

Mindful employees find their jobs less boring and are less likely to quit

August 1 2022



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Employees who practice mindfulness are less bored at work and less likely to quit, according to a new study.

Researchers including from the University of Exeter Business School found that in monotonous jobs, [employees](#) who are more 'mindful' have greater job satisfaction, are less likely to quit and think their job is less boring.

However, mindfulness was found to boost the quality but not the quantity of work, in what the study described as a "double-edged sword" for task performance in monotonous jobs.

The [research](#) was based on a study of 174 [blue-collar workers](#) at a Mexican manufacturing plant along the Mexico-US border whose job is to process discount coupons from US retailers, a highly repetitive task with no additional incentives for performing well.

The researchers measured the employees' mindfulness using a six-point mindfulness attention awareness scale, before assessing their boredom levels and attitudes four weeks later.

Then, after four months, they collected data about the number of coupons employees had processed and number of errors they had made.

The researchers found that higher levels of [employee](#) mindfulness meant they were less bored by their monotonous work and performed work tasks to a higher standard.

However, mindfulness was also linked to employees completing a reduced quantity of work.

Mindfulness was also found to have a significant impact on workers' attitudes towards their job; those who were more mindful had greater job satisfaction—in part because they felt less bored by their monotonous work.

Employees who were mindful were found to be less likely to quit their jobs—though there was no evidence this was a result of their lower boredom levels.

The study notes that workplace mindfulness has been examined and implemented largely in the context of white-collar jobs that feature relatively high levels of variety and human interaction.

In contrast, more monotonous working environments that are common in sectors such as manufacturing, services and agriculture, have received little attention from academic research and mindfulness literature, despite their prevalence across many industries and regions.

The study's co-author Jochen Menges, who teaches at the University of Zürich and Cambridge Judge Business School, said: "Monotonous jobs are held by millions of people around the world and more research needs to be done about those jobs.

"Our research now seeks to redress the balance in favor of blue-collar workers. We find that more mindful employees perceive their monotonous job as less boring and have higher job satisfaction, and are thus less likely to leave."

The study suggests that if quality work is more important than quantity, organizations should recognize and support employee mindfulness, and that incorporating mindfulness training into the workplace could both increase work quality and increase staff retention in monotonous jobs.

However, the researchers stress that mindfulness or mindfulness training is no silver bullet for the many problems associated with monotonous work tasks and that much needs to change about these jobs—from how they are designed to how they are paid.

Andreas Wihler, an Associate Professor of Management at the University of Exeter Business School, said: "Mindfulness helps employees in monotonous jobs to be more satisfied. But organizations would be ill-advised to rely on mindfulness for making boring work conditions bearable.

"Organizations are still responsible for resolving structural and organizational deficits through work redesign."

Here, the research points to the ethical framework of mindfulness, which suggests that [mindfulness](#) training should be founded on ethical intentions and practices that respect participants' lives.

The study is published in the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*.

More information: Andreas Wihler et al, It's so boring—or is it? Examining the role of mindfulness for work performance and attitudes in monotonous jobs, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/joop.12370](https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12370)

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: Mindful employees find their jobs less boring and are less likely to quit (2022, August 1) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-08-mindful-employees-jobs.html>

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