponed as well due to participants having missed their morning mindfulness session and requiring them to restart their daily practice. As the duration of this research consisted of week-long practice there are limitations on what the lasting impact a mindfulness practice has, the impact on state and trait mindfulness, and the ways in which a prolonged routine influences individuals. It is also important to note that the principle researcher was the sole data collector, and coder of the material. There is a potential

for unconscious biases to show themselves within the analyzing of the results.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on employees working directly with customers and not on business owners. The proprietor of an organization has additional emotionally laborious tasks, such as establishing a client base, hiring employees that reflect the organization's values, and connecting with vendors. Future research should consider collecting data from all the different levels of an organization to better understand the varying tolls of emotional labor and the impact of a mindfulness practice on all involved within a company. There is also a whole area of virtual business with marketing and online service encounters that this study did not touch on. Exploring technologies within the service sector is another area that could benefit from future research (Wang, Berthon, Pitt, McCarthy, 2016), taking a virtual approach to the ways those in the service industry engage with, and manage emotions behind a screen.

Conducting research on a prolonged mindfulness practice for customer service professionals would be another beneficial area of study. By expanding this study to research the long term effects would garner a deeper understanding of the lasting influence a mindfulness practice has over emotional regulation. It would also decipher if the continued practice of mindfulness increases the results discovered, or if the effects change over time as one begins to become more aware of their disingenuous emotional response triggers a negative result from a mindful state (Lyddy et al., 2021).

Recommendations for Organization Development Practitioners

Organization development practitioners seeking to help those working in a position that requires emotional labor by leveraging the influence of a mindfulness practice should first start by assessing the corporate culture. Through evaluation of the

current environment, company norms, and culture, the practitioner can assess how customer interactions are handled and reviewed. Understanding the environment of the organization will allow the practitioner to identify employee needs, and assess gaps in training or protocol in how to best interact with customers and meet their individual needs. They are also able to analyze the current impact emotional labor has over the organization and create interventions centered around specific employee needs.

Providing professional development and training to help support employees' emotional needs is another recommendation for an organization development practitioner. Offering training to employees on mindfulness tools and techniques, and explaining the benefits of a mindfulness based practice, will better prepare customer service professionals in their approach to emotionally charged encounters. It is also important to provide employees learning opportunities to find what best works for them and their process for handling challenging interactions. Creating opportunities for individuals to find a healthy balance between the refuge of a mindful state and facing difficult emotions, and stay engaged with the experience without completely detaching from it (Shapiro, Siegal, Neff, 2018), and develop personal and organizational best practices for future experiences that may cause emotional strain.

Summary of Learnings

The research suggests that the implications of adding a mindfulness based practice into the lives of customer service employees has the potential to garner beneficial results. Those working in a customer facing role experience emotional strain as a result of managing their emotions to meet the demands of their job. The toll of modifying one's emotional state results in anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and difficulty in letting go of taxing interactions. These employees face the risk of burnout, as well as other detrimental health consequences as they

continue to suppress their emotions.

Introducing a mindfulness practice into the daily routines of these customer service professionals provides tools and techniques to aid in their emotional response. A mindfulness practice can help those in the customer service field by generating a calmness within that allows them to engage with customers without added emotional strain. They are able to empathize with their clients, thus eliminating the need to feign the appropriate response or reaction, and be more engaged and create a deeper connection. By implementing a mindfulness practice, those working in the customer service field are better equipped to face the emotional needs of their clients, as well as support their own emotional well-being.

Resources

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What is your current job title, and your role within the organization?
2. What sort of training material/guidelines were provided by your organization related to your behavior at work and expectations when it comes to customer interactions?
3. How would you describe your experience with emotional labor at work?
4. How would you describe your emotional state at the beginning of your workday? At the end of your workday?
5. How do you handle an emotionally charged interaction with a customer? What, if any, strategies do you use during those exchanges?
6. Do you continue to think about specific interactions with customers after they have occurred? If so, what is the nature of those interactions, and for how long do you carry them with you?
7. How often would you say that you feel the need to modify your emotional state at work?
8. Is there anything I haven't asked that you would like to comment on regarding your experience with emotional management in the workplace, and your experience with emotional labor?

Appendix B
Research Description



Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Lauren Dainko, and I am a master's student studying Organization Development through the Graziadio Business School at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study in which I am studying the impact a mindfulness practice has on the effects of emotional labor, and I need your help! I am seeking volunteer study participants to engage in a daily mindfulness practice and partake in two interviews, one at the beginning and one at the end of the study. Your participation in the study would include the audio of your interviews to be recorded and is anticipated to take no more than one week.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the time that study data is collected. Strict confidentiality procedures will be in place. During and after the study. All the information collected will be kept confidential and stored in a secure locked filing cabinet for three years, after which will be destroyed. Only the researcher will have access to the filing cabinet. You will not be named or identified in any report or publication as a result of this study.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in this study, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your participation,

Lauren Dainko
Pepperdine University
Graziadio Business School
Master Student
ldainko924@gmail.com
(630) 881-8197

Appendix C
Intervention Instructions



Intervention Instructions

Visit www.headspace.com, or download the Headspace app onto your mobile device, and download the free 7-day trial. Every morning log onto the application or website and engage in the daily guided mindfulness meditation.

Before you begin, create a safe space that is free of distractions or disruptions. When you engage in your morning mindfulness routine ensure that you are in a comfortable seated position. Follow the daily guided meditation without pausing or stopping. You must engage in your morning meditation each day. If you miss a day you may be asked to start over, or withdraw from this study.

Please notify the researcher if you are unable to commit to a daily mindfulness practice. Your participation is voluntary, and you will not be penalized for withdrawing from this study at any point.

If you have any questions please contact Lauren Dainko at ldainko924@gmail.com or at (630)881-8197

Appendix D
Participant Consent Form



IRB #: 22-06-1863

Formal Study Title: The Impact of a Mindfulness Practice on the Effects of Emotional Labor

Authorized Study Personnel

Principal Investigator: Lauren Dainko, Master's Student (630) 881-8197

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask Lauren Dainko by phone: (630) 881-8197 or email: ldainko924@gmail.com.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a full-time professional working in the customer service field, engaging one-on-one with customers. You must be 18 years of age, or older to participate, have worked in a customer-facing role for at least a year, and are currently without a daily mindfulness practice.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

Those who work in the customer service field use different strategies for managing their outward expressions and emotions in order to create positive experiences for their customers, and to encourage continued patronage. While managing emotions at work, or emotional labor, has been found to have possible negative consequences for employees, the benefits of applying a mindfulness practice have been found to have the reverse effect, supporting employees in their daily tasks.

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact a mindfulness practice has on the effects of emotional labor. This research is attempting to determine how the emotional regulation process for those in a customer service position impacts its workers, and the ways in which introducing a mindfulness practice influences it.

Emotional Labor: The process of managing emotions during, and as a result of, interactions with customers and/or clients.

Mindfulness: A state of consciousness where one is focused on the here and now, observing the present moment without judgment, evaluation, or giving meaning to what is currently happening

What will be done during this research study?

Participation in this research is a week-long commitment and requires you to engage in two separate recorded phone interviews and incorporate a daily mindfulness practice into your morning routine.

Interviews will be conducted once at the beginning of your participation, and again at the end, using the same set of interview questions. Each will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The interviews will focus on your personal experiences with emotional management in the workplace during customer interactions. All interviews are conducted through recorded phone calls with the researcher using a handheld recording device, and both you and the researcher are required to partake in the interview process within your own homes to ensure a safe and secure environment.

You will also be required to engage in a mindfulness meditation each morning lasting approximately 5 min. using the Headspace app by downloading it onto a computer or mobile device. Again, all mindful meditations must occur in your own home to ensure that the environment is safe and secure.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

The potential risks of this study are minimal. The emotional distress that emotional labor can cause is a risk, and the awareness that mindfulness can bring could cause one to be more fully aware of emotional and mental fatigue, or any triggers that may arise throughout the work day. During the interview phase, the risk is the potential of having to recount and relive stressful or triggering interactions, and the risk of a confidentiality breach could cause your data to be accessed by someone other than the Principle Researcher.

What are the possible benefits to you?

Mindfulness meditation has been proven to help with task effectiveness, reducing employee burnout, and, when it comes to emotions, mindful awareness can aid in the acknowledgment and assessment of the feelings that are being brought up during an emotionally charged interaction, allowing one to better understand and process their feelings and reactions. You may, however, not receive any benefit from being in this research study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

The possible benefits to science and/or society may include a better understanding of the direct relationship between mindfulness and emotional labor, and how to support those in a position where managing emotions at work cause strain.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

The alternative to being in this research study is to not participate.

What will being in this research study cost you?

There is no cost to you for being a participant in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

There is no compensation for being a participant in this research study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?

Your welfare is the major concern of the researcher. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact the principal researcher listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. Your participation in this survey will be kept confidential. All data collected, and instruments used, will be stored in a secure locked filing cabinet for three years, after which all documentation will be destroyed. Only the researcher will have access to the filing cabinet. You will not be named or identified in any report or publication as a result of this study.

The email exchanges stored electronically are done so through using Gmail's "Confidentiality Mode" and will only be seen by the principal researcher during the study and for 3 years after the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pepperdine University, and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. For study related questions, please contact the investigator listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305

Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University. You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Feedback Survey

To meet Pepperdine University’s ongoing accreditation efforts and to meet the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) standards, an online feedback survey is included below:

<https://forms.gle/nnRgRwLgajYzBq5t7>

Participant Name:

Name of Participant: Please Print

Participant Signature:

Signature of Research Participant

Date