Chapter 3

Should Mindfulness Practices Be Mandatory in Business Education?

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Abstract

Business schools need to prepare students for effective, ethical decision-making. When faced with stressful life events that negatively affect wellbeing, making decisions can become more challenging. As future managers, students will need to learn how to make decisions when they are at the same time faced with stress and cognitive overload. In such situations, the brain looks for mental shortcuts in making choices to make things faster and easier, which leads to less optimal decision-making. Research shows that mindfulness meditation can effectively decrease stress and anxiety. Mindfulness meditation increases metacognition and, in the process, reduces the effects of biases, ethical blind spots, and psychological traps. Therefore, introducing students to these techniques has significant pedagogical potential for business education as students learn mindfulness meditation and show a need to include such practices in the curriculum. This chapter sheds light on two mindfulness technique cases with business school students in Lebanon and Switzerland. In these cases, the authors explore the impact of mindfulness practices on students by applying the emotional intelligence mood metre and mindfulness meditation. The authors also apply the 'response time testing' (RTT) methodology in the Swiss case to measure students' attitudes. As a result, the authors provide simple confirmations from their classrooms that engaging in mindfulness activities and meditation is a simple and productive exercise that is essential for student wellbeing, learning, and decision-making. Therefore, the authors' purpose is to encourage and give mindfulness practices a viable place in business education.

Keywords: Business school education; decision-making; perception biases; mindfulness meditation; Lebanon/Switzerland; response time testing

Introduction

Decision-making is a crucial competency at the heart of managerial behaviour (Johnson & Kruse, 2009) and an essential leadership ingredient in organizations (Hoy & Tarter, 2011; Simon, 1987). Traditionally, business schools prepare students by teaching them to use evidence-based models and analytical tools. Additionally, this approach is complemented by a focus on data-driven decision-making (big data and artificial intelligence/machine learning), as well as 'out of the box' thinking such as 'Design Thinking' (Razzouk & Shute, 2012). However, knowing how tools and methods work is only half the story. One needs to be aware of how the input given to these models is created and how the output is processed (Özleblebici & Çetin, 2015).

This brings us to perception on one side (input), as well as to the conclusions managers draw from the results that these tools provide (output) (Roy, Giri, Cowdhurry, Matzoumder, & Das, 2020). Perception is a selection process. Only 5% of what our eyes perceive reaches our brains (Morin & Renvoise, 2018). By processing the data provided by our senses, perception creates something meaningful (Robbins & Judge, 2015). The construction of such meaning by the brain will influence the decision-making process.

Students will become future managers who will make many decisions in stressful situations. It is well-documented that stressful work or stressful life events affect emotions, cognition, behaviour, and mental health (Cohen, Murphy, & Prather, 2019; Savolainen, Oksa, Savela, Celuch, & Oksanen, 2021; Schwartz & Pines, 2020; Tahara, Mashizume, & Takahashi, 2021). According to the mental noise theory, when people are stressed, their perception process is perturbed by rushing thoughts in their minds (Clayton & Frey, 1997; Covello, 2002). The brain becomes a boisterous place where emotions and thoughts play gatekeepers (selection) and architects (i.e. they build meaning from our senses) (Kahneman, Sibony, & Sunstein, 2021).

Today, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people are experiencing higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Tahara et al., 2021). University students' lives altered abruptly in every way. They had to face the fear of the contagious virus and cope with the accompanying social and economic woes. In the end, students found themselves isolated on many levels. Online education, social distancing, and the constant fear of serious illness preoccupied everyone's thoughts and emotions. Thus, educators must be ready to help anxious students to manage and cope with stress by developing more capacity for present-moment awareness. This can be achieved by adopting mindfulness practices which educators can use to reduce student stress and encourage learning.

Mindfulness meditation as a mindfulness practice is a growing field of study. Mindfulness is 'an efficient practice for improving the perception and expression of one's emotions, emotional assimilation or facilitation, and emotional understanding and regulation' (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021, p. 9). It is a 'non-judgmental observation of the ongoing stream of internal and external stimuli as they arise' (Baer, 2003, p. 125), as well as 'one's ability to maintain awareness in the present moment' (Huerta, Carberry, Pipe, & McKenna, 2021, p. 640). An example of

mindfulness practice is meditation, defined as 'a form of mental training that aims to improve an individual's core psychological capacities, such as attentional and emotional self-regulation' (Tang, Hölzel, & Posner, 2015, p. 1). It allows for observing pain sensations non-judgementally and thus reduces stress-associated pain (Baer, 2003).

The literature shows that mindfulness practices can build students' resilience (Rogers, 2013) and decrease stress, anxiety (Aránega, Sánchez, & Pérez, 2019; Bamber & Schneider, 2016), and depression (Ratanasiripong, Park, Ratanasiripong, & Kathalae, 2015). Mindfulness practices such as meditation can build productive habits that help students in their university years and later in their careers. Personality characteristics such as determination, passion, and the pursuit of excellence contribute to students' overall psychological wellbeing. Strength of character also helps students perceive a life event as less stressful, which contributes to their wellbeing and to building characteristics such as courage, humility, integrity, justice, and transcendence (Seijts, Monzani, Woodley, & Mohan, 2022)

Although there are limited studies on the effects of delivering mindfulness practices and courses (Baverstock & Hulatt, 2021), there is enough scientific evidence in the literature that shows the benefits of mindfulness practices and mindfulness meditation on students' wellbeing and capacity to learn. Our purpose in this chapter is to show that mindfulness practices are simple and effective ways to improve the quality of teaching and do not need prior preparation or expertise. The chapter is divided as follows:

First, we shed light on the benefits of mindfulness practices and meditation. Next, we discuss decision-making as a mental process, highlighting the role of perception biases and ethical blind spots. Then, we reveal some business education challenges that demonstrate the need for mindfulness practices. Finally, on the practical level, we use two case studies from Lebanon and Switzerland as guidelines to show how our role as educators changes when we engage our students deeply using mindfulness. In the Swiss case, we explore the impact of such mindfulness practices by applying the innovative 'RTT' methodology. As a result, we argue that since business education aims to train students to improve the quality of their decision-making, we need to find ways to fill the gap between knowing and doing. Therefore, we provide ample evidence from the literature complemented with real-life cases that we hope will set the stage for others to follow. Our chapter reveals that engaging business students in mindfulness practices and meditation is a modest task with positive, much-needed outcomes.

Mindfulness and Mindful Meditation

Students face many sources of stress, including academics, family problems, finances, relationship management, and planning for their careers (Weis, Ray, & Cohen, 2020). One way to help students manage through times of stress is by practicing mindfulness. As Marques (2019) expresses:

> The mindfulness-based practice is an advantage far beyond mere business education. Yet, it definitely amplifies ethical awareness,

> and can help students understand some of the essential facts of life, such as the impermanence of everything, and the role we play in enhancing the quality of life for ourselves and others …. Through its deep reflective nature, it can also effectively resolve concerns, confusion and misconceptions about ethics and morality. Thanks to its aspect of internal reflection, students may feel more engaged in their educational experience …. (p. 20)

After practicing mindfulness, students report significant personal growth based on new knowledge and reflection (Buttarazzi, 2020). Moreover, mindful meditation can reduce anxiety through self-regulation and orientation (Bamber & Morpeth, 2018), causing neuroplastic changes in the structure of the brain regions associated with emotional regulation, attention, and self-awareness. It also treats clinical disorders and facilitates the presence of a healthy mind, body, and emotions (Behan, 2020; Tang et al., 2015). Student programmes with formal meditations and informal practices (rather than just brief mindful activities) are interventions that can help reduce student stress levels (Hindman, Glass, Arnkoff, & Maron, 2014). Students learn to leverage their psychological resources and personality strengths while pursuing goals. While others may passively react to their environments, students trained in self-regulation techniques may be more likely to achieve academic goals (Luthans, Luthans, & Chaffin, 2021). For example, research revealed that mindfulness could help overcome the adverse effects of COVID-19 (Arslan, 2022). Students can acquire a heightened sense of control which reduces burnout and leads to higher emotional functioning (Osman, Hamid, & Singaram, 2021). Additionally, as mindfulness is inexpensive and beneficial, it would allow students to feel more relaxed and reach higher states of 'self-knowledge' and motivation (Aránega et al., 2019). Mindfulness meditation also enhances moral reasoning, compassion, and mindfulness (Pandey, Chandwani, & Navare, 2018). It helps students become better leaders (George, 2012) as they learn to stay in the 'present' moment (Randerson, 2020). Mindfulness enhances business self-efficacy and interpersonal skills (Rieken, Schar, & Sheppard, 2016). Adopting mindfulness practices and mindfulness meditation in management courses can have significant pedagogical potential for business education (Yang & Goralski, 2016).

Aside from business schools, mindfulness education is a central part of experiential learning in other popular fields such as psychology and medicine (Baverstock & Hulatt, 2021). For example, it is common to hear of 'mindful nurse practitioners' (Baverstock & Hulatt, 2021) or 'mindful lawyering courses', which encourage deep listening and client simulations in law schools. Introducing such mindfulness practices can help students live more 'reflectively, rather than reactively' (Brostoff, 2017, p. 162).

In addition to the above, studies also show a positive relationship between mindfulness and emotional intelligence, especially when dealing with emotional regulation. After mindful meditation, students understand their emotions better and feel less emotional exhaustion as they manage stressful life events (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021). Training interventions based on mindfulness promote

emotional awareness, acceptance, and recognition. The innovative technique of developing emotional intelligence through mindfulness meditation is established in diverse settings (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021). Moreover, mindfulness practices can build creativity. Personal responses to creative challenges can energize business students into learning and thus provide an optimal foundation for university education and the outside world (Sunley, Harding, & Jones, 2019). By helping students acquire mindfulness skills, we as educators can enable them to detect signs of stress and anxiety to which they can directly respond rather than react. This acknowledgement usually happens before anyone, including academic advisors, is aware (Baverstock & Hulatt, 2021).

Decision-Making as a Mental Process

People make decisions constantly, and a substantial majority of these is made unconsciously (Thompson, & Waltz, 2007). With his New York Times bestseller 'Thinking fast and slow', Nobel Prize winner Kahneman (2012) introduced a simple but solid concept of decision-making composed of two systems. System one involves rapid, effortless, and automatic answers, whereas system two is slow and effortful. According to Kahneman (2012), most of our decisions are made by system one, even if we might think these decisions are the product of a rational conscious process. Decision-making is thus an error-prone process. According to this dual theory, we can assume that system one is in charge of the student's decision-making most of the time. We will show that students can become more aware of their thoughts and emotions through mindfulness practices. In what follows, we want to highlight two significant aspects of decision-making as a mental process.

Perception Biases

Essentially, perception is about how our brains create meaning out of the numerous stimuli it receives from our senses. The brain will use memory, which is not necessarily the most appropriate, but the most effortlessly read and provides the fastest access. The available rapidly accessible memory patterns may differ from person to person and moment to moment. Values, beliefs, childhood memories, and emotions all intermingle and affect how people choose, decide, and behave.

Consequently, each person has their unique view of the world. These factors might not be very stable and can be strongly influenced by the circumstances in which people find themselves. Thus, how they see the world around them creates individual mental shortcuts resulting in judgement errors. From a purely biological perspective, the creation of meaning from what our senses perceive must be assessed as quickly as possible. Mental shortcuts, or heuristics, respond to this primary need and change the course of decision-making. Those perceptual biases that happen when making decisions impact overall behaviour. How a person makes decisions, under what circumstances and perceptual influences, distorts and causes an error, which has important implications for organizational conduct (Sharma, 2020).

Ethical Blind Spots

Unethical behaviour makes headlines as people ask how stories like the Lehman Brothers and others could happen. But while some of the actors are well aware of their actions' unethical nature or impact, others act unethically and appear unaware of their 'unintentional' morally questionable behaviour. Sezer, Gino, and Bazerman (2015) identify three sources of such behaviour: implicit biases, temporal distance from an ethical dilemma, and decision biases that lead people to disregard and misevaluate others' ethical lapses.

Judgement distortions caused by emotions or judgement heuristics, biases, or psychological traps are extremely powerful when making decisions and can make people believe their behaviour is ethical. 'Ethical blind spots' are simply those biases and judgement heuristics in 'behavioral ethics'. To be aware of such biases means business students must be trained during their university years to understand the effect of such mental shortcuts on their decision-making. But are business schools preparing students for optimal decision-making?

Business Education Challenges

Business schools claim to prepare students for the corporate world. Organizational behaviour has been part of the curricula of business and management schools, where business students learn about decision-making biases and distorted perceptions. Admittedly, engaging students in exercises that show they are gullible to psychological traps is challenging. Students learn best or are more likely to accept this when they experience a situation where they realize their own biases are taking place (Rabinowitz & Fender, 2018). *To reduce biases, judgement heuristics, or perceptual distortions, students need to become more self-aware and socially aware*. Knowing something does not imply knowing how to do it. If one of the goals of business education is to develop students' decision-making skills, then we need to find ways to close the gap between knowing what quality decisions are and the ability to make them. Adopting a philosophy of mindfulness can be a new way to teach perception (Nodulman, 2018). Below are two ways to do this.

Teach Metacognition

Metacognition can be defined as the awareness of a person's own mental processes which includes the ability to recognize one's own biases and decision-making abilities (Szczepanik et al., 2020, p. 1). Metacognition 'is associated with greater recruitment of cortical activity brain areas involved in self-referential and empathetic processing' (p. 13). Students who score higher in 'metacognitive ability' exhibit more positive emotions such as joy and love and the capacity to experience pleasure and are physically more healthy. When students realize that their decisions are based on biased cognition and emotions, they can choose to respond differently by building metacognitive

awareness through mindfulness. Mindfulness practices, therefore, cultivate students' attention in a self-directed way rather than a reactive way to sudden changes or stressors. Such activities help students accept and regulate negative thoughts and feelings.

Moreover, mindfulness practices enable students to view stressful life events more objectively, leaving room for personal growth and development. For example, students who undergo mindfulness-based group therapy (Koru Mindfulness) have high attention spans and better performance (Weis et al., 2020). Hence, cultivating business students' *metacognitive* awareness during university years can be advantageous.

Teaching Ethical Behaviour and Social Responsibility

Research has shown that ethics education can decrease narcissism and immoral decision-making in business students and thus be a tool for more conscious deliberations and empathy (Marques, 2019). The benefits of teaching business ethics are currently a subject of debate; however, there is consensus that business schools realize the importance of teaching graduates to be 'ethical' future graduates.

Business education has received negative critiques from scholars (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005). Criticism about the business school's disciplinary approach, misconceptions about business and morality, disappointment with ethics education, and fears about business students' apparent lack of empathy have been raised (Marques, 2019). Although not all of those factors are in educators' control, educators can still make a positive contribution.

Educators of business ethics courses need to strive not only to have graduates who understand theories of ethical decision-making, but also who can apply what they have learned when faced with challenges. In the delivery of a business course, it is of utmost importance for educators to incorporate 'interventions' that help students recognize their own 'susceptibility to perpetuating unethical business behaviors and to identify ethical issues specific to their real-world projects' (Tomlin, Metzger, & Bradley-Geist, 2019, p. 731). Intervention includes giving students the chance to practice real-world ethical dilemmas in all business education curricula. Students should be taught directly that humans who are rarely rational are often 'fallible', especially regarding cognitive biases. Making choices and evaluating options with resultant outcomes in light of such awareness will equip students with more objectivity and success in managing real-world ethical problems. Although the subject is challenging, students learn through case studies, simulations, and testimonials that choices can be reflected on through unbiased perception and cognitive and emotional processes (Tomlin et al., 2019).

Students often find themselves facing ethical dilemmas. To bring about behavioural changes in students, ethics education needs to be released from the 'traditional approach'. When students become aware of their biases, through metacognition techniques, they are more likely to judge fairly, identify real-world problems, and modify their behaviour accordingly (Tomlin, Metzger, Bradley-Geist, & Gonzalez-Padron, 2017).

Case Studies

The following sections provide evidence from our own experience as business school professors.

Mindfulness Practices (Lebanon)

COVID-19 was only one of many hardships the Lebanese have faced since 2019. In the past two years, the Lebanese youth participated in the 17 October 2019 revolution and have faced an unprecedented political, financial, and economic crisis. On 4 August 2020, the traumatic Beirut explosion caused many deaths, injuries, and left an estimated 300,000 people homeless. Suddenly, Lebanese middle-class families found themselves having lost all their savings as the currency lost its value. As a result, 80% of the Lebanese population now live in poverty. The pressure on families to provide basic needs has taken its toll on university students. As a professor whose mission is not only to disseminate and facilitate knowledge but also to cater to my business students' psychological and emotional needs as they learn, I took it to heart.

Every semester, I engage first-year and graduate students in two mindfulness activities. First, I develop their emotional intelligence through the mood-metre exercise. Second, I encourage 10-minute mindfulness meditations every Friday at the beginning of class.

The Mood Metre Exercise.   As students enter class, I play soft classical music. Next, I always begin the course by showing students a 'mood metre' graph of emotional intelligence (Fig. 3) adapted from Caruso and Salovey (2004). I ask my students: 'How are we feeling today? What emotions do you feel? What is your energy level?' Students are encouraged to tap into their state of being in the present moment. The mood metre graph shows an *x*-axis measuring their emotions (negative to positive) and a *y*-axis of their energy levels (low to high). Students reflect and give their *x–y* coordinates at the beginning of class, then voluntarily provide their mood again at the end of class to reflect on any changes. I used the mood metre consistently in all courses, especially my online courses, when COVID-19 cases surged and the economic crisis worsened. I did not know its impact on my students until I received my evaluations.

Throughout the years, my student evaluations were consistently positive. I contribute a part of this success to mindfulness practices. Common themes consistently emerged from 90% of the students. Summarized below are excerpts from students' anonymous feedback in the Fall and Spring semesters (2019–2020). The purpose of those entries is to reveal the insights students share after having been exposed to mindfulness education in business courses.

Guided Mindful Meditation.   The second activity my business students participate in is that of weekly guided mindfulness meditation. With the lights turned off and the curtains closed, a dark room with a vibrational sound in the background sets the mood for meditation. Students close their eyes and are guided through with a calm voice, breathing counts, positive affirmations, and moments of silence. After a 10-minute meditation and feeling more connected to my
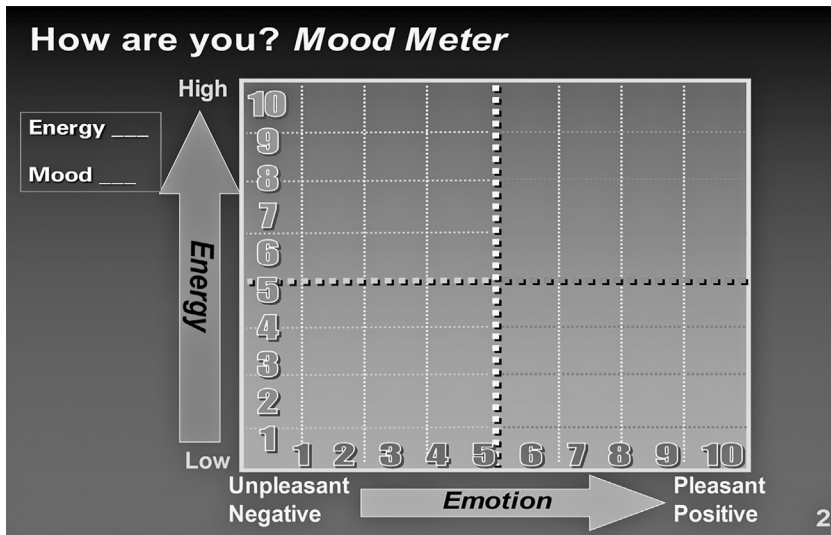
Fig. 3.   Mood Metre. *Source*: Adapted from Caruso and Salovey (2004).

students, I ask them how they feel. One student calls out 'much needed', and a couple of others simultaneously say 'calm'. Another says, 'I feel lighter', almost as if insinuating to the class that she carries a lot on her shoulders.

Categories	Student Feedback
Emotional intelligence	• 'This course allowed me to self-reflect. From all the courses I took in this university, this course by far increased my self-awareness and emotional intelligence.' • 'This course should be an elective for all students from different majors! This course increases students' awareness'
Positive energy	• 'The Doctor was so professional, always having a good spirit and a smile on her face. The best course I ever took!!' • 'I can confidently say that Dr Harajli is what LAU needs to improve its business program and climb up the rankings. She knows how to keep a class engaged. Her energy is contagious She is a wonderful human being with very interesting and useful knowledge.' • '*The dynamics of the class, Dr Dunia is so positive, and she reflects it on her students which made us more motivated and productive. It is the only course I felt I am somewhat in class because we would open our camera and interact as friends. Also, her team projects enhanced our social skills. I LOVE DR DUNIA she really helped shape my personality and taught me much more than the course material*.'

(*Continued*)

(*Continued*)

Categories	Student Feedback
Emotional/mental wellbeing	• 'I loved the participation. This course is so beneficial it aided me in different aspects (personally, mentally, educational) Dr Harajli is the best because she tried her best to unlock this dark character, we have within ourselves due to stress and insecurities and worked on enhancing our weaknesses' • 'Drs have it hard in the lockdown but trust me students have it harder in trying to learn online on one side and seeing their future burn down with the country on the other). Other LAU professors are NOT qualified to teach online! I would easily recommend Dr Dunia to perform a seminar to lead other faculty members on how things should be when teaching online.' • 'I wish all the Drs are like Dr Dunia she is more of a friend than Dr she is very understanding, fun, knowledgeable, well spoken, interesting, and caring. She cares about the students' mental health unlike everyone else.'
Mindful presence	• 'This course has stretched my mind and I'm so thankful. She is the perfect woman for this course. The professor was reachable and challenged the process of learning/applying everything that we encountered. It was a holistic learning process.' • 'I learned a lot and I became really interested in every single point we talked about.'
Life Changing course	• 'Dr Harajli is an amazing scholar practitioner, this course simply changed my life and made me experience new horizons.' • 'I am not the person I am after this course. She made us self-learn and encouraged us at every step. This course must be taken more care of and must be delivered to every MBA student at least.' • 'The professor *works on changing your mindset to the better and making you want to thrive for success*.'
Empathetic professor	• 'The way the course was delivered is unique. Real-life application of the material – the interaction – the subjects discussed – the presentation techniques – the prof felt like a mentor and a friend.' • 'I already took with Dr Dunia business communication last year on campus and although this course was online, it was as interesting as the on-campus courses with her Really Dr Dunia was beyond empathetic when dealing with every student.' • '*She is so professional yet makes you feel so engaged with her. A role model she is*.'

Source: Authors' own.

Feedback from students was similar across both online and in-class courses. I tried my utmost to develop my students' metacognition and my consciousness about students and teaching.

Below is a list of themes that emerged from business students' feelings after meditation.

- Tranquillity
- Relief from stress/anxiety
- Energized
- Peaceful
- Positive
- Connectedness

The vignettes below provides more details and shows how neuromarketing students express themselves. The moment when students share their meditation experiences, I begin to feel my mission as an educator being realized. I start to feel like a life coach, ready to help, guide, and ensure that students are less anxious and that they understand the purpose behind a quality education. Therefore, it is no longer a surprise when I meet students who vividly remember examples and activities given in class years later. Energy is contagious, and when a professor emits positive energy, there is a sense of connectedness with students that livens up the learning process, making it more enjoyable, interactive, and memorable.

Student Feedback
'After meditation I felt soothed, relaxed, less anxious and energized.'
'The breaths I took relaxed me a little and put in me in a blissful state. Random but subtle thoughts start emerging, whenever they pop up, I just take deeper breaths and try to concentrate on the act of exhale and inhale. After about 10 minutes, a firm dissociation between me and my thoughts start to form, and I'm watching them go by like clouds, and I'm the one cloud gazing. And a feeling of peace is starting to come I feel less stressed....'
'Before meditating, I thought how I really feel, I was a bit sad, stressed and overthinking everything. After meditating I really felt relaxed, smiling without even knowing it and felt that the tension that been built up from today and the days before just left my body and that my mind took a break from himself. "This activity makes you mentally leave all dimensions of the world and enter your own world; it helps you to ride and live the waves of smoothness and comfort of feelings."'

'Before meditation I had a lot on my mind, now I am so calm. I am soothed. I let go of all the toxicity happening around. In the process I felt like something was leaving my body through my arms and chest. I felt a negative energy let go instantly.'

'Before this course, I never realized that I needed to meditate. After meditating, I felt like there was a heavy load that came off my shoulders, I was relaxed. I felt like all the stress that I was passing through because of our country and COVID all disappeared while meditating. Meditation made me feel a feeling I never felt before.'

'When I meditate, I feel that my muscles relaxed, my mind calm and empty, and I feel that I was holding a huge rock on my shoulders and then it suddenly released.'

'I am passing through hard times ever since last month. Many events happened lately that affected on my mental health, my father is very sick, I have many exams, finals are on the way. I am already stressed. When we meditate in class, I feel all the negative energy left my body. I feel every word the speaker says and apply them with all my heart. Dr Dunia, you asked us to reflect our meditations in one word and my reply is "much needed". Thank you for teaching us something that we do use in our daily lives, something that makes us better. Now, whenever I feel stressed, I meditate, and I swear I really feel better.'

'I was anxious about the final period of the semester as I had many deadlines and exams. Meditation gave me a whole new perspective, something dark became bright during that instance. I started meditating constantly as my daily morning routine, which taught me that I should become conscious of my unconscious thoughts and my behavior towards my overthinking. Moreover, came to realization that the mind is the body and what the mind believes, the body acts. I felt like my breathing altered. It pushed me to remember to always try and be conscious to be able to stay at peace, which is very difficult and challenging. That aided in being aware of my behavior/thoughts and that needed adaptation.'

'During class meditation I felt as if I was seeing myself from above, my thoughts aren't clouding my brain, instead I can see them going by in front of me like cars passing by. I'm observing them. I'm not defined by what happen. I'm pure consciousness away from the noise. Instead of stress controlling me I can see it passing by. Thoughts are deeper and slower, I'm aware of them. It's okay to feel a certain way, just accept it as part of the thoughts. Able to appreciate who I am more and see myself from above, a part of the universe. I am in control. Stress escaping. I released tension and tightness. Aware of the moment instead of stressing on unnecessary thoughts.'

'The mindful meditations we do in class are really a need. I never realized that I needed to meditate. After, I felt like there was a heavy load that came off my shoulders I felt like all the stress that I was passing through because of our country and COVID all disappeared while meditating.'

'Meditation made me so happy and positive, relaxed and I felt so much better. I started doing this before sleeping, and every time I wake up, I am always excited to do it again. Since doing this meditation I became much more productive. As someone who is surrounded by anxiety most of the time, I did not know it was possible to be this calm after this meditation.'

The student testimonials are from business students who have expressed their feelings with utmost transparency.

Mindfulness Practices (Switzerland)

The school of management of Fribourg is part of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland and provides Bachelor's, Master and Postgraduate education. The number of students per class in our management school is 25. These relatively small classes grant optimal learning conditions as they provide sufficient room for interaction between the students and the professor. Trust is a crucial success factor for a productive and engaging relationship. Therefore, when I start a new class and encounter new students at the beginning of the semester, I take sufficient time to present myself. I do not only talk about my education and professional experience but also my interests and passions. One of them is meditation. I have meditated regularly for more than 20 years.

My journey with mindfulness meditation and teaching started in the Autumn of 2017. After presenting my interests at the beginning of a new class in strategic management, and students asked me if they could learn more about meditation. I was surprised by this question and promised them I would think about it and work out a proposition. Though my personal experience with meditation was rich and broad, I could not rely on a specific education to teach them properly. Indeed, I did not want to disappoint my students and leave their requests without an appropriate and adequate answer.

On the other hand, I was supposed to teach a class in strategic management and not in mindfulness meditation. Here is what I decided: At the beginning of each session, we would dedicate 10 minutes to a straightforward practice of mindfulness meditation. To guide us through the mindfulness approach, I chose an app that was highly rated by its numerous users. The meditation app proposed an introduction programme composed of 20 meditations, each lasting for 10 minutes.

At the beginning of our first meditation session, I asked the students to close all laptops and keep their smartphones out of reach. I launched the introduction programme's first session, and a gentle voice guided us through a simple meditation exercise. The class remained very quiet. We repeated this exercise in the following weeks. Four meditation sessions later, I became curious to

learn more about their experience. I asked the students to share how they went through this new mental environment. The feedback I received was very encouraging. Some students declared that meditation prepared them to become more focussed in class. Other students said they enjoyed this moment in their bubble where they felt good. But some students said that they encountered some difficulties engaging in it but were encouraged (or should I say inspired?) by their classmates' feedback, they felt they should try again. This overall very positive feedback encouraged me to continue to meditate for 10 minutes each lesson during the autumn semester.

As a teacher, I discovered multiple benefits, which compensated to a great extent for the 10 minutes sacrificed for meditation. First of all, these 10 minutes of mindfulness helped me to be fully present in my teaching. But more importantly, this shared moment of mindfulness meditation created a better connection with the students, which manifested in the ease and fluidity of interactions. Finally, students' higher concentration levels and focus allowed me to move faster through the curriculum and dedicate more time for practice and interaction.

Based on the encouraging results of this first experiment, I decided to propose mindfulness meditation to all management classes. I stress 'propose' because a vast majority of the students (at least 90%) needed to favour this experience. Over the last four years, 80% of the management classes have chosen to practice mindfulness meditation. In neuromarketing courses, I decided to make the mindfulness meditation experience part of the class. Every lesson starts with 10 minutes of mindfulness meditation, and everybody is invited to participate. Students who do not desire to participate are requested not to disturb their classmates.

Eager to know how strongly students are involved with the practice, I decided to perform a test with iCode. This RTT software developed by Neurohm allows one to measure the accessibility of attitudes or the level of conviction (Matukin & Ohme, 2016). During the RTT, participants are asked to agree or disagree with the statements projected on a screen (computer, smartphone, or tablet). The software captures two dimensions of the answers: what people say and how fast (calibrated with the individual aptitudes) people respond. I submitted two affirmations to students ($n = 59$) following the neuromarketing class in the bachelor or the master programme who had experienced three mindfulness meditation sessions.

For the first question as shown in Fig. 4, 87% of the participants said they felt good during the meditation. The second value in the solid green zone indicates that 55% of the respondents showed a high conviction in their responses. In other words, 55% were really feeling good – the remaining 32% said that they felt good but showed hesitation in their response. On the no-side, we find 13% answered no to the affirmation, but only 3% of the students showed a high conviction in their responses. The remaining 10% on the no side showed hesitation. In the second statement, however, 70% (17% less than the first question) said they were willing to continue with the mindfulness meditation practice.
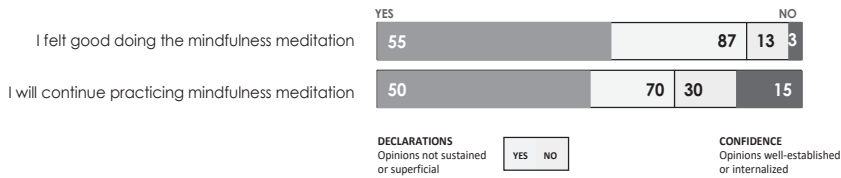
Fig. 4.   Results for Two Affirmations Submitted to Students ($N = 59$) Following the Neuromarketing Class. *Source*: Authors' Own.

About 50% of this group responded with a high level of conviction. We find that 30% of the students disagree with the statement on the no-side. Half (15%) of this 'no'-group is firmly convinced of their answer.

These numbers illustrate how a relatively small group of students perceive mindfulness meditation in the short term. More in-depth and larger-scale research would be necessary to draw more decisive conclusions. Moreover, many questions remain open such as how these numbers will evolve when students have more sessions. Would it convince the hesitant group (47% for question 1; 35% for question 2)? And if so, would they go to the highly convicted yes or no side? We also do not know if more extended practicing periods would show sustainability or fluctuation of their attitudes.

Conclusion

The mission of education is a spiritual one. It is a calling that infuses lives with meaning and purpose. Mindfulness practices nourish students' spiritual nature and allow them to become aware of the dynamics of thoughts and emotions. As a result, it is very likely that the quality of perception significantly increases as the noise decreases and the observation is more significant. Learning how to practice mindfulness meditation is a simple and solid activity that should be incorporated into the business school curriculum for several reasons. First, it improves teaching quality, as shown in student testimonials; Second, it helps students' learning outcomes and manages biases that may impede optimal decision-making. And third, a pedagogical environment that builds self-regulation capacities is crucial if business education is to remain future-oriented.

This chapter argued for the need for mindfulness practices through a review of the relevant literature and discussion of two case studies where students provided feedback after practicing mindfulness meditation. Additionally, the chapter connected the concepts of perceptual distortions, decision-making, business education, and mindfulness practices for a more aware pool of business graduates. Every mindfulness practice is positively related to students' 'self-esteem, self-acceptance, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, and negatively correlated with neuroticism' (Thompson & Walz, 2007). Most students who become *mindful* have better intrapersonal and interpersonal communication skills and begin to embrace more self-discipline, focus, empathy, teamwork, and leadership (Huerta et al., 2021).

To this end, we firmly believe that mindfulness practices should be mandatory in business schools since their scientifically validated benefits can significantly impact individual, organizational, and societal levels.

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