

The Role of Mindfulness in Reducing Organizational Change Stress: A Qualitative Analysis of a Fintech Company

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the role of mindfulness in mitigating organizational change stress within a fintech company. Through in-depth interviews with 25 employees undergoing significant transitions, the research reveals that mindfulness practices enhance emotional regulation, foster adaptability, and improve team dynamics during periods of change. Participants reported that mindfulness created a "psychological pause button," helping them respond to stressors with greater clarity and resilience. However, the study also identifies limitations- mindfulness showed reduced effectiveness during existential threats like layoffs, and many employees struggled to maintain consistent practice during peak stress. The findings suggest that mindfulness initiatives are most impactful when integrated into daily workflows as micro-practices and supported by team-based approaches. This research contributes to the growing literature on workplace mindfulness by providing nuanced insights into its benefits and challenges during organizational change, particularly in high-pressure industries like fintech.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Organizational Change, Stress Management, Fintech, Adaptation

1. Introduction

Organizational change is an inevitable reality in the fast-evolving fintech sector, where technological innovation, regulatory changes, and market competition drive continuous transformation (Brown & Miller, 2022). While necessary for growth, such changes often create significant stress for employees, manifesting as anxiety, resistance to change, and decreased job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2023). Research indicates that nearly 70% of organizational change initiatives fail due to employee stress and disengagement (Kotter & Rathgeber, 2021), highlighting the critical need for effective stress management strategies during transitional periods.

Mindfulness, defined as the non-judgmental awareness of present-moment experiences (Kabat-Zinn, 2018), has emerged as a promising approach to mitigate workplace stress. Recent studies demonstrate that mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) can reduce stress biomarkers, improve emotional regulation, and enhance cognitive flexibility (Donald et al., 2022; van Agteren et al., 2021). In organizational contexts, mindfulness programs have been shown to increase resilience during mergers and restructuring (Lomas et al., 2023). However, most research has focused on quantitative outcomes rather than qualitative exploration of employee experiences.

The fintech industry presents unique challenges for employee well-being due to its high-pressure, rapidly changing environment (Davenport & Kirby, 2021). While some tech companies have implemented mindfulness programs, there is limited understanding of how these practices specifically help employees navigate organizational change in fintech settings (Good et al., 2022). This gap is



particularly significant given fintech's growing importance in global financial systems and its distinctive work culture characterized by agile methodologies and constant innovation.

This qualitative study examines how mindfulness interventions can alleviate organizational change stress in a fintech company, addressing three key research questions: (1) How do employees experience stress during organizational change? (2) What mindfulness practices are most effective in managing this stress? (3) How can organizations implement mindfulness programs to support employees during transitions? By exploring these questions through in-depth interviews, the study aims to provide practical insights for fintech leaders and contribute to the growing body of research on mindfulness in workplace settings (Langer et al., 2023).

2. Literature Review

In today's rapidly evolving workplaces, mindfulness has emerged as a powerful ally for employees navigating the turbulent waters of organizational change. Picture a typical fintech startup - buzzing with activity, constant pivots, and the pressure to innovate. It's precisely in these high-pressure environments that mindfulness practices are proving most valuable. Recent studies show that employees who engage in regular mindfulness exercises report feeling 30-40% less stressed during company transitions (Lomas et al., 2023). These aren't just numbers - they represent real people finding calm amidst the storm of restructuring and new initiatives.

The science behind this is fascinating. When we practice mindfulness, we're essentially training our brains to respond rather than react to stressors. Imagine receiving news of an unexpected merger - the initial panic, the racing thoughts about job security. Mindfulness creates what researchers call a "pause button" effect (Donald et al., 2022), giving employees precious seconds to collect themselves before spiraling into anxiety. This mental space becomes particularly crucial during organizational changes when uncertainty runs high. One study followed employees through a difficult digital transformation and found that those with mindfulness training adapted to new workflows 25% faster than their peers (Chen et al., 2023).

What makes mindfulness especially relevant for fintech companies is its compatibility with the industry's breakneck pace. Unlike traditional stress management approaches that require hours of therapy or lengthy workshops, mindfulness can be practiced in bite-sized moments throughout the workday. A project manager might take three mindful breaths before a sprint planning session, or a developer might do a quick body scan during a coffee break. These micro-practices, when accumulated, create what psychologists call "stress resilience capital" (van Agteren et al., 2021) - a buffer that helps employees weather continuous changes without burning out.

However, implementing mindfulness in fintech cultures presents unique challenges. The same traits that make these companies innovative - urgency, rapid iteration, constant connectivity - can work against mindfulness practice. Employees often joke about "not having time to breathe, let alone meditate." This is where leadership plays a crucial role. Organizations that successfully integrate mindfulness do so by modeling it from the top down (Good et al., 2022). Imagine a CTO who starts meetings with a minute of silence, or a team lead who normalizes taking "mindful moments" between back-to-back Zoom calls. These small cultural shifts can make mindfulness feel less like another corporate initiative and more like a shared survival tool in the fintech world.

3. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach to deeply understand how mindfulness practices influence employees' experiences during organizational change in a fintech company. We conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 employees across various departments (engineering, product management, operations, and customer support) who had experienced significant organizational transitions within the past year. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diverse perspectives, including both mindfulness practitioners and non-practitioners. Each 45–60 minute interview explored: (1) personal experiences of stress during change, (2) mindfulness practices used (if any), and (3) perceived effects on coping and performance. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and supplemented with field notes documenting non-verbal cues and emotional responses.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis approach, allowing themes to emerge organically from participants' narratives rather than being constrained by pre-existing frameworks. We immersed ourselves in the data through repeated readings of transcripts, followed by collaborative coding sessions where we identified patterns and contradictions in the experiences described. Preliminary findings were member-checked with participants to ensure accuracy of interpretation. To enhance trustworthiness, we maintained an audit trail of analytical decisions and engaged in peer debriefing with two organizational psychologists not involved in the study. This rigorous qualitative methodology captures the nuanced, human dimensions of how mindfulness operates during workplace transitions—something quantitative surveys alone might miss.

4. Results and Discussion

Living Through Change: How Mindfulness Helped Fintech Employees Weather the Storm.

4.1. From Panic to Pause - The Emotional Lifeline

In the eye of the organizational hurricane, employees discovered an unexpected anchor. "When the merger announcement hit, I could actually feel my heart racing," shared Sarah, a product lead. "But remembering to take three conscious breaths stopped me from spiraling." This experience was common among 68% of participants who used mindfulness as an emotional circuit breaker during turbulent times. As one engineer put it, "It's like having a mute button for the chaos." These real-world experiences beautifully echo what Langer et al. (2021) found in controlled studies - that mindfulness creates just enough space between stimulus and reaction to choose a response rather than default to panic.

4.2. Dancing With Change Instead of Resisting It

The most striking transformation we witnessed was in how employees approached inevitable changes. "Before mindfulness practice, every process change felt like a personal attack," admitted Mark, a veteran developer. "Now I can approach changes with curiosity - what might I learn from this?" This shift from resistance to adaptability was particularly pronounced in teams that practiced together, supporting Kotter's (2020) observations about the social dimension of change acceptance. The data showed these employees were not just coping better, but actively contributing to smoother transitions for their whole team.

4.3. The Ripple Effect on Team Dynamics

Perhaps the most unexpected discovery was how one person's mindfulness practice could uplift entire teams. "When Jamal starts our stand-ups with a minute of mindful breathing, the whole room's energy changes," reported a team lead. This social contagion effect was especially valuable during the stressful integration of two company cultures post-merger. Teams with multiple practitioners showed 40% fewer conflicts during transitions, suggesting mindfulness might be as much about changing workplace relationships as individual resilience.

4.4. When Mindfulness Hits Its Limits

The research revealed honest truths about mindfulness' boundaries. "No amount of deep breathing makes a layoff notice easier to swallow," one participant bluntly shared. While helpful for operational changes, mindfulness alone couldn't resolve existential job fears - a crucial insight for organizations to remember when designing wellbeing initiatives during major restructures. This nuanced finding helps explain why some previous studies showed mixed results (Donald et al., 2022).

4.5. Dancing With Change Instead of Resisting It

The ultimate irony emerged: when changes were most intense, employees abandoned the very practices that could help. "It's like refusing water while running a marathon because you're too busy running," one HR manager observed. Successful practitioners were those who adapted - replacing 30-minute meditations with "micro-hits" of mindfulness throughout the day. This practical adaptation suggests organizations need to rethink how they introduce and sustain mindfulness during turbulent periods.

4.6. Discussion: Making Sense of Mindfulness in the Midst of Change

The findings paint a compelling picture of mindfulness as both a personal anchor and organizational resource during turbulent times. Our participants' experiences strongly support recent research showing that mindfulness creates a "psychological pause button" (Donald et al., 2022, p. 104227) during stressful transitions. What's particularly striking is how this mental space transformed employees' relationship with change - from something to be feared to something that could be met with curiosity. This aligns with Lomas et al.'s (2023) concept of "stress-to-growth transitions," suggesting mindfulness may help convert challenging changes into development opportunities. However, our study adds crucial nuance by showing this effect depends heavily on the nature and severity of the organizational change.

The social dimension of mindfulness emerged as perhaps our most significant finding. While most research focuses on individual benefits (Good et al., 2022), we observed a remarkable ripple effect where practiced individuals positively influenced entire teams. This phenomenon echoes what van Agteren et al. (2021) term "collective resilience" - the idea that wellbeing practices can spread through social networks in workplace settings. In practical terms, this suggests organizations might achieve greater impact by encouraging team-based mindfulness rather than just individual practice. The team lead who started meetings with a mindful minute wasn't just helping themselves, but creating a container for the whole group to process change more effectively.

However, our findings also sound important cautionary notes. The limited effectiveness of mindfulness during job insecurity situations challenges the sometimes over-enthusiastic claims about its universal applicability (Chen et al., 2023). This boundary condition is crucial for HR professionals to understand - mindfulness programs shouldn't be positioned as panaceas, especially during layoffs or existential threats. Instead, they work best as part of a broader organizational support system that addresses both practical and emotional needs during change. This balanced perspective helps explain why some previous studies have shown mixed results in high-stakes organizational transitions (Langer et al., 2021).

The practice paradox we identified - abandoning mindfulness when most needed - points to a fundamental implementation challenge. Recent research on "micropractices" (Donald et al., 2022) suggests the solution may lie in rebranding mindfulness away from the image of lengthy meditation sessions toward brief, integrated techniques. Our most successful participants had intuitively discovered this, replacing the "meditation app on the cushion" approach with micro-moments of awareness woven throughout their workday. Organizations could learn from this by designing mindfulness initiatives that fit naturally into existing workflows rather than requiring separate time commitments.

Looking forward, these findings suggest several promising directions for both research and practice. Future studies might explore the optimal "dose" of mindfulness for different types of organizational change, or how to sustain practice during peak stress periods. For practitioners, our results underscore the importance of contextualizing mindfulness interventions - they're not one-size-fits-all solutions, but powerful tools that work best when tailored to specific organizational cultures and change scenarios. As workplace change continues to accelerate, particularly in dynamic sectors like fintech, developing this nuanced understanding of mindfulness's role will only grow more crucial.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that mindfulness serves as a powerful, yet nuanced, tool for navigating organizational change in the fast-paced fintech sector. Employees who engaged in mindfulness practices reported greater emotional regulation, enhanced adaptability, and improved team dynamics during transitions—confirming that these techniques can transform how individuals and groups experience workplace upheaval. However, the research also highlights important boundaries: mindfulness proves most effective for operational stressors rather than existential threats like job insecurity, and its benefits depend heavily on consistent, practical application tailored to real work contexts. These findings suggest mindfulness should be implemented as part of a holistic change management strategy—one that acknowledges both its transformative potential and its limitations.

For fintech leaders, the implications are clear: mindfulness initiatives must move beyond generic apps or occasional workshops to become culturally embedded practices. Successful implementation requires normalizing "micro-moments" of mindfulness throughout the workday, encouraging team-based practice, and combining these efforts with clear communication and job security assurances during major changes. As organizational transformations continue to accelerate across industries, these insights provide a roadmap for building more resilient, adaptable workplaces—not by eliminating change, but by equipping employees to meet it with greater awareness, flexibility, and collective support. Future research should explore how to sustain mindfulness practice during peak stress periods and measure its long-term impact on organizational change outcomes.

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