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Exploring the Impact of Guided Meditation on Workplace Creativity: A Pilot Study Among Managers in A-Grade Hotels of North Goa

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Abstract:

Background:

The workplace creativity in Indian corporate sector is underexplored and inadequately documented, but creativity is increasingly recognized as a vital component for innovation and productivity, particularly in fast-paced sectors such as hospitality and IT. Factors like organizational culture, leadership styles, and stress management techniques, including mindfulness and meditation, have demonstrated an influence on creativity within the workplace. Integrating interventions like Cyclic Meditation (CM), a structured guided meditation approach has the potential to boost employees' creative performance

Aim:

This study explored the impact of a 6-week CM program on workplace creativity in 'A' grade hotels of North Goa, India

Methods:

This study worked with a single-arm pre-post design and involved 60 frontline and topline 'A' grade hotel managers, with an average age of 34.2 ± 4.7 years. Participants engaged in CM program which is a guided meditation practice that included asana, pranayama, and relaxation techniques for 35 minutes each day, five days a week.

Results:

The Creativity Style Questionnaire – Revised (CSQ-R) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was evaluated at baseline and again after a period of 6 week. The analysis of data was conducted utilizing SPSS software. The Cohen's *d* values of 0.69 ($p < 0.001$) for CSQ-R and 1.10 ($p < 0.001$) for PSS suggest moderate to large effect sizes, highlighting significant enhancements in creativity because of effective reduction in the stress levels.

Conclusion:

CM significantly boosts creativity in the workplace by alleviating stress, which encourages better cognitive flexibility and innovative thought processes. Additional research involving a larger sample size and a strong research design utilizing objective variables is necessary to enhance the study's findings.

Keywords: Guided Meditation, Cyclic Meditation, Work-place Creativity, Hospitality sector.

Introduction:

Workplace creativity is gaining acknowledgment as an essential factor for organizational success, promoting innovation, adaptability, and effective problem-solving in competitive business settings (Proctor, T., 2010). Research indicates that creativity plays a crucial role (Asada, N., et al., 2021) in boosting productivity, elevating employee engagement, and improving overall business performance, particularly in sectors like hospitality, where innovation in customer service and operations is essential. A recent survey on LinkedIn revealed that creativity stands out as the most sought-after soft skill

worldwide, underscoring its significance in today's job market (Pate, D. L., 2020). Despite this, the occurrence of workplace creativity within Indian industries has not been thoroughly examined, and there is inadequate evidence regarding interventions that might improve creative performance in high-stress environments.

In high-pressure industries such as hospitality, where employees encounter constant demands and tight deadlines, the ability to innovate frequently diminishes as a result of stress and burnout. Studies show a link between job-related stress and reduced creative performance (Gutnick, D., et al., 2012), highlighting that stress negatively impacts divergent thinking, which is essential for creativity. The hospitality sector in India, which employs over 8 million individuals, necessitates innovative solutions to uphold service excellence and adapt to changing customer expectations. This highlights a crucial requirement for approaches that can alleviate stress and foster creative thinking within the workforce.

Guided meditation (Moral, A., 2017) consists of a facilitator, audio recording, or written script delivering organized guidance. This format facilitates a more structured approach to meditation, enhancing focus and engagement for participants compared to self-directed practices. Guided meditation sessions can be customized to enhance stress reduction, improve mental clarity, or promote creativity.

CM involves a structured approach to meditation that incorporates dynamic, cyclic patterns of stimulation and relaxation. These organized sequences involve participants through intended postures, breathing techniques, and profound relaxation. Every stage of CM incorporates purposeful guidance for physical movements, breathing techniques, and concentration, facilitating a state of relaxation both physically and mentally for participants. This structured CM format enhances cognitive clarity and concentration.

Advantages of implementing guided meditation such as CM within the professional environment. CM aids individuals in enhancing concentration, alleviating stress, and fostering creativity through a balanced approach of stimulation and relaxation. Due to its structured nature, participants can deeply engage in the practice, rendering it a practical and impactful resource for enhancing well-being and fostering creativity in high-pressure settings.

Meditation, especially guided techniques like CM, provides a scientifically supported method for improving cognitive abilities and efficiently handling stress (Garg, N., et al., 2023, Pradhan, B., 2014). CM, rooted in ancient yogic traditions, involves alternating phases of physical activity and deep relaxation, highlighting benefits for mental clarity and emotional regulation. Research shows that meditation practices boost cognitive flexibility, lower stress levels, and enhance divergent thinking, all of which are essential for fostering creativity (Srinivas, P. S., & Kumari, S., 2015). A study conducted by (Ding, X., et al., 2014) revealed that those who practice meditation show enhanced creative problem-solving skills compared to those who do not meditate. A study conducted by Brandmeyer, T., Delorme, A., and Wahbeh, H., (2019) highlighted notable advancements in stress reduction and cognitive clarity following meditation practice. The results indicate that guided meditation, like CM could have a beneficial impact on creativity in the workplace by diminishing cognitive rigidity and improving emotional well-being.

1. Methodology

1.1. Study Participants

This pilot study included 60 frontline managers from 2 different 'A' grade hotels located in North Goa, India. 'A' grade hotels in Goa are classified as star-rated establishments, with ratings ranging from 1 to 5 stars, as per the Goa Tourist Trade Act, 1982, and the Rules of 1985 (SaiMerchant, S. S., et al., 2018). Participants were chosen according to defined eligibility criteria: they were aged 25 to 60 years and had at least six months of continuous employment in their current position. All participants exhibited willingness and availability for participating in a daily guided meditation practice, specifically CM, for 35 minutes across 6 weeks of duration.

1.2. Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria

- ✓ Personnel and management operating at the forefront of 'A' grade hotels in North Goa, India.
- ✓ People aged 25 to 60 years.
- ✓ At least six months of continuous employment in the current role is required.
- ✓ Sincerity to participate in a daily guided meditation practice for 35 minutes over a 6 weeks' period.
- ✓ Willingness to provide informed consent for taking part in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals currently participating in any form of meditation or mindfulness training that falls outside of the terms of the study protocol.
- Participants with a history of notable psychiatric disorders that could obstruct faithfulness to the intervention or influence the outcomes of the study.
- Any medical condition that prevents participation in a guided meditation practice.

1.3. Participant recruitment

The recruitment process for this pilot study occurred in 2 different 'A' grade hotels in North Goa, India. Preliminary communication was initiated with the hotel management to delineate the study objectives and solicit permission to interact with employees. Subsequent to approval, informational sessions were conducted at each hotel to present the study and outline the specific requirements, which entailed a daily 35-minute guided meditation practice over a duration of six weeks.

Following the sessions, employees and supervisors expressing interest were invited to participate in an initial eligibility assessment based on predetermined criteria. Qualified individuals were provided with detailed information regarding the study and asked to give written informed consent. The recruitment materials indicated that participation was voluntary, and all candidates were assured that their data would be kept confidential. This systematic approach aimed to recruit participants who fulfilled the criteria and exhibited commitment, thereby creating a robust foundation for assessing the influence of CM on workplace creativity in this pilot study.

1.4. Ethical consideration

This study maintained rigorous ethical standards to ensure participant welfare, autonomy, and confidentiality. Approval was secured from the appropriate ethics committee, affirming adherence to guidelines for research involving human subjects.

1.5. Consent

Informed consent was secured from each participant prior to the commencement of the study. Participants received comprehensive information regarding the study's objectives, methodology, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without repercussions.

1.6. Confidentiality

Privacy and transparency were ensured by the strict confidentiality of personal and assessment data. The methodologies for data collection and storage were consistent with ethical standards, assuring the anonymity of individual data during analysis and publication and the protection of participant identities.

1.7. Assessment

The research study employed a conventional pen-and-pencil survey approach to collect responses, guaranteeing accessibility and convenience for participants across different work environments. This method facilitated easy data gathering and reduced technical obstacles, especially advantageous for individuals with restricted digital access. The primary outcome variables included CSQ-R, while the secondary measures encompassed stress. Two key assessment tools were utilized in this study, CSQ-R and PSS.

1.7.1. Creativity Style Questionnaire – Revised (CSQ-R)

The CSQ-R seeks to determine the creative thinking styles and preferences of individuals. This questionnaire includes multiple aspects of creativity, enabling a thorough assessment of participants' creative abilities. Numerous studies have confirmed the validity of the CSQ-R, emphasizing robust convergent and discriminant validity. A study conducted by (Kumar, V. K., et al., in 1997) revealed that the CSQ-R achieved a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.74, suggesting a strong level of internal consistency and reliability. Additionally, the tool has been successfully used in a range of settings, highlighting its relevance across diverse populations and situations.

1.8. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

One commonly used tool for gauging people's perceptions of stress is the PSS. It evaluates the degree of unpredictability, uncontrollability, and overload in respondents' lives, which can affect their general well-being and cognitive abilities. According to a study by (Khalili, R., Ebadi, A., Tavallai, A., & Habibi, M., 2017), the PSS-10 item scale has shown excellent validity and reliability. The scale's Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.93, indicating high internal consistency. The PSS is a reliable instrument for determining perceived stress levels in a variety of research contexts because it has also been validated across a range of populations.

In order to ensure a complete assessment of creativity and perceived stress among participants in the guided meditation intervention, these assessment instruments were selected based on their proven psychometric qualities and applicability to the study's goals.

1.9. Intervention details:

CM is a methodical 35-minute practice segmented into eight distinct steps aimed at fostering relaxation and enhancing mental clarity. CM is a well validated yogic practice which combines alternating cycles of physical postures with deep relaxation. This method targets to improve mental clarity, alleviate stress, and boost overall cognitive performance. By combining moments of stimulation with relaxation, CM supports individuals in reaching a state of balanced mental focus, which can be particularly beneficial in high-stress environments such as the workplace. Its capacity to promote many aspects of life (Lakshmi, K. S., et al., 2023), cognitive flexibility (Kansara, S., et al., 2021) and alleviate state of mind

(Boopalan, D., et al., 2024) makes it a valuable resource for enhancing creativity (Kushwah, K. K., et al., 2016) and productivity in work environments.

Table 1: Steps in Cyclic Meditation

Step	Duration	Activity	Description of the step
1. Opening Prayer	1 minute	Opening Prayer	Begins with a chant from the *Maṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, setting a calm intention for the session.
2. Instant Relaxation Technique (IRT)	2 minutes	Isometric Muscle Contractions	Engages muscle contraction for quick tension release, followed by supine relaxation.
3. Centering	4 minutes	Standing Position (*Tādāsana*)	Participants assume *Tādāsana*, grounding with feet planted firmly, enhancing awareness and stability.
4. Standing Posture (*Ardhakaṭichakrāsana*)	7 minutes	Lateral Bending from *Tādāsana*	Participants bend to the right for 1.5 minutes, return to *Tādāsana* for 1.5 minutes, then repeat the sequence on the left side.
5. Quick Relaxation Technique (QRT)	3 minutes	Supine Rest with Guided Instructions	Participants lie in supine rest with instructions and chanting (*Akāra*), promoting deeper relaxation.
6. Sitting Postures	6 minutes	*Vajrāsana*, *Śaśaṅkāsana*, and *Uṣṭrāsana*	Participants transition to seated postures: *Vajrāsana* for grounding, *Śaśaṅkāsana* (forward bend), and *Uṣṭrāsana* (backbend) with rest periods in between.
7. Deep Relaxation Technique (DRT)	10 minutes	Supine Position	Complete relaxation of body parts in sequence for a deep sense of physical and mental relaxation.
8. Closing Prayer	2 minutes	Concluding Prayer	A final prayer for collective well-being, bringing the session to a mindful close.

1.10. Data Analysis:

Data were statistically analysed using SPSS 22 (IBM, Chicago). The data are presented as mean and standard deviations. A paired sample t-test was used to measure pre to post changes. A p value of < 0.05 was regarded as statistically significant. The % change in the mean score was calculated using the following formula: post mean pre mean/pre mean * 100. Data analysis was conducted utilizing Microsoft Excel and SPSS software.

1.11. Participation:

The study was completed by 52 participants out of the initial 60 who gave their consent. Eight participants dropped out due to unsuitable timing and low attendance, with lesser than 15 sessions attended. Overall, the high acceptance, adherence, and feasibility of the yoga intervention in a community setting were demonstrated, as more than 93% of the participants attended at least 28 of the 30 sessions.

2. Results:

2.1. Demographic Characters:

The demographic characteristics of the 52 participants are presented in Table 2. Most participants were aged over 35-50 years (69.2%), with the remaining participants aged 40 years or below (30.8%). Regarding educational background, 55.8% had completed more than 17 years of education, while 44.2% had 16 or fewer years. In terms of job roles, frontline managers (FLM) comprised 57.7% of the sample, and top-level managers (TLM) made up 42.3%. Experience levels were evenly distributed, with 50% of participants having 15 years or less of work experience, and the other 50% having 16 years or more. Gender distribution was 70% male and 30% female (Table-2).

Table 2: Demographic details of the participants

Particulars	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)	Less than or equal to 40 years	16	30.8
	More than or equal to 41 years	36	69.2
Education (in years)	Less than or equal to 16 years	23	44.2
	More than or equal to 17 years	29	55.8
Job	FLM	30	57.7
	TLM	22	42.3
Experience (in years)	Less than or equal to 15 years	26	50.0
	More than or equal to 16 years	26	50.0
Gender	Male	37	70.0
	Female	15	30.0

2.2. Changes in the Psychological variables:

This section explores the impact of the guided meditation intervention on essential psychological variables associated with workplace creativity and stress. Measurements taken pre and post intervention offer an understanding of its effects on participants' creativity and stress levels. There was a statistically significant increase with moderate effect size in the CSQ-R ($p < 0.001$) and statistically significant decrease with high effect size in stress ($p < 0.001$) when compared to the pre intervention.

Table-3: Pre and Post changes of the parameter:

Measurements	Pre-Mean (SD)	Post - Mean (SD)	*p* value	% difference in the mean	Mean difference	95% CI	Cohen's d
CSQ-R	33.31(4.820)	36.09(4.403)	0.001	8.34	-2.78	-3.90 to -1.66	0.69
PSS	30.90(5.150)	25.94(4.478)	0.001	19.12	-4.96	-6.21 to -3.70	1.10

% Difference in the Mean = (post mean-pre mean)/pre mean *100; Mean Difference = post mean-pre mean; 95% Confidence Interval (CI) = Calculated using the mean difference and standard error for a 95% confidence level; Cohen's d = mean difference/pooled standard deviation.

The study assessed changes in creativity and stress levels prior to and following the intervention, incorporating the Creativity Style Questionnaire - Revised (CSQ-R) and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), with results expressed in Table 3. Both scales show notable changes in mean scores after the intervention, indicating considerable shifts among participants.

The CSQ-R score showed an increase from a pre-intervention mean of 33.31(4.820) to a post-intervention mean of 36.09(4.403), leading to an 8.34% improvement in creativity levels among participants. The average difference observed between the pre- and post-intervention scores was -2.78, suggesting a statistically significant improvement in creativity. The 95% Confidence Interval (CI) of [-3.90, -1.66] suggests that this improvement is unlikely to be due to random variation, thereby indicating a significant increase. The computed Cohen's d for CSQ-R was 0.69, suggesting a medium-to-large effect size. It shows a moderate impact of the intervention on enhancing creativity, underscoring the practical significance of CM in promoting creativity in the workplace.

The PSS score for stress reduction showed a decline from a pre-intervention mean of 30.90(5.150) to a post-intervention mean of 25.94(4.478), reflecting a 19.12% reduction in perceived stress. The mean difference of -4.96 suggests a noteworthy decrease in stress levels after the intervention. The 95% confidence interval of [-6.21, -3.70] underscores the importance of the observed reduction, indicating that the changes are reliable and improbable to happen randomly.

Cohen's d value for PSS was 1.10, indicating a large effect size and demonstrating a significant impact of the intervention on stress reduction. The effect size highlights the importance of CM as a valuable approach for managing stress in workplace settings.

The results reveal notable percentage variations in mean scores, illustrating that CM positively influences both creativity and stress levels. The Cohen's d values of 0.69 for CSQ-R and 1.10 for PSS reflect considerable effect sizes, suggesting that the changes in creativity and stress were both statistically significant. The results highlight the effectiveness of cyclic meditation as a structured method for improving psychological outcomes in demanding work environments. Minimizing stress in the workplace supports an environment that fosters creativity, as decreased stress levels correlate with enhanced cognitive flexibility, concentration, and openness to new ideas elements essential to boosting creativity in the workplace.

3. Discussion:

This pilot study reveals positive findings regarding the effects of CM on enhancing workplace creativity and reducing perceived stress among employees in the hospitality sector. The findings reveal significant improvements in creativity, measured by the CSQ-R, and reductions in perceived stress, assessed by the PSS, suggesting that CM may positively influence mental clarity and relaxation. The observed adherence rates indicate that the intervention is feasible for daily application, as most participants effectively incorporated a structured 35-minute meditation routine over the three-month period.

The present findings align with prior research concerning the cognitive and psychological benefits of meditation (Van Vugt, M. K., 2015). Previous research indicates that meditation methods, including guided and cyclic techniques, improve cognitive flexibility and mental clarity (Koch, B., (2024), both essential components of creativity. Comparable advantages have been reported in studies examining the impact of meditation on cognitive control, attentional capacity (Jo, H. G., Schmidt, et.al., 2016), and stress resilience in high-pressure professions (Green, A. A., & Kinchen, E. V., 2021). This study's findings enhance existing knowledge by focusing on the particular relaxation-stimulation cycle in CM, which may serve as a mental reset that improves creative problem-solving and idea generation. Minimizing stress improves cognitive adaptability, sharpens mental focus, and fosters positive emotional experiences, establishing ideal circumstances for creativity to flourish (ÖZCAN, N., & BEDİR, F., 2023).

One reason CM may have positively impacted creativity and stress is the distinct combination of physical stimulation and relaxation that characterizes this practice. The alternate stages of activity and relaxation in CM likely stimulate both the mind and body, enhancing mental clarity, which is crucial for creativity-related cognitive functions. Brief intervals of stimulation, followed by relaxation periods, may produce a reset effect on the mind, clearing cognitive clutter and fostering the emergence of more creative thoughts, as observed in numerous studies on relaxation-oriented meditation techniques. The findings are highly pertinent to high-pressure work environments, particularly in the hospitality sector, where employees frequently encounter demanding situations that require rapid decision-making and adaptability. Implementing structured guided meditation programs, such as CM, could provide an effective and significant approach to augment employee creativity and overall well-being. By implementing a concise and accessible daily routine, organizations can foster a workforce that is more resilient and innovative, potentially enhancing productivity and job satisfaction.

This study has certain limitations that should be taken into account in future research. The limited sample size and absence of a control group diminish the strength of the findings' applicability. Additionally, with higher commitment rates, the data were self-reported, and the subjective nature of creativity assessments could lead to response bias. The demographic diversity of the sample was restricted, mainly comprising employees from a particular age group and job role, which might not sufficiently represent wider workplace environments.

Future research should build on this pilot study by using a larger sample size, incorporating control groups, and adding more objective measures including neuroimaging tools and techniques such as electroencephalography (EEG), or physiological stress indicators, to analyze the brain signals and confirm the findings. Exploring the effects of factors like job position, lasting outcomes, and personal characteristics could provide valuable understanding of how CM affects creativity and the ability to cope with stress in various work settings.

4. Conclusion:

This pilot study demonstrated that a structured CM intervention has a positive effect on workplace creativity for frontline and topline employees in the hospitality sector. Participants demonstrated notable advancements in creative thinking and a reduction in stress, underscoring the effectiveness of guided meditation in boosting cognitive flexibility and promoting overall well-being in high-pressure settings. The strong adherence rate and positive feedback from participants indicate that CM is a practical and well-received intervention in a challenging work environment. The results back the incorporation of CM as a fresh method for enhancing creativity in the workplace. It is advisable to conduct further research involving a larger sample size and more variables to validate these findings and deepen our understanding of how meditation can enhance creativity in the workplace across various sectors. The findings from the pilot study draw attention

to the importance of future studies, utilizing larger and more varied samples across different work environments, to gain a comprehensive understanding of how CM affects creativity and mental health in the workplace.

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