

**Mindfulness Communication to Improve Productivity: A Cross-Sectional  
Description of Female-Workers' Opinions Through Qualitative-Focus-Groups.**

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**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**RESE8419**

**THE IIE BACHELOR OF ARTS HONOURS IN COMMUNICATION**

**Word Count: 11897**

**Declaration:**

*I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Arts Honours  
in Communication Degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work  
and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education  
Institution for degree purposes.*

*Signature:* \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would just like to thank my supervisor, Dr Marchant Van Der Schyff, for his continuous support, motivation, and guidance during my time as a student. His inspiration and positive outlook gave me confidence in my research. His meticulous editing has contributed immensely to the development of this study. I would like to thank my Mom and Dad, Sally Ann and Jason William Ackermann, who constantly made me feel confident in my abilities and positively guided me through my degree - without you both, I would never be where I am today. To my fiancé, James Reece Marshall, thank you for your patience, for believing in and encouraging me and being my voice of reason.

## **Abstract:**

This study gained an insightful perspective into how female employees feel about mindfulness communication and its role it plays in enhancing their productivity. This may/may not be helpful to a future company's goal of increasing their overall performance – before engaging in any policy training. This was a qualitative, descriptive study that made use of online focus-groups. This study thematically analysed and interpreted 6 female employee's opinions on mindfulness communication and productivity. The findings showed that 35.3% of female employees felt if mindful communication were used by managers, this would positively affect their performance. Additionally, 23.53% felt that if mindfulness communication were not used, this would negatively affect their performance. Furthermore, 41.7% of female employees felt that if superiors used supportive communication this would increase their performance. While 20.8% felt that empathetic communication would increase productivity. Lastly, 37.5% felt that non-judgmental communication would improve their productivity.

## **Introduction:**

The following study is a cross-sectional, descriptive report that critically analyses 6 female employee's opinions/feelings regarding mindfulness and productivity. This will be done through online focus-groups, where participants' will be randomly selected through simple random sampling. The participants' responses will be thematically analysed and findings qualitatively interpreted. The report additionally looks at the trustworthiness of the study, ethics, recommendations and includes the studies heuristic value.

**Title:** Mindfulness Communication to Improve Productivity: A Cross-Sectional Description of Female-Workers' Opinions Through Qualitative-Focus-Groups.

## **1. Background**

According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, a theory in linguistic relativity - language determines or creates our perceptions of reality (Twinword Inc, 2018). Communication essentially involves responding to individuals in a thoughtful manner. People can sense when one is not present during a conversation. This results in people assuming that they are not valued or respected in the conversation (Sigma Assessment Systems, 2019). Additionally, this can lead to miscommunication, misunderstandings and deterioration in relationships. However, mindful communication can help alleviate these barriers by strengthening one's presence in the communication process (Sigma Assessment Systems, 2019).

Research shows that effective communication can lead to a variety of beneficial impacts, from improved teamwork to stronger employee involvement (Sigma Assessment Systems, 2019). Each message can be personalised to suit the needs/desires of the audience, by using mindfulness communication (Garrett, 2018). Mindfulness communication involves being fully present throughout the duration of a conversation (Garrett, 2018). By recognising how we communicate with each other and how we interact differently while incorporating empathy and support in our approach, results in building stronger, more constructive interactions (Garrett, 2018). Mindfulness communication is about raising awareness amongst the two aspects of communication - listening and speaking (Sigma, 2019). For instance, if a manager has approached an employee who is not doing his best in a project, the manager may begin the discussion by saying, "I see you were unable to handle the project this month". As opposed to "This isn't good enough, your lazy, you need to handle your time better, your fired", an example of what mindful communication is not.

When one talks about efficiency in the workplace, they refer mainly to how much work is achieved/accomplished over a period of time (Hanna, 2018). Productivity includes attaining business objectives timeously, respecting/engaging with co-workers/colleagues, strengthening work relationships and being able to make confident decisions both personally/professionally (Perrin, 2020). Efficiency in the workplace is one of the key influencing factors in the ability of a company to make a profit. Therefore, unmotivated and unengaged employees will have a significant effect on any company's overall performance (Hanna, 2018). Therefore, for any senior leadership team, knowing what benefits and what

hampers efficiency is of utmost importance. Human Resource administrators and practitioners are continually searching for opportunities to sustain or improve efficiency in an organisation (Hanna, 2018). Mindful communication for managers and business owners can therefore be the distinction between employees who are afraid to speak and employees who are comfortable informing their employers about the issues they face at work (Howes, 2018).

According to a study by Gijsbert Stoet and others, “*Are women better than men at multi-tasking?*”, 2013. It was discovered that the responses of women were 69 percent slower, while undertaking two tasks simultaneously - while men were 77 percent slower in their responses (Stoet, et al., 2013). However, multi-tasking significantly impacts efficiency by as much as 40% (Cabrera, 2016). For working women, this may lead to problematic outcomes. A report from the University of Michigan, indicated that females multi-task more than men by ten hours weekly. Additionally, multi-tasking behaviours raise fatigue, negative feelings, and perceived tension between work and life, resulting in women feeling more stress than men, even though their workloads are identical (Cabrera, 2016). Based on this, women may be unable to perform/function at their optimum level. However, by being more mindful — women may stress less and increase their performance (Cabrera, 2016), presenting the proposed study to be hugely beneficial for the female gender and organisations alike.

## **2. Rationale**

The proposed research is important to the communications sector, especially involving gender, as studies on mindfulness in the workplace and leadership mindfulness are currently at an early stage (Arendt, et al. 2019). Therefore, gaining further insight into how women feel about mindfulness communication and productivity presents an opportunity to undertake further research. The research may help businesses gain an insightful perspective into how female workers' feel mindfulness communication may enhance their productivity – before a company engages in any policy training – which may/may not be helpful to the future company's goal of increasing their overall performance.

Additionally, the researchers' personal experience with mindfulness as a mechanism to combat OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) to remain focused, reduce stress, lead a more productive, secure and healthy life, sparked an interest in exploring the impact of mindful communication in the workplace.

### **3. Problem Statement**

Mindful communication is perhaps the most powerful influence for good within a business environment, but it is neglected more than any other aspect of successful company practices and policies (Duchêne, 2019). Little is understood about mindfulness communication used in the workplace and productivity. This is a concern as companies might/might not invest in mindfulness communication training/practices. The study aims to add to this growing body of research by presenting more knowledge on how female employees feel about mindfulness communication and productivity. By presenting more knowledge on the topic at hand may help businesses gain an insightful perspective into how female workers' feel mindfulness communication may enhance their productivity – before a company engages in any policy training – which may/may not be helpful to the future company's goal of increasing their overall performance.

### **4. Purpose Statement**

This study aims to collect and interpret data to describe how female workers feel about mindfulness communication as a managerial communication style on the improvement of productivity. The purpose of this study is to explore the views of South African female workers, through qualitative online (*Skype*) focus-groups to assist businesses in gaining an insightful perspective into how female workers' feel mindfulness communication may enhance their productivity – before a company engages in any policy training to improve corporate efficiency. The findings will be presented in the format of a descriptive report, whereby, the researcher will conduct a thematic analysis. Politeness-theory will be utilised as the researcher wishes to investigate the influence of mindfulness on productivity. Lastly, the central-concept/s of mindfulness communication, female employees, productivity and face-saving strategies will be discussed - to give an all-round-understanding on the studies key focus-areas.

### **5. Research Questions**

- What opinions do female employees have on the role mindfulness communication plays in an organisation's productivity?
- How does mindfulness communication shape females view of face-saving tactics?

#### **5.1 Objectives**

- To understand the feelings about the role mindfulness communication may play in productivity.

- To understand how mindfulness communication shapes female employees' views of face-saving tactics.

## **6. Literature and Theoretical Foundation**

### **6.1 Theoretical Foundation**

This study aims to focus on understanding the views of female workers on mindfulness communication, used as a form of managerial communication to increase workforce productivity. Therefore, Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) will be explored.

Politeness theory appeared within the framework of the pragmatic approach to linguistics (Alekseyenko, 2016). Interlocutors use strategies to achieve successful communication (Alekseyenko, 2016). These techniques enable communication to take place in a relaxed environment (Alekseyenko, 2016).

Using Erving Goffman's theory's the foundation of their own theory, Brown and Levinson highlighted the concept of "face" (Alekseyenko, 2016). It represents two opposite needs of a human-being: Positive face - looks at the desire to be accepted and respected by an interlocutor and a negative face is the need to have an independent voice (Alekseyenko, 2016). Politeness is known as people's capacity to use interactive methods depending on the communicative situation (Alekseyenko, 2016). The communicator by their actions can make a good impression on the interlocutor and create a favourable self-image or extend his/her personal space (Alekseyenko, 2016). This is relevant to the proposed study in understanding if female employees feel that mindfulness communication used by their superiors can have a lasting impression on them to improve their productivity, for example boosting their confidence.

An individual tends to protect his or her own face in the communication process and thus deviates from simple and straightforward communication (Alekseyenko, 2016). One can differentiate between techniques of positive politeness (displaying concern, sympathy) and negative politeness (voicing pessimism, apologising) (Alekseyenko, 2016). For example, a manager may approach an employee who failed to hand in a project by giving feedback such as, "What I hear is that you feel that you have too much on your plate, I feel that you will benefit greatly from our time management

workshops, what do you think?". This is a good way to communicate with sympathy and support, rather than saying, "This is not good enough, you are lazy, you need to manage your time better, you fired."

Furthermore, estimating face-threatening acts considers three socio-cultural variables: the social distance, degree of power and rank between the speakers (Alekseyenko, 2016). This is significant as the proposed research focuses on an organisational environment, in which these communicative events occur.

Politeness theory has a strong motivational-aspect – the negative-face relates to autonomy and the positive-face– in managerial settings, relates to acceptance and self-esteem (Massoudi, 2017). Thus, a speech act uttered by managers can affect-subordinates depending on what kind of politeness-strategy the manager may use – positive politeness/negative politeness (Massoudi, 2017). This is relevant to the proposed research as it is attempting to understand females' views on mindfulness communication used as a managerial communication style and improved productivity. This may suggest that females may feel positively for managerial use of mindfulness communication and improved productivity.

The proposed study focuses on women as according to Glass and Cook (2016), increased scrutiny and negative assessment of women leaders results in lower work satisfaction, higher depression rates, retention, and withdrawal (Phillips, 2018). This may lead to undesirable impacts in the workplace. Additionally, female trait-mindfulness carries a predictive weight (Barnes, 2007). In proposing to research mindfulness to promote productivity, the researcher will focus specifically on the positive-face and not the negative-face tenets. With the proposed research concerned with the positive-face tenants of this theory, it will only consider those speech-acts attending to a member's positive-face want (Abergs, 2020). The acts of positive politeness include namely offering affection, compliments, showing genuine interest, sincere gestures (Abergs, 2020) – closely matching mindfulness communicative characteristics (Priest, 2018).

A limitation of the theory is that individuals need to consider the various face-saving tactics before selecting which one tactic they are going to use in a face-threatening episode. Additionally, individuals can only implement one face-saving tactic at a time (Redmond, 2015). Given the number of tactics available to handle face-threatening acts, it seems unlikely that one will have time before acting to sort through them all

(Redmond, 2015). This limitation is considered through the notion that mindfulness encourages a focus on what is happening in the present moment rather than being overwhelmed and reactive. It includes paying close attention to everyday tasks, pausing before answering and listening without judgment (Priest, 2018).

## **6.2 Literature Review**

The literature review will be drawn constructively recognising that little is known about mindfulness communication and work productivity, respectively. The literature will focus on the following themes: performance, wellbeing, leadership, and mindfulness-training, in the workplace in general. The review will address the research problem that businesses could/might not invest in mindfulness communication training/practices.

### **6.2.1 Performance:**

Erik Dane's 2013 study, *"Examining workplace mindfulness and its relations to job performance and turnover intention,"* looked at organisational mindfulness and the degree to which individuals are mindful in a specific work-setting and its contribution to job performance and turnover intention in a dynamic work climate (Dane, 2013). The findings showed mindfulness contributes to performance, by improving cognitive resilience and awareness (Dane, 2013). The strengths are that it demonstrates that managerial scholars and executives ought to be vigilant about mindfulness as it is linked to the company's bottom line (Dane, 2013). The relevance is that it suggests that occupational mindfulness may, in turn, contribute to improved productivity, by enhancing one's ability to cope with a dynamic work environment. The limitation is that this source though dated, as it was published in 2013 (over 7 years ago), provides insight, as mindfulness in the workforce is still a recent framework. The proposed study seeks to add to this growing body of research.

According to Asanka Gunasekara (2019), *"Examining the effect of different facets of mindfulness on work engagement"*, the research explored the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement, focusing on examining to what degree four facets of mindfulness ("attention," "awareness," "present focus" and "acceptance") affect work engagement (Gunasekara,

2019). The results indicated that mindfulness as a common term is strongly related to job engagement. The facet-level review revealed that each of the four dimensions was substantially linked to work engagement (Gunasekara, 2019). The strength of the study showed that staff with enhanced attention skills and acknowledgement of the present moment contribute more to work engagement (Gunasekara 2019). This is important as female workers may believe that a mindful approach to communication may contribute to increased productivity. A limitation is that the analysis used a cross-sectional form of gathering results from a self-report survey (questionnaire where respondents read the question and choose an answer on their own without interference), which may have skewed responses, as it does not allow for a detailed interpretation of the topic (Gunasekara, 2019). This will be avoided as much as possible, as the proposed study will be performed by in-depth online focus-groups. This allows the researcher to answer any questions that the respondents may be unsure of or need clarification on. The focus-groups also allow respondents to elaborate on their answers. Due to the nature of open-ended questions, utilised in the study, the facilitator will also be able to observe the recipients verbal and non-verbal behaviour/actions.

According to Darren J. Good, "*Contemplating Mindfulness at Work: An Integrative Review*" explores how mindfulness affects attention, with indirect impacts on cognition, emotion, behaviour, and physiology, affecting core outcomes in the workplace, including performance, relationships, and wellbeing (Good, 2015). The analysis suggested in certain societies, mindfulness is strongly linked to the development of resilience (Good, 2015). This is a strength as resilience represents the ability to recover from hardship, conflict, and failure, suggesting that if mindfulness communication is used by managers when giving positive criticism, for example, females may feel they can overcome the "failure", rather than letting the failure interfere with their productivity (Good, 2015). This suggests that female employees may positively view managers use of mindfulness communication when asked to implement changes in both themselves and in projects. A Limitation is that much of the experimental research on mindfulness emerged from non-workplace trials (laboratories), raising questions regarding generalizability. This is considered through the notion that the proposed research is of a

qualitative nature, whereby, participants' will be interviewed from the comfort of their own homes, allowing for a relaxed environment.

According to Steve Crabtree's *"142-country study on the State of the Global Workplace"*, 13% of workers globally are engaged at work (Crabtree, 2013). Around 180 million employees in the countries surveyed — are mentally dedicated to their employment and more likely to make meaningful contributions to their organisation (Crabtree, 2013). Additionally, 63% of workers worldwide are "not committed," implying they lack enthusiasm and are less likely to invest budgetary time in corporate objectives or results (Crabtree, 2013). Furthermore, 24% are "highly disengaged," due to unhappy working conditions, resulting in them being unproductive and transmitting negativity to colleagues (Crabtree, 2013). A strength argues that low engagement rates impede economic growth and quality of life (Crabtree, 2013). This is relevant as it would be interesting to understand if mindfulness communication makes female employees feel more engaged in their work, have improved quality of life, thus improving productivity. The limitation is that this source though dated, as it was published in 2013 (over 7 years ago), provides insight as the study is adding to the growing body of knowledge by indicating that only 13% of workers are engaged in their work – makes the proposed research findings hugely beneficial for business owners wanting to improve their companies overall efficiency.

### **6.2.2 Wellbeing**

According to Beth Cabrera, in her article, *"Women Need Mindfulness Even More than Men Do"*, 2016, the article suggests that women are more likely to benefit from practicing mindfulness, as they tend to multi-task more than men (Cabrera, 2016). The study indicates that women multi-task 10 hours a week more than men and that participating in multi-tasking behaviours increases fatigue, negative feelings, and perceived work-life conflict (Cabrera, 2016). Additionally, women undergo more stress than men, even when they have equal workloads (Cabrera, 2016). Due to differences in brain structures both physiological and chemically, females are more prone to anxiety than men - according to the Anxiety Disorders Association of America (Cabrera, 2016). A strength of this report is that the research not only shows that multi-tasking negatively affects performance, but women can perform better and

worry less by being more mindful. This is relevant to the proposed research, as it shows that women need mindfulness training practices. This may be of particular importance for women working in perceived professions that are predominantly masculine as women and men handle and feel stress differently. This is a strength as the opinions of female employees may provide insight into how they feel the role mindfulness communication will have on productivity – which may/may not help working females improve their optimal performance. A limitation of this article is that it focuses on mindfulness, typically meditation, this does not impact the research as the proposed study aims to understand if mindfulness communication will help improve productivity based on female employees' views.

Additionally, Claudia L. Orellana-Rios, *"Mindfulness and compassion-oriented practices at work reduce distress and enhance self-care of palliative care teams: a mixed-method evaluation of an on-the-job program"* (2018), intended to pilot an "on the job" mindfulness and compassion-oriented meditation training for interdisciplinary teams. This aimed at mitigating anxiety, promoting resilience and enhancing prosocial inspiration in clinical experiences (Orellana-Rios, 2018). The study reported significant improvements in the components of burn-out (emotional fatigue and personal accomplishment), and competencies in emotional control (anxiety and stress) including organisational happiness (Orellana-Rios, 2018). Researchers also noted that, along with strengthening interpersonal communication skills and increasing team communication, individual goals were attained by 85% (Orellana-Rios, 2018). These findings are beneficial as they provide insight into how mindfulness can aid in wellbeing, suggesting that female employees may feel strongly that mindfulness communication may help in their overall productivity levels. A strength is that the findings show that mindfulness training can be a practical and feasible investment (Orellana-Rios, 2018). This is relevant to the research as it shows that mindfulness training may be of serious consideration to organisation's looking to improve company and employee efficiency. A research disadvantage is the small sample-size, reducing statistical capacity and generalizability (Orellana-Rios, 2018). This not impacting the proposed research as the study proposed is qualitative in nature, via online focus-groups, requiring only 6 participants.

*"Mindfulness at work: resource accumulation, well-being and attitudes"*, Suzanne Zivnuska (2016) explored how mindfulness at work can help workers develop resources (work-family balance and work engagement) can be associated with greater wellbeing (less psychological pressure, and more job satisfaction) and organisational attitudes (intent to turnover and affective commitment) (Zivnuska, 2016). The study's results indicate that workplace mindfulness is a mechanism that lets workers build resources that improve their wellbeing and the likelihood of employees remaining with their current company (Zivnuska, 2016). One strength is that it indicates that mindfulness at work is highly trainable and advantageous (Zivnuska, 2016). This is important as it indicates that mindfulness communicative techniques employed by managers may be perceived favourably to the advantage of both managers and female workers for improved productivity by employees wanting to stay in the firm. The limitation is that the study utilised cross-sectional data, excluding causal conclusions (Zivnuska, 2016). This does not affect the proposed research as the researcher is focusing on the viewpoint of an understanding rather than causal conclusions.

According to Teri Phillips *"Women leader/ship development: mindfulness and well-being"* (2018), with the intent of introducing mindfulness as a beneficial approach to women leader/ship development research and practice, primarily as a way of avoiding and reducing adverse health consequences (Phillips, 2018). The study showed that women are more inclined to participate in activities of mindfulness and experience greater benefits (Phillips, 2018). A strength shows that women's mindfulness leadership development programs are needed as they provide positive outcomes for women leaders (Phillips 2018). This is important as it demonstrates the need for organisation's to recognise the opinions of female workers on mindfulness communication and efficiency, as it may improve not just the wellbeing of female employees but also the profit margins, thereby impacting the company. From the articles read and included in the literature review, there appears to be, inadequate research that specifically focuses on the field of gender and mindfulness, particularly women leaders (Phillips, 2018). This being eliminated as the proposed research address the female gender following an in-depth understanding of their feelings towards mindfulness and improved productivity.

### 6.2.3 Leadership

In Silke Astrid Eisenbeiss' research *"On Ethical Leadership impact: The Role of Follower mindfulness and Moral Emotions"* (2015), suggesting a moral information processing viewpoint on ethical leadership. This allowed individuals to vary in their sensitivity to and perception of moral information and therefore respond differently to ethical leadership (Eisenbeiss, 2015). The findings suggest that ethical leadership is linked to followers' extra effort, helping with higher levels of followers' moral emotions and higher levels of followers' mindfulness (Eisenbeiss, 2015). A strength indicates that managers have an influence on their employees. This is relevant to the proposed study as female employees may feel that mindfulness communication has a positive influence on them to be more productive when used as a managerial communication style. A limitation is that it has evaluated extra effort and improved actions of followers by using leader assessments of follower behaviour (Eisenbeiss, 2015). This being omitted as the research is measuring mindfulness communication as a managerial strategy and productivity from female employees' views, thus gaining an in-depth understanding from the follower's point of view.

In Chris Altizer report, *"Mindfulness: performance, wellness or fad?"* (2017) The paper's goal was to concentrate on 'mindfulness' as an emerging approach to health, performance and business leadership (Altizer, 2017). The research indicated that mindfulness training provides improved physical wellbeing and enhanced individual stress reduction, as well as potential success and efficiency gains for organisations, teams, and members (Altizer, 2017). A strength of this research indicates that companies need to include mindfulness training as a facet of their business practices. A limitation is that if a mindful approach is not compatible with business policies and principles, it may be a waste of an investment (Altizer, 2017). This does not affect the proposed study as it is assessing female employees' views and whether they feel mindfulness communication may/may not improve productivity – and not implementing mindfulness training.

According to Tessa Pfafman's study titled *"Polite Women at Work,"* explores how women develop effective communication methods through socialisation and the strategic choices women make while performing face-threatening acts

at work (Pfafman, 2015). The report indicates that choices about communication styles are gendered and learned mainly by trial and error (Pfafman, 2015). It argues that women learn to be assertive to handle conflicts between their personal and professional identities (Pfafman, 2015). Findings from the study revealed that what defines acceptable communication conduct for women at work are signalling femininity and submissiveness (Pfafman, 2015). Additionally, all participants' used positive politeness in general to mitigate both positive and negative face threats (Pfafman, 2015). A strength: it utilises positive politeness approaches, which is significant since positive acts of politeness include affection, compliments, genuine concern, and gestures – closely representing mindful communicative characteristics (Abergs, 2020). Limitation: effective communication styles for women require more complex approaches than just assertive ones (Pfafman, 2015). This does not impact the research as the proposed study addresses the opinions of female workers revolving mindfulness communication in addition to this.

In Marie Ann Mahon (2017) study, *"Nurses' perceived stress and compassion following mindfulness meditation and self-compassion training"*, investigated the impact of mindfulness meditation practices on nurses perceived stress and compassion (Mahon, 2017) The study found that the perceived stress of the nurses was greatly diminished after a mindfulness training intervention (Mahon, 2017). Notably, compassionate scores increased (Mahon, 2017). The findings of the study suggest that mindfulness training can impact positively on nurses' perceived stress and enhance nurses' compassion. Mindfulness may be a suitable self-care or stress-management intervention that can effectively teach nurses coping skills to assist them in managing the daily stressors inherent in their home/work life. This is relevant as it suggests that mindfulness communication may teach female workers to cope with the stresses of a dynamic work environment, in turn, aiding their productivity. A Strength indicates that mindfulness training may be an important method of self-care and stress management (Mahon, 2017). This is relevant as females may feel productivity may increase because of reduced stress due to mindfulness. A limitation: the lack of a randomised control group, against which comparisons could be made with the pre- and post-test results (Mahon,

2017). This is excluded as the work being suggested is of a qualitative nature by online focus-groups.

#### **6.2.4 Mindfulness Training**

*"Mindfulness training in the workplace: exploring its scope and outcomes"* by Karen R. Johnson (2019) providing an overview of the scope of mindfulness as an intervention in the workplace, identifying outcomes of mindfulness-related training activities at the individual, job/work, team/group and organisational levels (Johnson, 2019). The research showed that mindfulness-based training played a major role in minimising anxiety, burnout, depression, and tension, whereby employee awareness, engagement, positive emotion, resilience, and wellbeing was increased (Johnson, 2019). The significance is that it contributes to the literature of mindfulness training in the corporate world. Showing that mindfulness-based programming is an important tool for organisations, to enhance the emotional wellbeing/success of workers. (Johnson, 1919). This is important to the proposed research, as it indicates that mindful workplace strategies may contribute to productivity. Understanding female employees' opinions on mindfulness communication and productivity may present for an interesting investigation to add to this growing body of knowledge. A limitation is that it notes that more qualitative and mixed-method research approaches are needed to promote a more comprehensive approach to organisational mindfulness (Johnson, 2019). This is considered as the proposed study focuses on an in-depth qualitative approach.

Nadine Joelle Mellor's study *"Mindfulness training and employees well-being"* (2016), assessed the impact of mindfulness training on the wellbeing of workers (Mellor, 2016). The results indicated that mindfulness training significantly enhances individual awareness, boosts work concentration, and strengthens interpersonal relationships (Mellor, 2016). The findings of the study showed that mindfulness group training significantly increased mindfulness skills, including observing and acting with awareness. Scores on wellbeing, satisfaction with life, hope and anxiety also improved. The data showed additional benefits of mindfulness training, such as improved concentration at work and better interpersonal relationships. A strength is that it indicates the impact of mindfulness training on employees and strengthens

interpersonal relationships (Mellor, 2016), this is important to the proposed study implying that as a consequence of mindfulness training, female employees may feel more confident communicating to their superiors regarding issues/objectives. In the study's limitation, it suggests that future research needs to consider a longer follow-up period, to further explore the sustainability of the training benefits. This not impacting the proposed research as it is focusing purely on the opinions of female workers regarding how they feel mindfulness communication will impact productivity and not the outcome of mindfulness training.

*“The Interpersonal Benefits of Leader Mindfulness: A serial Mediation Model Linking Leader Mindfulness, Leader Procedural Justice Enactment and Employee Exhaustion and Performance”*, (2017) by Sebastian C. Schuh, indicates that leader mindfulness increases employee output and subsequently reduces emotional distress of employees (Schuh, 2017). It found that leaders who were more mindful displayed higher levels of authentic leadership to their employees than less mindful leaders (Schuh, 2017). A strength is that it provides the first evidence of the relationship between leadership mindfulness and positive leadership behaviours (Schuh, 2017). This is relevant as managers' mindfulness communication methods may be of serious concern when looking at employee productivity. A limitation is that it assessed all variables at the same time and did not see how variables changed over time (Schuh, 2017). This does not affect the proposed study, as the study focuses on the female workers' "feelings" at a single point in time and does not aim to investigate how mindfulness communication changes female employees productivity over time, although a topic worthy of future investigation.

### **6.3 Conceptualisation**

**6.3.1 Mindfulness Communication:** The researcher specifically looks at attentive communication that prompts better engagement with peers, leading to more effective task completion (Priest, 2018). Mindfulness communication involves listening to every word and absorbing what an individual says, verbally and non-verbally, to give a thoughtful response (Garrett, 2018). This includes maintaining eye contact, giving verbal and non-verbal feedback ("I see," "Okay," head nods, and smiles), and rarely interrupts, even when they are not in agreement (Garrett,

2018). For example, managers waiting until a break in the conversation to add a point or put forward an argument for further discussion (Garrett, 2018). Feedback like "What I hear is", "I feel that", "I understand" and "What do you think?" is a good way to communicate with sympathy and support. Communicating mindfully means adapting one's speech to whomever one addresses (co-worker, subordinate, supervisor), allowing them to provide input by enabling them to ask questions, and showing respect with the tone and word choices (Garrett, 2018). Thus, the researcher will ask questions that will attempt to describe the female workers' opinions, about the role they feel mindfulness communication plays in an organisation's productivity.

**6.3.2 Face-Saving Strategies** – is a component of Politeness Theory whereby social interactions require participants' to work together to preserve everyone's face – to maintain the simultaneous desire/want to be liked and being autonomous (and to be seen as such) (Sheffield University, 2012). To preserve face, individuals have the choice of utilizing several super-strategies of politeness for Face-threatening acts (Sheffield University, 2012). The proposed study will focus on the super-strategy of Positive politeness (refer to theoretical foundation section) (showing respect to someone to mitigate the threat to the positive face) (Sheffield University, 2012). Positive politeness strategies try to avoid offending by emphasising friendliness (Sheffield University, 2012). The researcher is specifically addressing juxtaposing criticism with praise and using special discourse markers (such as "please"). For instance, the researcher will ask the respondents about when they are communicating with their supervisors are positive comments given before and after a criticism.

**6.3.3 Productivity:** relates to increased workplace performance and turnaround times, creating strong workplace manager/colleague relationships, less tension and positive corporate image to ensure timely accomplishment of goals and tasks (Perrin, 2020). The researcher will ask female employees' questions if they feel mindfulness communication may have any effect on the organisation's productivity. The researcher is specifically looking to see if employees can reach business objectives timely, engage in their work setting, are happy with their working conditions, can connect with or understand their co-workers/superiors, strengthen their workplace relationships and ultimately make confident choices both professionally and personally when mindfulness communication is used.

**6.3.4 Female Employees:** It is an individual who, for a certain duration of time, provides services for and under the guidance of another individual, in exchange for remuneration (Law Insider Inc, 2020). The researcher is specifically interviewing females who work at a predominantly masculine perceived organisation, Company “X”. A male-perceived corporation is a business that is primarily male-dominated or stereotypically regarded as male-dominated professions, such as software engineers, farmers, construction workers, or architects, respectively (Dayton, 2020). According to the research described in the background and literature review, women face higher levels of stress than men, even with similar workloads (Cabrera, 2016), and this could have a significant impact on the performance of women, especially, working in male dominated industries. The proposed research is specifically focusing on females in a masculine dominated field to understand if they feel mindfulness communication may indeed help them perform to their optimal level to improve the organisation’s efficiency.

## **7. Methodology**

### **7.1 Research Paradigm**

The following paradigm was chosen as the researcher aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how mindful communication could influence female employees work productivity. Interpretivism is the study of behaviour or an aspect of a phenomenon, based on understanding the meaning and purpose individuals attach to their personal actions and experiences (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2018). It describes a phenomenon in an in-depth, empathetic, and subjective manner (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2018).

The researcher aimed to describe the meaningful social action and experiences from the views of female employees on mindfulness and productivity, in an attempt to gain an in-depth and robust understanding (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2018), of how mindfulness communication could improve productivity in the workforce. This was done by using deductive and qualitative measures/methods (focus-group), ensuring an in-depth representation of the findings of this study (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2018). The ontological (the study of being or what one believes constitutes social reality) view was understood as “socially constructed” from the female participants’ views on

mindfulness communication and productivity. The proposed research aimed to interpret female employees' personal feelings regarding the role they felt mindfulness communication will have on work productivity. This was done by analysing their opinions on the matter.

Uniqueness (axiological) was important in this study, therefore, the methodology drew on subjectivity and qualitative methods (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2018)(research was done at a single point in time – through the use of online focus-groups, where each participant was allowed to express their own unique personal account regarding the subject). The epistemology/perspective of interpretivism in the proposed research had a value-laden nature of mindfulness and its effects on productivity (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2018). In other words, the research noted the findings/knowledge about mindfulness and its effects on productivity, when that knowledge or information felt right to the female employees being studied.

## **7.2 Research Design**

The overall-design of the proposed-research was qualitative in nature, as an online focus-group was utilised to obtain-data from female employees in a descriptive-nature regarding mindfulness communication and productivity (SkillsYouNeed, 2019). The researcher performed a thematic analysis of female employee's opinions on the use of mindfulness communication as a style of managerial communication and its role in increasing productivity. This was done by asking a series of open-ended questions on the online (Skype) focus-group interview (Annexure C). This enabled statement of opinions to be analysed in a robust and in-depth manner (SkillsYouNeed, 2019). The research made use of a top-down theorizing approach, deductive processing (general to specific). The-researcher explored mindfulness communication and Politeness Theory, concerned with the interlocutor's use of strategies to achieve successful communication and applied these findings to a specific-topic under-investigation, female employees' feelings towards mindfulness communication and improved productivity. The research was a cross-sectional-study, whereby, data was collected from the participant's once, assessing the 6-subject's opinions on the topic (Cherry, 2019). Different people were analysed simultaneously, to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon at hand (Cherry, 2019).

### 7.3 Population

The target population looked at female South African workers employed by a South African Company. The population parameters included time, geographically to broad and inefficient as it would be nearly impossible to reach all female employees working in South African firms timeously while trying to keep costs to a minimum. Additionally, the focus-groups took place via *Skype* (a luxury item), due to Covid-19 restricting face-to-face meetings. Therefore, the accessible population addressed 6 South African female workers employed by Company “X”, a middle-to-upper-class organisation, whose employees had access to Wi-Fi/data/smart devices to access *Skype*. Company “X”, is a predominantly male-dominated company in the Durban area. The researcher had been granted permission to conduct the focus-group with its staff members. Female staff who had access to *Skype* were selected as this further kept research costs to a minimum.

### 7.4 Sampling

After a random approach of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Company “X”, the researcher was granted permission to conduct the focus-group meeting with Company “X” employees (Annexure D). This allowed for the study to analyse participant responses on mindfulness communication and productivity.

The sampling technique used probability sampling, where a sample from a large population was randomly chosen (M.K, 2006). Simple random sampling was selected to ensure each participant had an equal chance of being selected to form part of the sample (M.K, 2006). This technique was used to remove the influence of researcher bias (Research Methodology, 2019).

Female participants’ who had *Skype* and were working during the lockdown, were randomly selected to form part of the focus-group. Online focus-groups were required as the study was conducted during the global pandemic, Covid-19, which limited the researcher to South African companies that were still operating during this period.

To motivate the sampling more samples than needed were sent out, to not bias the process across authenticity/age/ethnicity/race. A motivation containing (Annexure H) the details of the research were displayed on the notice board within Company “X”. This invited female employees who had access to *Skype* to participate in the study, by contacting the researcher, whose contact information was provided. Female

employees who contacted the researcher were sent an informed consent/information sheet, to which they had to agree to, sign and email the consent form back, within 2 weeks (Annexure E).

Once the consent forms had been obtained, simple random sampling took place. Each consent form was assigned a sequential-number (sampling-frame) (M.K, 2006). Next, the sample size was made, 6 female employees (M.K, 2006). A random-number-generator was utilised to select the sample. This was done by the researcher typing in "Random Number Generator" on *Chrome*. Using the researchers sampling-frame (population-size of 8) and the researcher's sample-size of 6 (M.K, 2006), the researcher generated 6 random numbers between 1 and 8. Additionally, 2-weeks were given to gain a sufficient sample size of 6 female participant's and an additional week for the analysis was required.

The advantage was that it was relatively inexpensive and required few resources (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018). The only resources needed was a smart-device and access to Wi-Fi (to access *Skype*). The disadvantage of simple random sampling is that the researcher may struggle to get answers/replies from females wanting to participate (du PlooyCilliers, et al., 2018). This was considered as a descriptive motivation (Annexure H) was displayed on the company notice board and was made available to more than 6-samples, to get sufficient-analysis.

## **7.5 Application of data-collection method(s)**

The forms of data collection were online-focus-groups, comprised of open ended-questions. Such online focus-groups were not only a safer and more reliable way of collecting participant data during the COVID-19 pandemic, but offered a more in-depth view of the topic at hand. Focus-groups consist of meetings of small groups of people usually 6-12, to express their views/opinions regarding a phenomenon, who are interviewed simultaneously by a facilitator (duPlooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018). The benefits of focus-group research are that group dynamics can offer useful information which is not produced through individual data collection (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018) However, focus-groups take a great deal of time and effort to organise, run and transcribe (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018). This was considered as the researcher allowed two weeks for participant's to join the study, 3 days to draw up the sample size and an additional week for the analysis.

A gatekeeping letter from the CEO of Company “X” was needed to collect the data. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, the gatekeeping letter was obtained (Annexure D). The researcher advertised using a short, simple motivation (Annexure H) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2020. By the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2020, 8 prospective female employees were willing to participate in the study. The prospective participants were sent an informed consent/information sheet to which they had to agree to, sign and email the consent form back, by the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2020(Annexure E). Once the consent forms were obtained, simple random sampling took place and out of this, 6 random participants were selected to form the sample. This was completed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2020.

On Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2020, the participants were phoned to organise a date/time for the focus-group to commence. The 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 at 13:30 pm was originally agreed upon, however, the time was later changed to 14:30, due to a participant not being available. The focus-group was held via a *Skype* conference call, whereby participant’s videos were required to be switched on. The focus-group meeting was recorded by pressing the record icon on the *Skype* app. This aided in the transcription of the data and participants were informed of this (Annexure F).

The researcher started the focus-group meeting by introducing herself, thanking the participants for participating and informed them of how long the meeting would take. The purpose of the study and the reason for the meeting was then discussed. This discussion took 5 minutes.

Important points were then addressed, which consisted of 8 points, approximately 5 minutes were given for this discussion. Next was an icebreaker, where participants gave their names, their role within Company “X” and what they valued most, 6 minutes were given for this discussion. The researcher then moved onto the questions (Annexure C).

Throughout the focus-group schedule, a series of open-ended questions (a total of 12 questions) (see Annexure C), were asked to gather the opinions of female workers about mindfulness communication and productivity. The researcher asked group questions and gave the participants time to respond to feedback from each other. For example, participants would often agree with each other’s statement or reinforce it. Occasionally, a participant would disagree. The online focus-group lasted roughly 34 minutes. The focus-group meeting ended off by thanking each member for taking part in the research.

## 7.6 Data analysis method(s) and Application

The data analysis was done using a thematic analysis, whereby transcribing the focus-group recording while making use of extracts from the transcript to support the qualitative data (Caulfield, 2019). This involved closely examining the data to identify any common themes of meaning that repeatedly arose in the data. The researcher aimed to gain an in-depth-understanding about female employee's views/opinions, regarding mindfulness as a managerial communication style and its role on productivity in a predominantly masculine workplace. Furthermore, this form of data analysis was selected as it fitted within the parameters of the research as it is a comprehensive method of breaking down and arranging in-depth data from qualitative studies, by identifying individual observations and excerpts, with relevant codes to facilitate the identification of important themes. Thematic analysis presents a highly versatile approach that can be tailored to the needs of many researchers, offering a robust and dynamic data account that is rich and informative (Caulfield, 2020).

The researcher replayed the recording of the *Skype* meeting and typed out the transcript. This was done on the researcher's own personal laptop using *Microsoft Word*. The researcher needed to become familiar with the data to get a thorough overview of the data that had been collected. The researcher interpreted the text while taking down initial notes (highlighting any aspect/words/phrases that seemed to be important).

The researcher then moved onto the coding stage. The researcher took the highlighted text sections and generated codes, defining their meaning (Caulfield, 2020). This involved using different colours to highlight the various phrases that corresponded to the different codes. These codes represented the idea or feelings expressed in that section of the text. See the table below.

| Focus Group Question and <i>Verbatim</i>                                                                 | Code |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Question 9 (Annexure C)                                                                                  |      |
| Participant 1: "Positive communication, positive work performance, negative communication, negative work |      |



the foundation to understand how female employees felt their superiors communicated with them.

By understanding the different codes under theme 2 it was evident when female employees had an action response, it meant that they felt that mindfulness communication strategies used by superiors, would have a positive effect on their productivity, as it made them want to “work harder”. If female employees had an emotional response, they felt that if mindfulness communication strategies were not used by superiors, this would have a negative effect on their productivity, as it made them feel inadequate/lowered their self-esteem. Neutral Response was when participants were not sure whether mindfulness communication used by superiors, would have a positive or negative effect on their productivity.

The third theme was linked to the research indicating how female employees would prefer to be communicated with, to increase their productivity. Females employees felt that supportive, empathetic, and non-judgmental communication was needed in organisations. This was linked to the literature and theoretical foundation as supportive, empathetic and non-judgmental communication, closely resembled that of mindfulness communication traits, as well as elements associated with the tenants of positive face in preserving the addressees own face.

**7.6.1 Figure 1: Table showing which code falls under which theme – linked to the number of Times Throughout the Focus-Group Transcript Female Employees Spoke About the Codes Under Each Theme in (%).**

| Themes                                                       | Code                         | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| <b>1. The Types of Communication Used in An Organisation</b> | • Supportive Communication   | 28.95%     |
|                                                              | • Unsupportive Communication | 34.21%     |
|                                                              | • Empathetic Communication   | 21.05%     |
|                                                              | • Aggressive Communication   | 15.79%     |
| <b>2. Female Employees Feelings Towards</b>                  | • Action Response            | 35.3%      |
|                                                              | • Emotional Response         | 23.53%     |

|                                                   |                                |        |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Mindfulness Communication</b>                  | • Positive Politeness Response | 11.76% |
|                                                   | • Neutral Response             | 29.41% |
| <b>3. Communication Needs of Female Employees</b> | • Supportive Communication     | 41.7%  |
|                                                   | • Empathetic Communication     | 20.8%  |
|                                                   | • Non-Judgmental Communication | 37.5%  |

Finally, the researcher transformed the analysis into an interpretable piece of writing. The researcher used vivid extracts as examples that related the themes, research questions and literature. The researcher portrayed the analysis by using empirical evidence that addressed the research questions.

## 7.7 Trustworthiness

This study focused on trustworthiness. Various terminology is used for the trustworthiness of qualitative studies, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Statistics Solutions, 2020).

Credibility is how certain the researcher is in the replicability and soundness of the findings (Statistics Solutions, 2020). The researcher-maintained credibility through the usage of persistent observation. This included the development of codes, concepts, and core categories that helped the researcher analyse the characteristics of the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher continuously read the data, analysed, theorised, and updated the concepts accordingly. This involved re-coding and re-labelling codes, concepts and core categories until the final theory delivered the intended depth of insight.

Transferability is how qualitative researchers demonstrate their study results are relevant to other contexts (Statistics Solutions, 2020). The researcher used thick description (a thorough and purposeful explanation of the setting, participants, and study design), which demonstrated that the research findings could be applied to other situations, circumstances, and environments (Statistics Solutions, 2020).

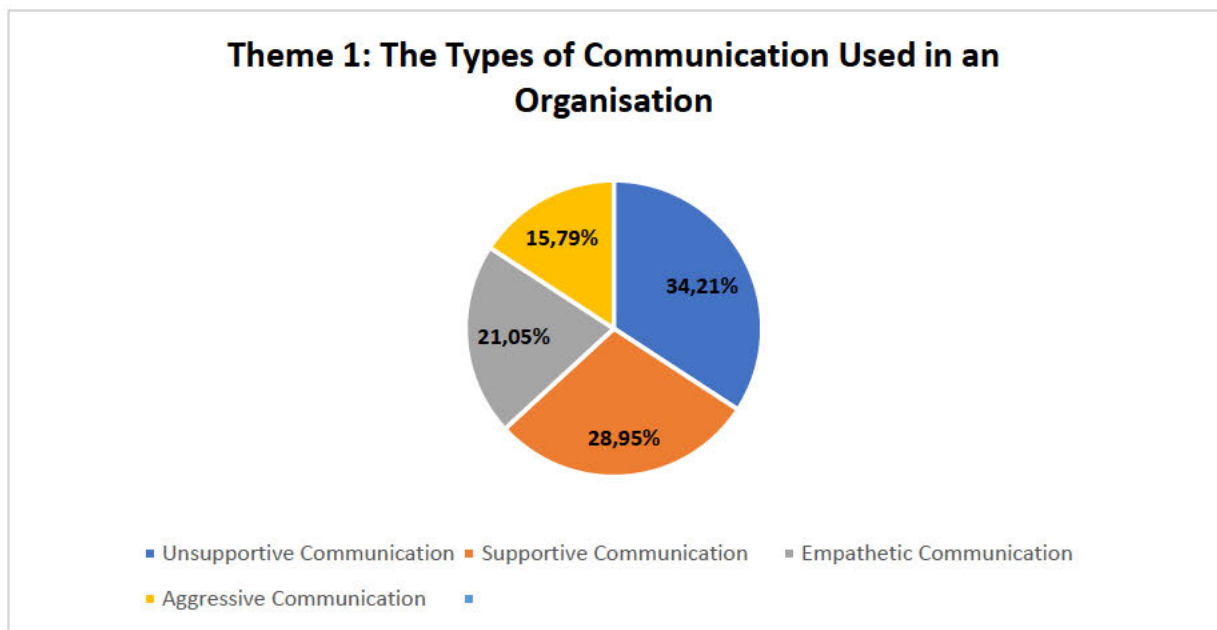
The degree of neutrality in the research findings was confirmability (Statistics Solutions, 2020). This ensured that the results were based on the participant's responses and not on any possible researcher biases or personal motivations (Statistics Solutions, 2020). The researcher used an audit trail to demonstrate every step of the data analysis, which provided justification for the decisions taken (Statistics Solutions, 2020).

Dependability is the degree to which other researchers may replicate the study, and the results will be consistent (Statistics Solutions, 2020). The processes in the study were recorded in-depth, allowing a potential researcher to replicate the study, and or produce same/similar findings (Shenton, 2003). The study design could also be used as a prototype model. The researcher presented in-depth coverage, allowing the reader to gain access to the degree to which solid research methods were practiced (Shenton, 2003). In order to establish a detailed understanding of the approaches and their effectiveness for the reader, the researcher provided text sections devoted to: (1) the design and implementation of the research, explaining what had been executed and applied at a strategic level, (2) Operational details of the collection of data, describing what took place in the focus group and (3) a reflective review of the study, highlighting the effectiveness of the research process performed (Shenton, 2003).

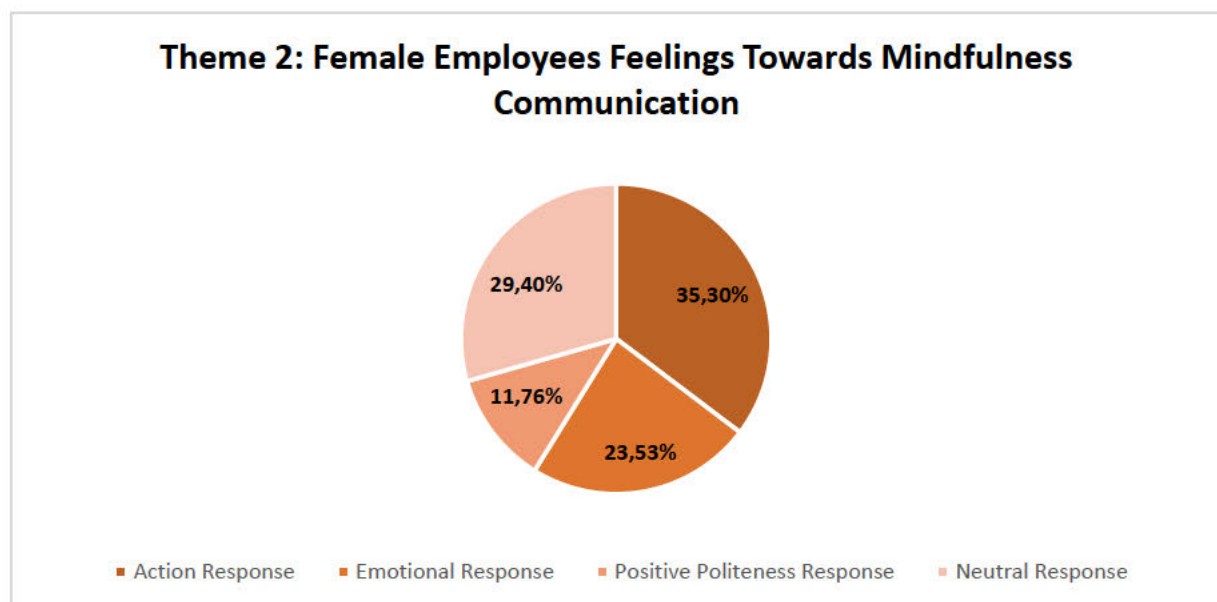
## **8 Data Presentation and Interpretation of Findings**

After conducting the focus-group interview and analysing the data set, the findings were as follows: See the following pie charts encapsulating the data per theme.

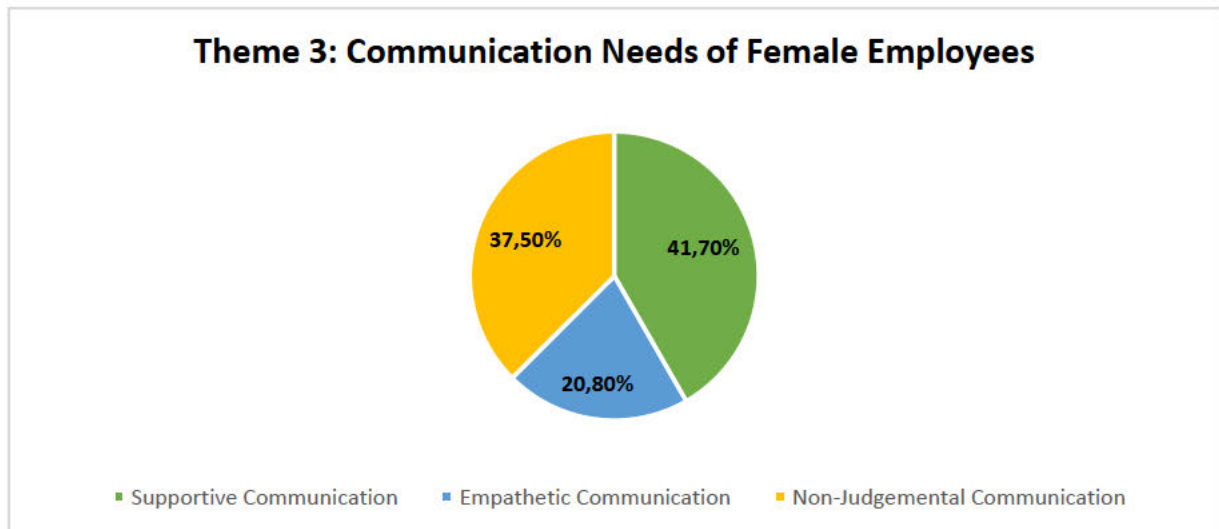
### 8.1 Theme 1:



### 8.2 Theme 2:



### 8.3 Theme 3:



The pie chart above showed that within theme 1 – 34.21% of the comments made by female employees, felt that unsupportive communication was used within the organisation. Additionally, 28.95% of the comments made, females felt that supportive communication was used. Furthermore, 21.05% of the comments made, females felt that the type of communication used was empathetic. Lastly, 15.79% of the comments made by the females felt that aggressive communication was also used within the organisation.

In theme 2 – 35.3% of the comments made by the female employees felt that if mindfulness communication were used by superiors, this would have a positive impact on their productivity. In contrast 23.53% of the comments made, females felt that if mindfulness communication were not used, this would negatively affect their productivity. Additionally, 11.76% of the comments made, females felt that they would like to be seen in a positive light (preserving their positive face). While 29.41% of the comments made, did not specify whether or not mindfulness communication would have a positive or negative effect on their productivity.

In theme 3 - 41.7% of the comments made, females felt that supportive communication would improve their productivity and 20.8% of the comments made, females felt the empathetic communication would improve their productivity. Lastly, 37.5% of the comments made, females felt that non-judgmental communication would improve their

productivity. This was significant as supportive, empathetic and non-judgmental communication are key factors of mindfulness communication (Priest, 2018).

Theme one looked at the types of communication used within an organisation. Question 1 to 4 and 11, respectively, were included in this theme. These questions were asked to gain an understanding of the types of communication elements that exist within an organisation. Females felt that within the organisation, supportive, unsupportive, aggressive, and empathetic communication was used. These questions were intentionally asked to set the atmosphere and to gain an understanding of how participants superiors communicated with them, before asking them how this communication affected their productivity.

Theme 2 included questions 7, 9 and 10, respectively. These questions answered the first research question (What opinions do female employees have on the role mindfulness communication plays in an organisation's productivity?) and objective (To understand the feelings about the role mindfulness communication may play in productivity). Within this theme, the findings showed links to the literature of the proposed research, which typically focused on past studies. The participants' responses not only supported some of the findings from previous research on mindfulness, but added to the body of research by exploring females' views of mindfulness communication, as a managerial style to improve their own productivity. Thus, addressed the research problem.

Theme 3, included questions 5, 6, 8 and 12 respectively of the research and these questions answered the second research question (How does mindfulness communication shape females view of face-saving tactics?) and objective (To understand how mindfulness communication shapes female employees' views of face saving tactics). The questions within this theme were linked to the theoretical foundation of the proposed research, which focused on Politeness Theory and specifically, aspects such as "face" and "positive politeness strategies". The participants' responses not only supported Politeness Theory of the theoretical section of this research, but showed when positive politeness techniques were employed, productivity improved.

The findings of this study supported Darren J. Good's study, *"Contemplating Mindfulness at Work: An Integrative Review."* The analysis of Good's study suggested in certain societies, mindfulness is strongly linked to the development of resilience (Good, 2015). This study was supported in the data findings, as participants' felt that if their superiors communicated with them constructively, this would positively affect their productivity.

Likewise, if their superior had to communicate with them unconstructively, this would negatively affect their productivity. For example, participant 1 commented,

“Positive communication, positive work performance, negative communication, negative work performance that sums it up. A reprimand or a complaint is not always negative communication, but it depends on how it is communicated. I’m not classing that a reprimand is negative communication, as long as it is done correctly. I’m just saying in general, negative communication, negative work performance, ja”.

Participant 3 commented; “But not nice every time, like if I never made any mistake its fine they will be nice, but if I made a mistake, you must call me and tell me [REDACTED] if you doing that thing [REDACTED] because the time I came to work, I know maybe the following day, they will say its fine, but the next day I come to work, my superior will say okay [REDACTED] when you are receiving a task you must do this and that because I know the day before maybe I never followed all the protocol.”

Participant 7 commented by stating using “constructive criticism.”

This supported the notion expressed in Good’s study, as the data showed that female employees felt positive about managers use of mindfulness communication, when asked to implement changes in both themselves and in projects. Female employees felt that they did not mind being reprimanded, as long as it was done in the correct way, “constructively” and that “positive communication” was used. This linked to resilience, as female employees felt that by giving positive criticisms, they could overcome the “criticism”, rather than letting the criticism/reprimand interfere with their productivity. This was reinforced by participant 6, who stated that superiors needed to “talk nicely” to their staff so that they could “push up the work”.

Negative politeness was supported in the transcript when asked question 10, “If you are not performing well on a task, how do you think your superior should approach you, to address the issue?” (Annexure C). Participants spoke of “understanding” their superiors when they get upset, particularly when a task was not completed. They mentioned that they (the employees) need to remember that their superiors are under just as much pressure/stress. Participant 8 said, for example,

“Remember our superiors are not running a kindergarten they can’t be behind us and kissing all our hurts and pains and whatever, they have a lot to deal with. We just have our one small task. So, if a superior comes to you and says this is not the way

it is supposed to be done, understand where he is coming from. He needs it done in a certain way, in order for everything to fall into place like dominos. If one part is not working properly, then it is going to be a problem. So, obviously, when he comes back again, he has got all the stress and pressures and then he is going to be a little harsh. So, we have to put ourselves in his shoe's sometimes".

Participant 7 responded by saying: "Well first time round I think he should come and speak to you about it and make you aware of the problem and obviously then if you just don't rectify the problem then you can understand him getting angry".

Three comments were made that spoke about understanding their superiors when they (the superiors) get angry, as participants 6 mentioned: "we need to understand that even the superiors are under pressure." Additionally, 2 comments were made that superiors, however, need to use non-judgemental and supportive communication when approaching employees about an issue. For example, participant 8 responded by saying,

"But nothing gives anybody the right to speak horribly or vindictively or personally to a person you can speak nicely. Anything you can do it in a good way."

This indicated that for the interlocutors to preserve their face, they collaborate with each other in all social communication, as the desire to maintain everyone's face depends on others (Al-Duleimi, et al., 2016). This was an unexpected finding, as the proposed research aimed to focus on the tenants of positive politeness and not negative politeness. This implication/discovery added to the research as it showed, non-judgmental characteristics and understanding – mindfulness communication characteristics. This discovery suggested that both positive and negative politeness strategies occurred during mindfulness communication.

#### **8.4 Answering the first research question (1)**

By understanding the influence of mindful communication (communicating to create relationships, with empathy and support) on productivity (attaining business objectives timeously, engage with or respect co-workers/colleagues, improving relationships and making confident decisions professionally/personally) presented an opportunity for further investigation, as little was understood about mindfulness communication used in the workplace and productivity. The researcher asked participants, "In what way do you think, the manner in which a superior communicates

with their staff will affect productivity?” - question 9 (Annexure C), Participant 8 responded by saying:

“Well obviously if he is harsh, he or she is harsh towards their staff, they not going to do their best, they just going to ride that gravy train. It’s a job they never going to go that extra mile, they never going to use their initiative, they are never going to want to better themselves. They are only going to carry on from day to day and be miserable and then the people that are associated with them become miserable and then the entire team becomes miserable.”

Participant 8’s response linked to the literature review and supported Steve Crabtree’s *“142-country study on the State of the Global Workplace.”* In Crabtree’s study, 24% of employees are highly disengaged, due to unhappy working conditions, resulting in them being unproductive and transmitting negativity to colleagues (Crabtree, 2013). Participant 8’s response illustrated this finding, as when a superior “is harsh” (unsupportive – lack of mindfulness communication), employees may become miserable and transmit negativity to colleagues (“the entire team becomes miserable”). Participant 8 further went on to say that ultimately “the work suffers”. Participant 6 further stated that: “They need to talk nicely to the staff so that we will push up the work”. This demonstrated how a manager treats/talks to his staff actively influences not only the company’s atmosphere but employee’s productivity levels.

In answering the question, “What opinions do female employees have on the role mindfulness communication plays in an organisation’s productivity”? The data findings indicated that female employees felt that if managers mindfully communicated with their staff (communicating with compassion and support), would increase their productivity. This indicated that the data findings may prove beneficial for corporates looking to improve their efficiency, by considering mindfulness training practices.

### **8.5 Answering the second research question**

According to Politeness Theory, acts that challenge the positive face of the addressee includes all actions in which the speaker shows that he/she does not respect the positive face or self-image of the addressee (example, criticisms, complaints, accusations, interruptions) (Sadeghoghli & Niroomand, 2016). This was supported in attempting to answer the study’s second research objective and question. The study found that participants felt that a positive reprimand by their superior would have a

positive effect on their performance, yet a negative reprimand would have a negative impact on their performance. The researcher asked participants, "In what way do you think being reprimanded by your superior affects your productivity?" (Question 5), participant 7 responded by saying that:

"It goes down to the way of speaking".

It is clear from the statements made by the participants that if their supervisors negatively affected their positive face, they felt that this had a negative impact on their performance. For example, Participant 8 said:

"I would say if a superior is harsh to you and I'm generalising now, you would tend to, I think, make more mistakes because you concentrating on the harshness and you have forgotten as much as you want to do it right, you will do it wrong."

In addition, they indicated that if their superior spoke to them in a more constructive way (not affecting their positive face), this would improve their effectiveness.

"So, if they speak to you in a better way, you even though they are saying something or they are reprimanding you, you would still feel motivated to continue".

Participant 7: "It's different, in the sense, for instance, if they notice your goods and then they for instance, so if they notice when you do good and then when it comes to the time when you do bad, you won't think, okay, all I do in this company is everything wrong because you know, okay, he does notice the good things I do."

An interesting finding, however, was as the participants continued to answer this question participant one, stated,

"They tend to be quite personal and don't be personal with a woman and not expect her to retaliate. You know, men they often become quite ugly and personal and then there is personal and then there is work. So, you keep it work-related and don't go personal."

This showed that when an individual's positive face was threatened, it not only has an impact on the performance of the employee but may cause hostility to arise within the company.

Another interesting finding was that female participants felt that their superior should not be “nice all the time”, especially when an employee made recurring mistakes. They felt that the first time an employee made a mistake, their superiors should communicate supportively. However, if the employee made the same mistake repetitively and the superior addressed it by communicating “nicely”, those employees would take advantage and not take their superior seriously. For example, participant 7 said,

“Ja, people are going to take you for a ride”.

Participant 7 further mentioned: “constructive criticism”, should be used.

This was an interesting discovery as the female participants’ comments supported the notion of mindfulness communication, communicating with support, empathy and without judgement. It further supported the theory of politeness, specifically an individual’s positive face. According to this theory, criticisms made to an addressee has the potential to negatively affect the addressee’s face (Sadeghoghli & Niroomand, 2016). However, the findings showed that female employees felt that if a criticism were given constructively, the criticism would not interfere with their positive face, but if the criticism were given too positively, an individual would take advantage.

The theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) suggests that certain speech acts inherently endanger either the hearer’s or the speakers’ face-wants, such as demands, offers, disputes and compliments, and that politeness is important in remedying certain face-threatening acts (Sadeghoghli & Niroomand, 2016). Positive politeness tends to help or improve the positive face of the addressee (Sadeghoghli & Niroomand, 2016). Positive politeness acts include compassion, compliments, genuine interest, sincere gestures (Abergs, 2020), closely following that of mindfulness communicative characteristics (Priest, 2018). The study’s findings supported positive politeness acts by asking participants the following question 6: “Describe how it would affect your productivity levels if your superior had to give you a positive comment before and after being reprimanded?” the following responses were given

Participant 7: “So, you would make sure you try your best cause you know he is going to acknowledge you, so it would improve it.”

Participant 1: "When you already doing your best every day and to actually be acknowledged, you know and not being downed, of course you are going to carry on doing your best."

This indicated that a speech act uttered by superiors does affect-subordinates. Females' felt that when using positive politeness strategies, it would positively improve their performance. In answering the question, how does mindfulness communication shape females' view of face-saving tactics?, the data indicated that female employees felt that when mindfulness communication, especially when positive politeness strategies were used (when their positive face is not threatened), would enhance their productivity. These data findings may prove beneficial for business aiming to implement mindfulness training to enhance their company's overall efficiency.

Overall, from the results, it was evident that through mindfulness communication, female employees felt that productivity would increase if superiors were supportive, empathetic, and non-judgmental when communicating. It was evident that female employees felt that if the communication used by superiors had an action response in them (females'), this would increase their productivity. In other words, female employees felt positively regarding mindfulness communication and productivity.

## **9 Ethical Considerations**

Research-participants were not subjected to harm (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018). Respect for the rights/dignity of research participants were prioritised (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018). Participants involved in the study could withdraw-themselves/data at any point, with no negative consequences (Annexure E). Participants/company signed full consent/gate-keeping letters before the online focus-group commenced. Protection of the information of research participants/Company "X", including privacy/confidentiality, was ensured (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018). The-researcher acted with integrity and strived for accuracy/honesty/truthfulness. Deception towards the participants and company was not acceptable (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018). The participants were aware of the affiliations of The Varsity College Research Committee – which they could contact. The researcher did not endeavour to incentivise or commodify answers and elicit responses that might be skewed due to the offering of payment or any other form considered to be bribery. No compensation/personal-advantage was given due to the nature and budget of this-research (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018). No participant underwent unjust/unfair procedures (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018), this was ensured by

simple random sampling, which maintained fairness/unbiased sample-size selection (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2018).

The researcher's ethical considerations consisted of aiming for accuracy and not falsify-information, distorting-data, misusing-information, using-inappropriate-research-methods or allowing bias to affect the findings.

## **10 Limitations**

Due to the current pandemic, the researcher had to alter the design required for "normal focus groups" and conducted online focus groups through *Skype*. This was a limitation as the researcher was unable to get the personal experience and engagement that was typical of a normal focus group. This was considered as the meeting was recorded for the researcher to repeatedly replay the audio, ensuring no important data was left out of the analysis. A delimitation was that the study focused on females employed in a predominantly male dominated profession, which might result in different data, if it were to be carried out for females employed in a predominantly female perceived organisation, or from a male perspective.

## **11 Heuristic Value**

This research is relevant to the field of communications and businesses. Organisation's may gain an interesting understanding regarding female employees' views on mindfulness communication and its role it plays in improving their work productivity – before a company decides to invest in training policies.

Additionally, due to the study focusing on the female gender, future studies and investigations from a male perspective, or the perspective of females working in a predominately feminine organisation, are worthy of investigation. Additionally, this research gave rise to an interesting topic worthy of investigation. During the focus-group when asked question 5 of the transcript, participant 4 strayed slightly off the research topic. She mentioned that men mainly work in a male predominated life and as a result, speak to females in the same tone they would speak to other males in. She further mentioned that females working with men on a permanent basis "start becoming hard" and this portrays them as being abrupt or rude.

From participant 4's comment, it would be a worthy investigation, to understand how women feel they are portrayed in a predominantly masculine industry and its effects on a company's efficiency.

Practice recommendations - researchers wanting to replicate the research should keep in mind that *Skype* was needed to conduct the focus-groups online, due to Covid-19 limiting face-to-face meetings. For future reference, researchers looking to conduct further research face-to-face interviews should be considered.

### **Closing Statement**

Little is understood about mindfulness communication used in the workplace and productivity. This is a concern as companies might/might not invest in mindfulness communication training/practices. The study aimed to add to this growing body of research by presenting more knowledge on the topic at hand, allowing businesses owners to gain an insightful perspective into how female workers' feel mindfulness communication may enhance their productivity, before a company engages in any policy training. The results of this study may prove beneficial to future company's goal of increasing their overall efficiency.

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## Annexure A: SafeAssign Screenshot of Originality





RESE8419\_2020\_HBA1\_VCDW1 - RESE8419\_VCDW1

### Step 2: Submit Assignment 7 - Research Report

Lauren-Lee Ackermann on Wed, Oct 28 2020, 10:17 PM

70% highest match

Submission ID: d124cf28-2080-441e-9cdb-01fc734a8926

**Ackermann - 1739146...**

Word Count: 17,518

Attachment ID: 3620795703

**70%**

Citations (24/24)

**1** Another student's paper

Activate Windows  
Go to Settings to activate Windows!

**1** Mindfulness Communication to Improve Productivity: A Cross-Sectional

Description of Female-Workers' Opinions Through Qualitative-Focus-Groups.

Lauren-Lee Ackermann

17391469

Dr. **1** Marchant Van Der Schyff

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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Word Count: 11897

Declaration:

## Annexure B

Concept Document Table: TITLE: Mindfulness Communication to Improve Productivity: A Cross-Sectional Description of Female-Workers' Opinions Through Qualitative-Focus-Groups

| Research purpose or aim                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Primary Research Question/s                                                                                                                                                                                  | Research Rationale and Relevance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Seminal Authors/ Sources                           | Literature Review                                                                                                                          | Paradigm                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Data Collection Method(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Ethics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Recommendations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The aim of this study is to collect data from female employees through online, <i>Skype</i> focus-groups and to analyse the data collected through thematic analysis to provide a rich overview of how female employees feel about mindfulness communication as a managerial style on the improvement of productivity.                                                                                                                                                                              | 1.How do female employees feel about mindfulness communication to improve productivity?<br><br>2.How does mindfulness communication shape females view of face-saving tactics?                               | Important to the communications sector - The research may help businesses gain an insightful perspective into how female workers' feel mindfulness communication may enhance their productivity – before a company engages in any policy training<br><br>2. Researchers own experience with mindfulness to combat ODC | Erving Goffmann [Goffman 1967] – Politeness Theory | <b>Theme 1:</b> Performance<br><br><b>Theme 2:</b> Wellbeing<br><br><b>Theme 3:</b> Leadership<br><br><b>Theme 4:</b> Mindfulness Training | <b>Paradigm</b><br><i>Interpretivist</i><br>Describe meaningful social action and experiences from the views of female employees on mindfulness and productivity.<br><br><b>Epistemology</b><br>Something is seen as knowledge when it feels right to those being studied. This research will emphasize the value-laden nature of mindfulness and its effects on productivity<br><br><b>Ontology</b><br>reality is understood as “socially constructed” from the female participants’ views on mindfulness and productivity.<br><br><b>Axiology</b><br>In this research, uniqueness will be valued | <b>Qualitative Population</b><br><br>6 South African Employees who are employed at Company “X”<br><b>Population Parameters</b><br>> Female workers >South African<br>>Belonging to a specific corporate company.<br>>Any age<br><br><b>Sampling</b><br><br>non-probability and probability to correct bias in the non-probability sampling<br><br><b>Sampling method</b><br>Convenience random sampling to account for bias produced by convenience sampling<br><br>Sampling Size 6 | <b>Method and tool/instrument</b><br>Online Focus Groups that will be conducted via <i>Skype</i> – due to Covid-19 restricting social gatherings resulting in social distancing<br><br><b>Data Analysis Method(s)</b><br><br><b>Unit of Analysis</b><br>Female participant responses about mindfulness on productivity<br><br><b>Data Analysis Method</b><br>Thematic Analysis | <b>Researcher:</b><br>No: Falsifying of information, Distorting results, Bias, misusing information and Using inappropriate research methods<br><br><b>Respondents or participants:</b><br>informed consent, confidentiality, avoiding harm, voluntary participation. Gate-Keeping Letter, Consent to record focus group<br><br><b>Limitations</b> | -35.3% of female employees felt that mindfulness communication would have a positive impact on their productivity. 23.53% of females felt that if mindfulness communication is not used this would negatively affect their productivity.<br>- 41.7% of females felt that supportive communication would improve their productivity, 20.8% of females felt the empathetic communication would improve their productivity, while 37.5% of females felt that non-judgmental communication would improve their productivity.<br><br><b>Key Contribution</b> | Business and Practice<br>1.Future studies and investigations from a male perspective or from the perspective of females working in a predominately feminine organisations are worthy of investigation.<br>2. Gave rise to an interesting investigation- would be interesting to understand how women feel they are represented in a predominantly masculine industry and how this may/may not affect a company's efficiency.<br>3. Future research show consider face-to-face focus groups<br>4. Researchers aiming to replicate the study should consider online focus groups were needed, due to Covid-19 |
| Understanding the influence of mindful communication on productivity presents an opportunity for further investigation. Little is understood about mindfulness communication used in the workplace and productivity. This is a concern because companies might/might not invest in mindfulness communication training/practices. The study aims to add to this growing body of research by presenting more knowledge on how female employees feel about mindfulness communication and productivity. | 1.To understand the feelings about the role mindfulness communication may play in productivity.<br><br>2. To understand how mindfulness communication shapes female employees' views of face-saving tactics. | Mindfulness Communication<br><br>Productivity<br><br>Face-Saving Strategies<br><br>Female Employees                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Politeness Theory (1987) by Brown and Levinson.    |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 1.Organisation/businesses alike can gain an in-depth understanding into how female employees feel about mindfulness communication as a managerial style to improve their productivity. this contribution is beneficial as it allows corporates to review the data before investing in any company policy/training to improve efficiency.<br><br>2.This study additionally adds to the growing body of research involving mindfulness and productivity.                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## **Annexure C**

### **Focus Group Sample Questions (Template)**

1. Explain how your superior communicates their expectations of you?
2. Please may you describe the type of nouns your superior uses when talking to you?
3. What is the tone that your superior uses when they give you an instruction?
4. What is the tone that your superior uses when they reprimand you?
5. In what way do you think being reprimanded by your superior affects your productivity
6. Describe how it would affect your productivity levels if your superior had to give you a positive comment before and after being reprimanded?
7. In what way do you think, the tone your superior uses affect's how you carry out a task.
8. What impact does it have on your productivity levels when your superior compliments you on a task well done?
9. In what way do you think, the manner in which a superior communicates with their staff will affect productivity?
- 10.If you are not performing well on a task, how do you think your superior should approach you, to address the issue?
- 11.What do you appreciate about your superior?
- 12.What do you think your superior values about you?

## Annexure D



### Gatekeepers letter/ Request to conduct research (Template)

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to ask for your permission to conduct research at your company.

My name is Lauren-Lee Ackermann, an Honours in Communications student at the Westville Varsity College a brand of the Independent Institute of Education (IIE). The research I wish to conduct for my Honours Project titled Mindfulness Communication to Improve Productivity: A Cross-Sectional Description of Female-Workers' Opinions Through Qualitative-Focus Groups.

This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding about the opinions female employees have on the role mindfulness communication (communicating to build relationships, with empathy and support) as a managerial communication style plays in productivity (to reach business objectives timely, connect with or understand co-workers and superiors, strengthen workplace relationships and make confident choices both professionally and personally).

The nature of your firm's participation will be for female employees to answer the researcher's series of open-ended questions regarding mindfulness communication and improved productivity, through online focus groups. A focus group is a small group meeting, in which 6 individuals express their views and opinions regarding the research topic above. I would like to make it clear that individuals who do not have access to *Skype*, unfortunately, cannot participate in the study, as the meeting has to commence online, due to the COVID19 pandemic restricting face-to-face meetings.

Using the social media tool, *Skype*, data will be collected online and cross-sectionally. Creating an overall picture of the phenomenon at a single point in time, requiring information from the female employees once-off

Throughout the focus group, the researcher will ask a series of open-ended questions to gather information on the opinions of female workers about mindfulness communication and productivity. The researcher will ask group questions and give the participants time to

respond to feedback from each other. Therefore, the researcher will lead the group through the discussion, keeping the group focused on the topic. Lastly, the allocated time for the online focus-group will average between 30 - 40 minutes.

Your company's inclusion in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw your company at any time; without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

### **Will my Company's identity be protected?**

I promise to protect your company's identity. I will not use your company/personal name in any research summaries to come out of this research. I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you or your company. I would like to ask for your permission to record the interviews, however, only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College, will have access to the interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you, your company or female staff members.

### **What will happen to the information that participants provide?**

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Honours in Communications. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the outcome of the study.

### **What happens if I have more questions about the study?**

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

**Yours Sincerely,**

**Student:** Lauren-Lee Ackermann

Signature

**Supervisor:** Marchant Van Der Schyff

Signature

**My contact details are as follows:**

Lauren-Lee Ackermann

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:**

Marchant Van Der Schyff

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(The Independent Institute of Education, 2020)



**Gatekeepers Approval (Template)**

**Consent form to conduct research at my company**

I,.....  
.....

Representative of.....

Give my permission that ..... may conduct research at my company. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at any time. I also understand that research reports are available in the library and IIE Repository unless I indicate below that I would not.

**Select below:**

- I request that my company's identity be kept confidential
- My company can be identified in the study
- The study may never be available on the repository.

- The study may be made available on the repository.
- The study may be made available on the repository after ..... months.

**Signature**

**Date**

(The Independent Institute of Education, 2020)

## **Annexure E**



### **EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET (Template)**

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lauren-Lee Ackermann and I am a student at the IIE Varsity College, in Westville. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Marchant Van Der Schyff, with the aim to gain a robust understanding, regarding how female employees feel about the role mindfulness communication (communicating to build relationships, with empathy and support) as a managerial communication style plays in productivity (to reach business objectives timely, connect with or understand co-workers and superiors, strengthen workplace relationships and make confident choices both professionally and personally). I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of how women feel about mindfulness communication and its role it may play in productivity to not only add to the growing body of knowledge on mindfulness communication in the work place but to gain an interesting and in-depth understanding from the views of female employees into how they feel mindfulness communication may improve their work productivity – before a company decides to invest in training - which may/may not prove beneficial to future company's aiming to improve their organisation's overall efficiency.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

#### **What will I be doing if I participate in your study?**

I would like to invite you to participate in this research to gain an interesting in-depth understanding regarding the views of a female employees on how you feel mindfulness communication may improve your work productivity. If you decide to participate in this

research, I would like to make note, that the social media app *Skype* will be needed to participate in this study, as the focus group will be held online.

A focus group is a small group meeting, in which 6 individuals express their views and opinions regarding the research topic above. I would like to make it clear that individuals who do not have access to *Skype*, unfortunately, cannot participate in the study, as the meeting has to commence online, due to the COVID19 pandemic restricting face-to-face meetings.

Using the social media tool, *Skype*, data will be collected online and cross-sectionally. Creating an overall picture of the phenomenon at a single point in time, requiring information from the participant once-off

Throughout the focus group, the researcher will ask a series of open-ended questions to gather information on the opinions of female workers about mindfulness communication and productivity. The researcher will ask group questions and give the participants time to respond to feedback from each other. Therefore, the researcher will lead the group through the discussion, keeping the group focused on the topic. Lastly, the allocated time for the online focus-group will average between 30 - 40 minutes.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

### **Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?**

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about mindfulness communication and the role you feel it plays in organisational productivity.

If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

### **Do I have to participate in the study?**

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

**Will my identity be protected?**

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

**What will happen to the information that participants provide?**

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Honours in Communications. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study

**What happens if I have more questions about the study?**

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

**My contact details are as follows:**

Lauren-Lee Ackermann

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:**

Marchant Van Der Schyff

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(The Independent Institute of Education, 2020)



## **CONSENT FORM (Template)**

Consent form for participants

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research conducted by Lauren-Lee Ackermann regarding how female employees feel about the role mindfulness communication (communicating to build relationships, with empathy and support) as a managerial communication style plays in productivity (to reach business objectives timely, connect with or understand co-workers and superiors, strengthen workplace relationships and make confident choices both professionally and personally).

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

**Signature**

**Date**

(The Independent Institute of Education, 2020)

## Annexure F



### CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING (Template)

#### Consent form for participants

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to allow Lauren-Lee Ackermann to audio record my interviews as part of the research to gain an in-depth understanding about the role mindfulness communication (communicating to build relationships, with empathy and support) as a managerial communication style plays in productivity (to reach business objectives timely, connect with or understand co-workers and superiors, strengthen workplace relationships and make confident choices both professionally and personally).

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve.

I understand that:

- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer.
- Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.

**Signature**

**Date**

(The Independent Institute of Education, 2020)

## Annexure G: Ethical Clearance Letter



11 August 2020

**Student name:** Lauren-Lee Ackermann

**Student number:** 17391469

**Campus:** The IIE's Varsity College, Westville Campus



**Re: Approval of The IIE Bachelor of Arts Honours in Communication Proposal and Ethical Clearance**



### HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

There are some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. You will need to **address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor before you may proceed. Please note your data collection may only proceed once you address the following issues:**

1. Clarify the research problem.
2. Replace Information Sheet, Consent Form and Gatekeeping Letter with The IIE templates.
3. Refine data collection tool. *Your supervisor needs to sign off your final data collection tool. Please resubmit.*

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

ADVTECH HOUSE

Inanda Greens  
54 Wierda Rd West  
Wierda Valley 2196  
P.O. Box 2369  
Randburg 2125



**Directors:** RJ Douglas (UK), JDR Oesch\*, MD Aitken\*, FJ Coughlan\* (\*Non-executive)

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## GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

*Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.*

**Please note:** The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.



Marchant van Der Schyff  
Supervisor



Dr Natalie Le Roux  
The IIE Honours in Communication  
Campus Post-Graduate Coordinator  
(CPC)

Source: <file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Lauren's%20Ethical%20Clearance.pdf>

## **Annexure H: Motivation (Template)**



### **FEMALE EMPLOYEES**

**I would like to invite you to participate in my study.**

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lauren-Lee Ackermann and I am a student at the IIE Varsity College, in Westville. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Marchant Van Der Schyff, with the aim to gain a robust understanding, regarding how female employees feel about the role mindfulness communication (communicating to build relationships, with empathy and support) as a managerial communication style plays in productivity (to reach business objectives timely, connect with or understand co-workers and superiors, strengthen workplace relationships and make confident choices both professionally and personally).

If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to make note, that the social media app *Skype* will be needed to participate in this study, as the focus group will be held online.

A focus group is a small group meeting, in which a group of individuals express their views and opinions regarding the research topic above. I would like to make it clear that individuals who do not have access to *Skype*, unfortunately, cannot participate in the study, as the meeting has to commence online, due to the COVID-19 pandemic restricting face-to-face meetings. Please note that confidentiality will be ensured and that you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. If you wish to participate in my study, please see my contact detail below.

Thanks in Advance,

Lauren-Lee Ackermann

**Contact details are as follows:**

██████████  
████████████████████████████████████████