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Maximising effectiveness of talent pools through mindfulness: An empirical investigation in a multinational corporation

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MAXIMISING EFFECTIVENESS OF TALENT POOLS THROUGH MINDFULNESS.

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION IN A MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION.

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work

and it has been written by me in its entirety.

I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information

which have been used in this dissertation.

This dissertation has also not been submitted for any degree

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ABSTRACT

Traditional human resource management is looking to identify and develop talent for maximising human capital in a competitive environment with limited resources and negative demographic trends. Attracting, deploying, motivating, developing and retaining talented employees is a corporate norm for meeting organisational goals. Proper human resource processes through rigorous mapping of employees according to the performance-potential matrix allow the grading of employees against peer groups to establish talent pools for development and internal succession planning.

Mindfulness originates from 2,500-year-old Buddhist spiritual practices and has a rare combination of spirituality and science. Eastern perspective originates from Asian traditions focusing on the self-regulation of emotions for improving well-being. Western perspective has developed during the last 50 years in clinical psychology practices and organisational behaviour studies as a present-centred awareness-acceptance model for reducing stress, strengthening emotional intelligence and enabling strategic thinking.

The mindfulness concept has moved from psychology and organisational behaviour studies to leadership development programs. Latest cutting-edge leadership development programs see the mastery of mindfulness only as the first step for increasing leadership capabilities and improving employee performance and job satisfaction.

The current study offers new insights into mindfulness's role in talent management, demonstrating that a higher capacity of consciousness leads to improved talent depth and breadth. The findings indicate compensation mechanisms between mindfulness facets while proving that a high level of both awareness and acceptance is needed to become part of the talent pool for accelerated growth. Evidence also suggests that supervisor mindfulness is essential in unlocking employee talent potential through improving employee mindfulness and proposes a "Winning Mindfulness Formula in the Talent Management Process" to position organisations better in the war for talent.

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for fostering my intellectual curiosity,

making it part of my life force,

part of happiness and a personal growth journey.

1. Introduction

Talent Management (TM) gained popularity after McKinsey popularised a new business reality about the competitive battle between organisations for talent in their publication "The War for Talent" (Michaels et al., 2001). Organisations started to focus on identifying and hiring top performers as a key to competitive advantage. Traditional human resource management views on talents (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) shifted towards maximising human capital in the current competitive environment (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Limited resources of talented people, negative demographic trends and international mobility have fuelled this trend further (Stahl et al., 2012). Attracting, deploying, motivating, developing and retaining talented employees has become a corporate norm for meeting organisational goals.

While succession planning was already studied by Jackson and Schuler (1990), proper human resource processes through rigorous performance management ranking systems and establishing Talent Pools have been institutionalised only in the last decade. Companies try to identify high-potential employees through multiple inputs like performance evaluations, 360-degree reviews and assessment centres. Mapping the performance-potential matrix allows the grading of employees against peer groups and provides a basis for further talent development and internal succession planning. Dividing talents into different talent pools according to different competency profiles

(like early career managerial, expert manager, senior executive) allows to differentiate investments for talent development (formal training, on-work assignments, coaching, mentoring) and to accelerate talent development through differentiated career paths (rotations, international assignments, higher visibility or high impact projects).

The mindfulness phenomena described by Kabat-Zinn (1994) is "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" and has both an Eastern and a Western perspective, a rare combination of spirituality and science. Eastern perspective originates from Asian traditions and Buddhist philosophy, where an individual mental state is characterised by wholesomeness and insights into reality (Cullen, 2011) through meditation and self-regulation of emotions. The secular Western perspective is seen as open, present-centred awareness and attention (Bishop et al., 2006), enabling strategic thinking, giving perspective and strengthening emotional intelligence.

The mindfulness concept has moved from psychology and organisational behaviour studies to leadership development programs. Mastery of mindfulness is seen only as the first step for increasing leadership capabilities. Studies show mindful leaders positively impact employee performance (Reb et al., 2018). However, few studies have been conducted on how mindfulness is linked to talent management, especially talent development through structured talent management programs for high-potential

employees for their career management. If one could improve the identification and development of talents, one would also be better positioned in the war for talent.

2. Statement of the research problem and purpose of the study

This research study is looking to understand the impact of mindfulness in talent management, especially how individuals' mindfulness impacts talent mapping in the performance-potential matrix. Will mindfulness have a positive relation to employee talent? If mindfulness, representing the capacity of consciousness through awareness and acceptance, is positively related to employee performance and potential, then can mindfulness be used in talent management to select and develop talents? What is the role of the supervisor's mindfulness? Will the employee whose supervisor demonstrates higher mindfulness be more mindful and harvest his/her talent better?

While organisational interest in mindfulness has increased significantly over the years to understand how to improve performance and productivity, both a person and a company, through mindfulness (Bruce, 2014), there are only limited studies conducted about mindfulness in talent management and leadership development. There are studies about the positive effects of mindfulness on individual health and well-being (Chiesa & Serretti, 2010), a quality improvement in work-life balance (Glomb et al., 2011), and leader mindfulness benefits on job performance, job satisfaction and reduction in emotional exhaustion (Reb et al., 2014). It has also been demonstrated that mindfulness, colloquially expressed as being "fully in there and now", enables a leader to notice factors about the employees that absent-minded and stressed leader would not

(Atkins & Parkins, 2012), also that leader-present moment attention helps a leader to understand better employees and thus be supportive (Reb et al., 2014).

I have not found studies analysing mindfulness's impact on employee performance and potential as part of the talent management process. In this study, I will have a closer look at how mindfulness, especially mindfulness' main components "awareness" and "acceptance", have an impact on traditional performance-potential talent management matrix as usually mindfulness has not been considered there for grading employees against peer group and nominating them into different talent pools. I would argue that mindfulness has a positive relation to both main talent management drivers, like performance and potential. Thus mindfulness helps employees to become selected to high potential talent pool members for accelerated development and career building.

Additionally, I would study the role of a supervisor in talent management, specifically how a supervisor's mindfulness relates to employee mindfulness in talent management. Recently evidence has emerged on the positive impact of supervisors' mindfulness not only on employee wellbeing but also on employee performance. A mindful supervisor is respected more as a leader as they demonstrate better leadership skills, have fair insights into their behaviour and can provide insightful feedback to unlock the full potential of an employee's talent. Therefore, a supervisor's mindfulness is essential in the talent management process, not only in selecting the right people for the talent pool

but also in positively unlocking an employee's talent depth (performance) and talent breadth (potential).

The practical benefit of this study would be a better understanding of mindfulness's role in the talent management process and how those findings could help to improve the identification, selection, attraction, appraisal, development, succession planning and retention of talent. In conclusion, this study should validate mindfulness's impact on talent management and shed light on the importance of supervisors' mindfulness in improving the organisation's competitive advantage in the current dynamic and volatile environment.

3. Literature review

3.1. Talent management

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *talent* as "a characteristic feature, aptitude, or disposition of a person or animal". In reality, this often-used word has a different meaning in different contexts. Commonly psychologists refer to talent as "speed to improvement" or as Angela Duckworth of the University of Pennsylvania has well defined:

> *"Talent - when I use the word, I mean it as the rate at which you get better with effort. The rate at which you get better at soccer is your soccer talent. The rate at which you get better at maths is your maths talent. You know, given that you are putting forth a certain amount of effort. And I absolutely believe - and not everyone does, but I think most people do - that there are differences in talent among us: that we are not all equally talented".*

In organisational human resource practice, talent is described as "… employees who are high performing and continuously improving within their current position, are mobile and have the potential and the willingness for further growth in other key positions'' (Makela et al., 2007). Thus, the focus is on performance and potential, or in

other words, on talent depth and breadth. High performers tend to have a great depth of knowledge about their areas of expertise and organisation. As such, they excel at what they do and perform well year after year. High potentials, on the other hand, can quickly learn new functions, deal with ambiguity and complexity, have a greater tolerance for taking risks, and with their curiosity and agility, can quickly build the breadth of experience required for success in senior positions.

Talent management is defined as an organisation's efforts to attract, select, develop and retain talented key employees (Stahl et al., 2007). It is regarded as a multidisciplinary bridge between academia and human resource management organisational practices (McDonnell et al., 2017). Despite increased attention to talent management and the focused effort of practitioners to identify, develop and retain talent, the field of talent management lacks adequate academic research (Lewis & Hackman, 2006). According to Anlesinya et al. (2019) empirical summary review, the key themes studied in talent management research are talent management outcomes, success factors of and challenges to talent management, drivers of talent management adoption, talent pool, the role of talent management actors and talent mobility.

Systematic identification of internal talents derives its roots from product portfolio analyses. Bruce D. Henderson in Boston Consulting Group created Growth-Share Matrix in 1970, often called the "BCG Matrix", to analyse product lines or portfolios for allocating marketing and product management resources. Such a 2x2 matrix

classifies a business portfolio into four categories based on industry growth/attractiveness (high-low) and relative market share (high-low). As the complexity of multi-business enterprises was growing, then McKinsey & Company followed this matrix with its 3x3 “McKinsey Nine-Box Matrix”, where they systemised investments among business units based on industry growth/attractiveness (high-medium-low) and competitive strength of business units (high-medium-low) into nine different categories. This Nine-Box matrix became the forerunner for many portfolio models. The origin of the “Nine-Box Performance-Potential Matrix”, or just “Nine-Box”, is shrouded in mystery. No one seems to know who invented it for human resource segmentation purposes. Assessing talent pools with this simple tool has become common and widely used by human resource management practitioners.

In the Nine-Box, employees are categorised similarly to McKinsey Nine-Box Matrix based on performance and potential or like, previously described by talent depth and breadth. In the Nine-Box performance management matrix, the organisation classifies talent performance (depth) into three categories: "Excellent Performance", "Solid Performance", and "Needs Improvement". Performance evaluation is based on experience demonstrated to the line manager, and the correctness of judgement is reviewed and challenged through multistage internal review processes by line manager peers and managers of the line manager.

Additionally, some companies use forced ranking where managers rank all employees individually according to their judgement to ensure relative distribution of performance ranking and forced turnover of the lowest 10% performing employees each year. They argue that forced ranking creates a high-performance culture, improves productivity and generally delivers a better return to the shareholders. The opponents of forced ranking suggest that such a system is bad for employees' morale, promotes competition at the expense of team performance, may not necessarily improve productivity and may also expose companies to legal litigation. Ultimately, it is subject to company culture driving collectivism versus individualism and control versus empowerment.

In recent years forced distribution has gained popularity over force ranking. In the forced distribution process company aligns employees according to pre-assigned distribution percentages into groups (for example, 20% of the employees are grouped under "Excellence Performance", 70-75% as "Solid Performance", and 5-10% of employees fall into the category of "Needs Improvement") and according to some performance criteria taking into account both individual performance and contribution to the team goals. Such forced distribution ensures relative distribution of all employees across companies and avoids leniency errors (all employees are rated as excellent performers) or severity errors (all employees are rated poorly). The leniency error is most familiar as managers often want to avoid confrontation and escape justification of their ratings. As employees are evaluated based on the same criteria, the outcome of

the process is more objective, facilitates more open communication and focuses on the feedback to identify improvement areas for employees. It also develops managers to give feedback to avoid a situation at the end of the year where they cannot explain why some have fallen into a lower position in the bell curve.

Assessing talent potential (breath) is much more challenging and somewhat subjective, but combining different assessment tools with management dialogue conducted by human resource professionals in partnership with leaders about other observed behavioural criteria enables decision-makers to classify their talent pool along three dimensions: high potential, medium potential and low potential. Literature on strategic decision-making describes that decision-makers ability to access knowledge is driven and limited by their experience and cognitions (Gavetti & Levinthal, 2000). In talent management, decision-makers rely on experience-based performance and evaluate talent potential mainly through cognition-based decision-making processes. Gavetti and Levinthal (2000) argue that strategic choice is typically based on (a) backwards-looking historical experience and accumulation of knowledge and (b) forward-looking cognitive assessment of different alternatives maximising pay-off. The combination of past performance and future potential enables assessment of individuals during organisational talent review and facilitates management discussion on the organisation's and individual's development needs. Those management discussions also improve the accuracy of categorisation. Instead of a one-person opinion, the final

categorisation is based on multiple managers' opinions. It eliminates the blind spots of a single line manager through how the peer group sees and perceives their employees.

Typically, talent management development focuses on high-potential employees, often called talent pool members (Figure 1: box 6 - key talent, box 8 - growing potential, box 9 - rising leader) or employees who "rank at the top in terms of capability and performance (Stahl et al., 2007). Companies invest time and money in those people as they see them as current or potential future leaders.

3.2. Mindfulness

The word "mindfulness" can be used to describe outcome - mindful awareness and a process – mindful practice (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). Above all, mindfulness is about the presence and bringing all of our awareness into the present moment. Shapiro and Carlson (2009) defined *mindfulness* as "the awareness that arises through intentionally attending in an open, caring, and discerning way". Mindfulness originates from 2,500-year-old Buddhist spiritual practices (Hanh, 1976) in North-Eastern India, where it occupied a central role in a system as a path to the cessation of personal suffering (Thera, 1962).

Contemporary psychology adopted mindfulness some 30 years ago as an approach to mental processes to respond to emotional distress and focus not so much on controlling but accepting pain. Clinical applications started to develop after the introduction of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) chronic pain treatment program developed at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in the 1970s by Professor Jon Kabat-Zinn (Kabat-Zinn, 1982), who defined *mindfulness* as "intentional and non-judgmental present moment awareness" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness-based clinical treatments are now used widely in clinical psychology for treating emotional and behavioural disorders, reducing psychological morbidity and enhancing emotional well-being (Reibel et al., 2001; Astin,1997). It is important to note that mindfulness-

based approaches are not considered relaxation techniques but a form of mental training to reduce vulnerability and emotional distress. Traditional concentration meditation restricts the focus to a single stimulus (word, sound, sensation). It redirects the wandering mind back to that stimulus, whereby mindfulness meditation observes changes in internal and external stimuli (Naranjo & Ornstein, 1971).

It has been widely recognised that mindfulness has become a phenomenon with functional importance in physical and psychological health, well-being and performance in work, sports and even relationships. Nevertheless, K.W. Brown and R.M. Ryan from the University of Rochester (2004) well-described mindfulness as "a deceptively simple concept that is difficult to characterise accurately". Bishop et al. (2004) have proposed the definition of mindfulness conceptually and operationally around a two-component model of mindfulness, incorporating (a) attention and awareness with (b) acceptance. They are consistent with most scholarly and popular writings on mindfulness, focussing on awareness and attention. "Awareness", according to Bishop et al. (2004), refers to the subjective experience of internal and external phenomena in pure apperception and perception of the field of events that encompass our reality at any given moment, while "attention" is a focusing of awareness to highlight selected aspects of that reality. They argue that awareness and attention are intertwined while being primary features of consciousness, distinguished from the other primary mental processing modalities like cognition, motives, and

emotions. Thus, mindfulness is specifically concerned with monitoring the capacity of consciousness. The second component of mindfulness, argued by Bishop et al. (2004), beyond attention and awareness is "acceptance" to sustain attention to and awareness of what is occurring. Brown and Ryan (2004) describe the meaning of such presence as "taking each moment as it comes" because if an individual does not accept what is occurring, then a natural reaction of human beings is to escape from the experience mentally and limit awareness while redirecting attention. Only by accepting consistently, openly and in a non-judgmental way can one experience the mindful state required with frequent attention to and awareness required for being mindful.

3.3. Mindfulness in workplace theories

VUCA, as an acronym for "Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous", originated from leadership theories (Bennis & Nanus, 1987) and was used originally in military circles. With the globalisation of trade and the progress of information technology, the term "VUCA environment" has found a way into the corporate world with related stress and challenges. Corporate executives make operational decisions predominantly based on their education and previous work experience using rational and analytical thinking provided by the left brain.

Bob Samples interpreted Albert Einstein's thoughts in his landmark book "Metaphoric Mind: A Celebration of Creative Consciousness" (1976) in a very concise way: "Albert Einstein called the intuitive or metaphoric mind a sacred gift. He added that the rational mind was a faithful servant. Paradoxically, we have begun to worship the servant and defile the divine". The rational mind needs control and structure and feels helpless in a VUCA environment, where it is difficult to predict and to be in control. The central part of Buddhism is impermanence – the reality of constant change, and when one resists reality, then suffering increases. Everybody faces impermanence, but the question is whether we come to terms with it (Bien, 2006). Organisations using mindfulness-based approaches can learn to accept impermanence in a stressful work environment and approaching deadlines. Using the language of the constantly changing nature of human experience, focusing on thoughts and emotions can help employees'

professional effectiveness and well-being, increase collaboration and create a safer working environment.

As awareness of mindfulness has emerged from individual well-being into traditional top-down corporate hierarchies, researchers have found that mindfulness does not only improve personal health but also can catalyse the workplace into "spacious, attuned, empathic internal and external environments that lead to productivity, creativity and innovation" (Shapiro et al., 2015). Mindfulness is a human capacity present in each individual, but it is also a skill that can be developed and trained. Killingsworth and Gilbert (2010) found that people's minds wander about 47 per cent of the time. Instead of being in the moment, people spend half their time thinking about what has happened in the past or what can happen in the future, while the present moment is where innovation, learning and production happen. Thus, developing the capacity to be mindful enables people and organisations to capture this untapped potential.

Many workplace processes, like decision-making and problem-solving, are vulnerable to stress. Researchers suggest that mindfulness may partially reduce workplace stress (Butler & Gray, 2006) but also improve the fundamental activity of making decisions (Reb & Atkins, 2015) around all four stages of decision-making: (1) framing the decision, (b) gathering and processing decisions, (c) coming to conclusions, and (d) learning from feedback. They also argue that although mindfulness may slow down the decision-making process, it may also allow decision-makers to “catch up” at the

implementation stage as decisions are made more based on fundamental values and objectives, whereby decision-makers will be less likely to change their minds after the decision has been made.

Mindfulness can also help managers decrease the rate of cognitive errors and reduce judgement mistakes, as with mindful focus, managers do not miss critical environmental cues for accurate present-moment assessment and effective response (Dane, 2011). Instead of reacting habitually based on existing knowledge, managers can reflect on what is essential and how it relates to their value system and process situation from different perspectives. Sadler-Smith & Shefy (2007) point out the increased capacity provided by mindfulness allowing managers to allocate resources better and delegate decisions instead of spending their resources on more minor unrelated issues.

Mindfulness also promotes a collaborative and trusting work environment as it promotes learning and reflection (Jordan et al., 2009) and generally a faster recovery from negative events (Keng et al., 2011). At the same time, mindful individuals are more aware of their ethical principles and engage less in unethical behaviour in the workplace (Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010).

Historically Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBI) have been studied from a clinical perspective focusing on individuals rather than from an organisational perspective where the focus is more on interpersonal and organisational processes and issues. Most

jobs require the ability to cope with emotions and stress, putting pressure on employees to regulate their emotions, expressions and underlying feelings. Traditional eight-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR, Kabat-Zinn 1982) type stress reduction training can be used for improving the well-being of employees while numerous shortened workplace mindfulness training programs (like Joy of Living, WorkingMind, Finding Peace in a Frantic World etc.) have been tailored for improving organisational climate and performance.

3.4. Mindfulness role in leadership

Theories about different leadership styles emerged from different contributors, first from the Ohio State University leadership studies in 1945, followed by the University of Michigan studies in 1947. Professor D.D. Warrick from the University of Colorado (1981) has summarised them well around two fundamental dimensions of leadership (a) emphasis on people and (b) emphasis on performance, resulting in four basic leadership styles described in Figure 2.

Mindfulness has a role in many styles but essentially boils down to authenticity and charisma.

Authentic leadership is seen as leadership that emphasises building the leader's legitimacy through honest relationships with followers and are built on "owning one's personal experiences, be they thoughts, emotions, needs, preferences, or beliefs, processes captured by the injunction to know oneself" and "behaving in accordance with the true self" or as captured by ancient Greeks "be true to oneself" (Harter, 2002). Awareness through mindfulness is both cause and an enabler of authenticity - mindfulness practice can develop the awareness and behaviour of an authentic leader.

Dietl & Reb (2019) explain how mindfulness, defined as sustained attention centred on the present moment, helps leaders stay connected to their core self and, in combination with social effectiveness, helps leaders interact with employees authentically and

effectively. A self-aware leader who pays attention to his or her internal state has a solid base for clarity and self-disclosure required for authentic leadership. Observing one's leadership behaviour in a patient and the self-compassionate way will provide insights into one's behaviour and can be instrumental for self-determination. At the same time, such present-moment attention enables leaders to observe colleagues in an open and non-judgmental way for insightful development feedback valued by mentees. Leaders who mindfully self-regulate their attention feel more authentic and are positively associated with employee perceptions of leader authenticity and effectiveness.

Charismatic leadership relies on charismatic qualities and persuasive communication skills of a leader. Charismatic leaders have been characterised as extraordinary and visionary (Conger, 1989), perceived as having higher emotional expressiveness (Bono & Ilies, 2006), and generally appealing more to emotions and values. The mindfulness act of being present contributes to the charisma of a leader to connect quickly with followers leading to social identification and positive response by subordinates. Especially political leaders can leave the impression of being present and connecting with their constituency. Generally, present-moment attention derived from mindfulness is a resource for a leader, and the usage depends on a person's values and moral code. Mindful leaders can regulate their emotions similarly to charismatic leaders, especially by evaluating their inner experiences through mindful practice to reduce negative

emotions while keeping positive ones visible. Keeping emotional responses aligned with expectations helps positively portray the confidence and enthusiasm of charismatic leaders. However, if not balanced with authenticity, it could also lead towards negative aspects described earlier in the impact of ethics in mindfulness.

Acknowledging the connection between mindfulness and ethics is also essential, as prominently featured in the Buddhist approach (Kudesia & Nyima, 2015). Without a proper foundation, leaders can take shallow mindfulness to support "darker" aspects of leadership by faking presence to earn employee respect, extracting more from employees to achieve unwholesome goals, pushing employees above their limits resulting in burnout or directing vulnerable employees to unethical action. Thus, it is crucial to understand the leader's value system and goals to understand mindfulness's impact on leadership studies.

4. Research hypothesis

4.1. Hypothesis 1. - the role of mindfulness in talent management

CASE STORY

Astrid started working as Head of Marketing in the head office of a multinational company in Madrid. She was recognised as a growing talent, having worked successfully in different technical roles in R&D and technical service. Most recently, she demonstrated outstanding results in a commercial role as head of regional sales. Colleagues recognised her as a professional manager speaking honestly, clearly and explicitly to reach the point. After one year, during her first performance review with her new line manager, she was nominated to the talent pool for senior managers and recommended to work with an executive coach to improve her empathy. Astrid was puzzled. Management recognised her excellent work, but she got feedback that her trademark direct Nordic style communication was deemed arrogant and sometimes offensive in the head office environment. Her line manager specifically asked her to work with the executive coach on "demonstrating empathy" in her communication. Astrid has received many compliments from colleagues who liked her no-nonsense communication style, managers have

recognised her good team leadership skills, and she has been promoted several times based on her excellent teamwork. Astrid started sessions with the executive coach to understand the issue. To her surprise, the coach asked her to stay authentic in her communication style but focus on the small things, like the fact that what was acceptable for an operational role only sometimes works in a more senior strategic role. Also, to realise that culturally southern European communication style was more indirect and nuanced than her native, sometimes unfiltered communication style from Denmark. Thanks to the executive coach's support, her awareness of reading external cues increased, and while her awareness improved, so did her acceptance of small changes. She realised that only slight modification was needed to her direct communication style by demonstrating extra empathy and humbleness so that her colleagues started giving feedback that she was perceived as a respected, performance-driven, but not arrogant leader. It was only a matter of time before senior management acknowledged her talent and offered her a senior executive position.

* * *

Many scholars have demonstrated that mindfulness positively impacts employee performance (Glomb, 2011; Dane, 2011; Reb. et al., 2014; Dane & Brummel, 2014; Reb et al., 2018). People with higher mindfulness perform better because of their self-

awareness, attention and focus. Growing evidence shows that awareness and acceptance positively affect physical and psychological health. While awareness provides introspectiveness in internal and external processes, acceptance refers to openness and the ability to remain present with recent experiences (Cavanagh et al., 2014). Acceptance lets people let go of an unhelpful habitual reaction to present experience and enables them to choose better ways to respond. Instead of dwelling on negative thoughts and spiralling into a depressive state, one can mindfully observe and accept such a thought as a mental event, not a truth, and avoid driving into a lower mood. Monitor and Acceptance Theory (MAT) explains conceptually how monitoring and especially acceptance skills interact to drive mindfulness. Specifically, MAT posits that while monitoring the present moment may enhance the experience, bringing an acceptance toward monitored experiences is a crucial emotion regulation mechanism and allows for predicting mindfulness traits (Lindsay & Creswell, 2019).

Sports psychology has traditionally utilised psychological skill training to enhance athletic performance by controlling or eliminating negative thoughts and developing mental skills to create the ideal performance state. Recent evidence suggests that such efforts to control the internal state may have the opposite effect (Nelson, 2018). Suppressing unwanted thoughts may trigger a meta-cognitive scanning process actively searching for signs of unwanted cognitive activity and lead to negative outcomes (Purdon, 1999). Instead, modern performance enhancement practices keep the goal to drive for. However, anxiety reduction draws from clinical mindfulness models emphasising awareness and acceptance of internal experiences as naturally occurring

events that regularly come and go. As a result, athletes worry less, enjoy the competitive experience a great deal more, and are more engaged in activities improving their valued goals.

However, it is not only performance. Mindfulness also impacts employee growth potential or learning capability. It has been reported that mindfulness improves students' academic performance by boosting their emotional and psychological well-being (McConville et al., 2017), lengthening their attention span and strengthening their ability to stay engaged and focus on coursework (Khalatbari, 2016). Medical studies have revealed that mindfulness plays a crucial role in improving both working and long term-memory by boosting the density of the hippocampus and metacognitive skills in general (Hölzel, 2011). While mindfulness helps to reduce the negative effects of stress in general, then evidence suggests a reduction of stress reactivity in first-year college students during their pivotal transition period (Ramler et al., 2016), but also helps older learners to maintain alertness, motivation and commitment (Langer, 1989). Generally, it has been argued that incorporating mindfulness in lifelong learning helps reconnect the cognitive and affective dimensions of education (Aspin et al., 2012) as present-moment reality helps make educational psychology more effective and enjoyable (Langer, 2003). Aspin et al. (2012) have summarised the importance of mindfulness in lifelong learning as a compelling and valuable notion for personal growth. Through personal, educational objectives (like self-esteem, confidence and emotional intelligence), it integrally connects the transformative and transformational development nature of learning at all levels.

In summary, previous studies indicate a positive impact of mindfulness on employee performance due to their self-awareness, attention and focus. Also, positive mindfulness impact is documented related to employee personal growth potential or learning capability. Therefore I would argue that mindfulness has a positive relation with employee talent, or as sometimes quoted, "learning speed" represented by talent potential (breath) and talent performance (depth), and:

Hypothesis 1. Employee Mindfulness has a positive relation with Employee Talent.

Mediation Hypotheses

If both awareness and acceptance increase talent, one question then becomes whether there is a mediation such that either acceptance mediates the relation between awareness and talent, or awareness mediates the relation between acceptance and talent. Or perhaps it goes both ways.

First, I examine whether mindful acceptance might help employees to be more aware and thus have a positive relation with employee talent as such. Like in the case of Astrid in the case story - instead of being puzzled after feedback and consumed by negative thoughts, she accepted help from the executive coach to understand why people perceived her clear and direct communication style as arrogant. With acceptance to observe a new head office environment, she could increase her awareness and add an additional layer of humbleness to her communication style.

Therefore I would argue that:

H.1.1: The effect of Employee Awareness on Employee Talent is mediated positively by Employee Acceptance.

Also, I would argue that mindful acceptance helps employees to be more aware and therefore have a positive relation with employee talent contributors - performance and potential:

> **H.1.1.a.** Employee Acceptance will positively mediate the relationship between Employee Awareness and Employee Performance.
>
> **H.1.1.b.** Employee Acceptance will positively mediate the relationship between Employee Awareness and Employee Potential.

Also, one could argue that while acceptance helps people be more aware, at the same time, awareness helps employees mindfully accept what is happening by providing better internal and external cues and thus have a positive relation with employee talent. Like in the case of Astrid in the case story - once she understood external environmental cues better, she could accept that slight modification requirement to her communication style in order to open up her full potential. Therefore I would argue that:

H.1.2.: The effect of Employee Acceptance on Employee Talent is mediated positively by Employee Awareness.

Also, I would argue that awareness helps employees to mindfully accept what is happening and therefore have a positive relation with employee talent contributors - performance and potential:

H.1.2.a. Employee Awareness will positively mediate the relationship between Employee Acceptance and Employee Performance.

H.1.2.b. Employee Awareness will positively mediate the relationship between Employee Acceptance and Employee Potential.

Quite possibly, there is a reciprocal relationship between awareness and acceptance in relation to improving talent, so that bidirectionally they cause each other. Talent, or in simple terms “speed of improvement”, will increase when an employee is more aware of internal/external cues while accepting feedback. By accepting feedback, one will again increase awareness and speed up learning. Or in other words, if the employee has awareness but low acceptance, then the learning speed will be slower, and the same is also true the opposite way - if the employee has acceptance but low awareness, then the learning speed will also be lower. In the end, it comes back to the conclusion that mindfulness facets - awareness and attention - are intertwined and represent together the capacity of consciousness. A higher level of capacity of consciousness again relates to higher talent or faster learning speed.

4.2. Hypothesis 2. - compensation mechanism of mindfulness facets

CASE STORY

John was promoted to Regional Vice President, EMEA position in London after demonstrating solid performance as a Country Manager in the UK. Over the years, he led the local sales team and delivered good results. The company was now growing globally at a fast pace and hired many new employees during a short time span. The internal processes were getting more complicated, decision-making was slowing down, and new working methods had to be established. As a natural "activator," according to Clifton Strenghtfinder (Rath, 2007), John was seen as the right choice to implement changes to a global sales and operations planning (S&OP) process as he knew products and customers, existing processes and culture. John quickly started brainstorming for a solution, assembled a project team and launched an implementation plan. Despite high enthusiasm, implementation stalled. The challenge was more complex than estimated. Additional analyses and situation mapping with external support led to a new, more comprehensive implementation plan. Implementation finally succeeded but with delay and above the agreed budget. Later during multisource feedback on John's performance, it became clear that John demonstrated low awareness of the situation in addition to weak project management skills. He was keen to implement changes but was not patient

enough to listen to all required inputs and without analysing enough consequences. John's drive and high acceptance of change were not combined with high awareness of the situation, and his ambition to deliver was not substantiated by a solid plan. Despite excelling in an operational role as a country manager, John faced challenges uplifting his game in a more complex corporate position. While John managed to compensate in the operational role for his lower mindfulness (low awareness) with natural "activator" mode (high acceptance), then in a more demanding senior role, the compensation of different mindfulness facets was not sufficient.

* * *

Theoretically high level of awareness combined with a high level of acceptance is most beneficial for mindfulness (Fletcher & Hayes, 2005), while deviations, where high awareness is combined with low acceptance, have been seen leading to oversensitivity and avoidance of responsibilities and high acceptance combined with low awareness could lead to ineffective actions and missing out on opportunities. However, instead of looking at the limitations of interactions in mindfulness facets, one could look at whether mindfulness facets compensate each other for optimal outcomes to a certain extent.

Alfred Adler, the founder of the school of individual psychology, introduced in his book "Study of Organ Inferiority and Its Psychical Compensation" (1907) a compensation strategy where individual person, consciously or unconsciously, drives towards excellence in one life area to compensate personal or physical inferiority in another area. Kurt Goldstein, neurologist and psychiatrist, developed the theory further by looking at organisms more holistically and defined first-time term "self-actualisation" as the motive to realise one's full potential (Goldstein, 1934). Mindfulness studies (Van De Veer et al., 2016) have shown that improved mindfulness helps consumers compensate external cues with physiological cues and avoid mindless eating (like increased food intake in case of more significant portions or low-fat labels).

Such mindfulness's impact on enhancing the responsiveness to physiological cues and enabling compensation mechanism indicates a possibility that a person driving for self-actualisation by exploiting full talent potential could also be capable subconsciously compensating for awareness with acceptance and vice-versa for improved mindfulness outcome.

In summary, I would argue that while high mindfulness combining high levels of awareness and acceptance, would be most beneficial to open up full talent, then people can up to certain extent compensate for low awareness with high acceptance, and vice versa, to deliver solid performance. Like in the case of John, in the case story, his natural low awareness with high drive and acceptance did not impact his performance in an operational role, and management considered him a solid performer. Only when his role was becoming more complex he could not demonstrate his talent (“speed of

improvement") without having a high level of awareness to complement his high level of acceptance.

Hypothesis 2.1. Mindfulness facets - awareness and acceptance - can compensate for each other:

H.2.1.a. A high level of Employee Awareness can compensate for a lower level of Employee Acceptance with positive relation to Employee Talent.

H.2.1.b. A high level of Employee Acceptance can compensate for a lower level of Employee Awareness with positive relation to Employee Talent.

Hypothesis 2.2. Compensation mechanism of mindfulness facets - awareness and acceptance - is limited:

H.2.2.a. Employees with high levels of both Employee Awareness and Employees Acceptance demonstrate higher Employee Talent with the highest probability of being selected to the Talent Pool.

H.2.2.b. Employees compensating for a low level of one mindfulness facet - Employee Awareness or Employees Acceptance - with a high level of another mindfulness facet demonstrate average Employee Talent with some probability of being selected for the Talent Pool.

H.2.2.c. Employees demonstrating low levels of both Employee Awareness and Employees Acceptance demonstrate low Employee Talent and have the lowest probability of making it to the Talent Pool.

4.3. Hypothesis 3. - the role of supervisor's mindfulness

CASE STORY

Munn was a young Commercial Analyst working for a multinational company in Singapore, preparing analyses for the Senior Vice President, APAC. With a strong analytical mind and clear communication skills, he quickly became the go-to person for the entire sales team for analytical support. He could connect well with his fellow Singaporean colleagues in the office, and soon also, his line manager started to trust Munn, additionally to analytical support for leading different internal sales excellence projects. After some years in the role with positive performance reviews, Munn was nominated to the talent pool for young managers. Munn was clear in his career discussions with the supervisor that his ambition was to become a manager leading a team of professionals, grow his experience and become a recognised business leader. Feedback was given to Munn that solid performance in his current role alone was not sufficient to become a manager. His excellent performance was observed so far only based on a well-functioning head office environment working together predominantly with fellow Singaporean subject matter experts. As part of the accelerated development plan, Munn's manager made him a proposal for a two-year international assignment to lead a small team in India. At the same time, he proposed that the most senior executive in the region, Vice President for Indian Subcontinent, will be assigned a direct supervisor and personal mentor. Munn

understood that he had to step out of his comfort zone to validate his potential in additionally to already proven performance, but was afraid to accept the proposed new role because he had to (a) move from support function to business function (b) be a line manager for a small team and (c) limited understanding of Indian business culture despite being himself second-generation Singapore Tamil. His analytical mind, complemented by strong emotional intelligence, had helped him so far, but would it be enough to succeed in a new environment? Munn sat down with his potential new supervisor to discuss his challenges and hesitations. After long deliberation he finally accepted the job and completed the assignment successfully. After demonstrating both good performance and fast learning skills in a new environment, Munn became one of the youngest managers when he returned back to Singapore. When Munn was later asked about his decision process to accept an overseas assignment, he explained that the critical decision point to accept a new challenge was not only the drive to build a career, but a major contributor to the final decision was mindful and unwavering support from his new supervisor. A supervisor who understood the situation took time to listen to his concerns, ask the right questions and provide advice to build the required insights to accept and excel in the challenging assignment.

* * *

Recent evidence has emerged on the positive impact of supervisors' mindfulness not only on employee well-being but also on employee performance, job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviours (J.Reb et al., 2015). Studies have also shown how supervisor mindfulness positively impacts workforce health and reduces organisational stress and employee mental distress (Vonderlin et al., 2021).

People with higher mindfulness are respected as leaders by team members as they demonstrate better leadership skills by being more authentic, having insights into their behaviour and can provide insightful feedback to their mentees, thus unlocking the full potential of employee talent. Studies have demonstrated mindfulness unlocking human potential (Scialla, 2019) and how supervisor mindfulness positively impacts employee creativity (Tan et al., 2021).

I would also argue that a supervisor's mindfulness has an important influence on employee talent development, most likely through improving employee mindfulness or being a mindful role model. In the case of Munn, in the case story, a mindful supervisor recognised the potential of a talent pool member and provided Munn with insights and support needed to open up his potential and demonstrate excellent performance during his international assignment.

Hypothesis 3. Supervisor mindfulness has a positive relation with employee talent.

Mediation Hypotheses

If Employee Mindfulness increases Employee Talent, as argued in Hypothesis 3, the question becomes whether there is a mediation such that Employee Mindfulness mediates the relation between Supervisor Mindfulness and Employee Talent and talent contributors - performance and potential. Or, like in the case of Munn, who was already considered a talent pool member (and demonstrated higher mindfulness as per Hypothesis 1), would the impact of his supervisor's mindfulness on his talent be higher than on somebody else with lower mindfulness outside the talent pool?

I would argue that:

H.3.1. Employee Mindfulness will positively mediate the relationship between Supervisor Mindfulness and Employee Performance.

H.3.2. Employee Mindfulness will positively mediate the relationship between Supervisor Mindfulness and Employee Potential.

H.3.3. Employee Mindfulness will positively mediate the relationship between Supervisor Mindfulness and Employee Talent.

5. Research methodology

5.1. Procedure

The main objective of this study is to understand employee mindfulness' role in talent management. Participants of this study were employees of a multinational company, whose "performance" and "potential" has been evaluated annually by their supervisor, distribution normalised by the human resource department and a final ranking of the talent is confirmed by peers into a Nine-Box performance management matrix in annual senior managers meeting.

Mindfulness was measured voluntarily and anonymously online by questionnaire using the short Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) to measure "Awareness" and part of the Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHMLS) measuring "Acceptance".

All company employees got an internal email to participate in the mindfulness study lasting one month, an invitation was posted in the company's internal training magazine, and management invited employees verbally during an internal town hall meeting. The invitation email included a high-level description of mindfulness, an informed consent form with the company's personal data protection policy, a description of the personal data anonymisation process and a disclaimer that participants can withdraw their data during two weeks after the study is completed.

The secured company's intranet system was used for online questionnaires with data stored in servers with access only by dedicated human resource specialists. Human resource specialist linked mindfulness survey data with employee demographic information and anonymised final dataset by removing personal identifiers before handing fully anonymized data to the researcher.

Final mindfulness and talent scores were modelled by the researcher according to the hypothesis and analysed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS).

5.1. Participants

301 out of 3100 employees answered the questionnaire giving a response rate of 9,7%. 19 responses were filtered out due to data inconsistencies or missing values. For final analytics, the total sample size was 282 employees, out of which 83 were supervisors.

82 participants were female (29.1%), and 200 were male (70.9%).

121 participants were from China (43%), 83 participants from India and South-East Asia (29%) and 78 participants from the United Arab Emirates (28%).

The age distribution of participants was following: 14 of 30 & below (5.0%), 49 of 31 - 35 (17.4%), 76 of 36 - 40 (27.0%), 73 of 41 - 45 (25.9%), 34 of 46 - 50 (12.1%), 25 of 51 - 55 (8.9%) and 11 of 56 & above (3.9%).

The distribution of the tenure of participants was following: 65 of less than 3 years (23%), 34 of 3-4.99 years (12.1%), 39 of 5-7.99 years (13.8%), 42 of 8-9.99 years (14.9%), 80 of 10-14.99 years (28.4%), 15 of 15-19.99 years (5.4%) and 7 of 20 years and above (2.5%).

The distribution of job level of participants was as follows: 44 operators and technical staff (16%), 92 specialists (33%), 77 managers (27%), 52 senior managers (18%), 17 senior executives (6%).

5.2. Instruments to measure talent

The company uses a structured process to map employees in a Nine-Box performance management matrix based on employee performance and potential for talent management purposes.

Performance is measured annually against defined goals and demonstrated behaviour, reviewed once during mid-year and finalised at the end of the year. Performance is measured on five levels, from " Unsatisfactory to " Significantly Exceeds Expectations" (see Table 1), to finetune employee-specific feedback and ensure motivation. Managers evaluate employee performance based on actual results. To ensure the impartiality and correctness of the judgement, the human resource department facilitates the distribution of the team's final result according to the recommended distribution curve in Table 1. Recommended distribution curve forces managers to think about the relative performance of all team members, have meaningful performance discussions and document conclusions with examples. The final distribution is first reviewed and challenged by the own management team, and in case of questions or inconsistencies, additional real-life evidence has to be provided. Additionally, the distribution curve is reviewed on the company level to ensure alignment across all teams. For the final conversion to Nine-Box performance management matrix, the performance levels “Unsatisfactory” and “Partially Meets Expectations” are combined as“Low

Performance", and "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" and "Exceed Expectations" are combined to "Excellent Performance".

Assessing an employee's potential is much more challenging and somewhat subjective. The Potential Assessment Scoring tool (see Table 2.) is used together with systematic annual management and human resource workshop to reduce subjectivity. Line managers must provide evidence demonstrating employee potential like willingness to take stretch assignments, leadership qualities under challenging situations, career plan demonstrating desire to learn more about the organisation cross-functionally, documented anecdotal data from customers/vendors/colleagues about the individual, performance trends and progression over time.

The scoring of employee potential is divided into three levels:

1. High Potential (Score 37-48) - employee demonstrates knowledge, skills and learning capability to exceed expectations and grow further in the organisation

2. Medium Potential (Score 25-36) - employee demonstrates having average knowledge, skills and learning capability to meet expectations and grow further in the organisation

3. Low Potential (Score 12-24) - the employee does not demonstrate having the knowledge, skills and learning skill to meet minimum expectations to grow in the organisation or has reached maximum seniority level.

The final employee's position in the Nine-Box performance management matrix is defined by combining performance and potential results and successfully defending this judgement in the management team and human resource workshop where:

1. Low Performer – is not meeting performance expectations, has reached job potential and is underperforming or could have a behaviour problem

2. Solid Performer – is a steady and dependable performer, and has reached career potential

3. High Performer – is an outstanding performer but has reached career potential

4. Marginal Performer – is new in the job, function or organisation, performs inconsistently and is yet to meet performance expectations

5. Valued Professional – is a steady, dependable performer, often the "backbone" of the company

6. Key Talent – is a critical resource and subject matter expert in their respective areas of expertise

7. Watch List – is new in the job, function or organisation, yet to demonstrate desired high performance

8. Growing Potential – demonstrating capacity for advancement, capable of more contributions

9. Rising Leader – is ready for immediate advancement and potential for senior succession

For statistical analysis purposes, each box of the performance management matrix is scored where each performance and potential level gives the additional score (see Figure3.). Altogether there are five levels of Nine-Box Matrix scores where:

- score 0 is for Box 1 (low performance combined with low potential)
- score 1 is for Boxes 2 and 4 (either solid performance with low potential or medium potential with low performance)
- score 2 is for Boxes 3, 5 and 7 (excellent performance with low potential, solid performance with medium potential, low performance with high potential)
- score 3 is for Boxes 6 and 8 (excellent performance with medium potential, solid performance with high potential)
- score 4 is for Box 9 (excellent performance combined with high potential)

5.3. Instruments to measure mindfulness

Generally, mindfulness scales can be categorised along different dimensions, what facet of mindfulness they measure, and how complex scoring is (single vs multiple scores). A clear distinction is whether the measurement assesses the state (temporary mindset to move in and out) vs the trait (permanent personality characteristics) of mindfulness. The most common scales measuring mindfulness are the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS), State Mindfulness Scale (SMS), Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS), Southampton Mindfulness Questionnaire (SMQ), Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale (CAMS-R). Mindfulness practitioners have developed some scales for experienced meditators (like the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory, while others only for the clinical population (like the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills).

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) was selected to measure “awareness” as it is one of the most widely used one-dimensional single scores trait-based clinically and non-clinically tested mindfulness scales. The MAAS scale was developed by Kirk Brown and Richard Ryan in 2003 and has become a successful measurement scale for the general population without meditation experience, with the original Cronbach Alpa in the range of 0.80-0.87. This scale has been validated in numerous studies for the

general community and different languages with good validity. For measuring "awareness," I have used a short MAAS questionnaire with five questions reflecting mindfulness through absence, not presence, to avoid bias from social desirability (see Table 3.).

Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHMLS) was selected to measure "acceptance" due to its efficiency in measuring mindfulness through present-moment awareness and acceptance. The PHLMS scale was developed by Cardaciotto et al. (2008) to answer how to measure mindfulness through present-moment awareness and acceptance. The scale was validated originally by Cardaciotte et al. (2008), demonstrating Cronbach Alpha for acceptance subscale in the range of 0.75-0.90. Meanwhile scales have been validated additionally widely across the world in different studies. For this research, I have used ten even questions out of the twenty questions in the PHLMS scale measuring "acceptance" (see Table 4.).

For both questionnaires, 6 Likert-type scales were used:1 - Almost Never, 2 - Very Infrequently, 3 - Somewhat Infrequently, 4 - Somewhat Frequently, 5 - Very Frequently, 6 - Almost Always.

Scores for the PHLMS acceptance subscale were reverse scored and summed as per scale protocol for higher values indicating higher mindfulness.

6. Findings

6.1. Overview

Table 5 summarises this mindfulness study result demonstrating good reliability with strong consistency measures where Cronbach Alpha for Employee Awareness (MAAS awareness subscale) is 0.83, for Employee Acceptance (PHLMS acceptance subscale) is 0.84 and combined for Employee Mindfulness Cronbach Alpha is 0.88.

Average Employee Mindfulness scores and the number of employees (Figure 4.) demonstrate an increasing mindfulness score across the x-axis for Employee Performance and the y-axis for Employee Potential. 78 respondents are ranked as High Potential Talents (Box 6, 8, 9), and their average Employee Mindfulness score is higher than the rest of the respondents. The only exception is noticed in Box 7, with two questionnaire participants demonstrating relatively high mindfulness scores, with a possible explanation that those are recently promoted talents who are still in the settling in period and have not had time to demonstrate their full performance capability in the new role.

Standard box plot diagrams (Figure 5.) demonstrates the distribution of awareness and acceptance scores by sorting them into four equal 25% groups and showing 50% of all scores in the middlebox. The median is marked by the line that divides the box into two parts, while upper and lower whiskers represent scores outside the middle 50%. Outliers with values outside the overall distribution pattern are marked on the graph by

the empty dot. An increasing trend of mindfulness facets - awareness and acceptance - is noticed across the entire talent grid with increasing median for Employee Potential and Employee Performance. Also, Nine-Box performance management matrix combining performance and potential demonstrates an increasing mindfulness trend from lower to a higher levels of talent. Shorter boxes in the acceptance chart demonstrate higher levels of agreement across respondents, while taller awareness boxes demonstrate more wider score distribution. Employee Awareness has higher median scores linked to Employee Potential than to Employee Performance, while in the case of Employee Acceptance, scores for both talent contributors - performance and potential - are on the same level.

6.2. Finding: employee mindfulness has a positive relation with employee talent

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the relationship between Employee Mindfulness and Employee Talent is positive (see Figure 6.) as demonstrated by mindfulness facets whereby Employee Awareness and Employee Talent were positive and significant (coeff=0.84, p<=0.0043; BCLB=0.26, BCUC=1.41). A positive and significant relationship was also found between Employee Acceptance and Employee Talent (coeff=0.65, p<=0.0057; BCLB=0.19, BCUC=1.11).

To support Hypothesis 1.1., the mediation model using Employee Acceptance as a mediation on Employee Awareness and Employee Talent (represented by a Nine-Box performance management matrix score) relationship was tested (see Figure 7.).

From the total effect model Employee Talent (effect=0.29, p=0.0000; the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero, bias correlated lower bound (BCLB) = 0.20, and bias correlated upper bound (BCUC)=0.38). Additionally, the analysis showed that for Employee Awareness, the direct effect on Employee Talent was significant (effect=0.22, p=0.0003; BCLB=0.10, BCUC=0.33). The indirect effect on Employee Talent score was also significant (effect=0.07; BCLB=0.01, BCUC=0.14).

Results validate the assumption that Employee Awareness helps employees to be more accepting and, through this, develops Employee Talent positively while at the same

time, Employee Awareness could be directly helpful to Employee Talent in other circumstances.

The mediation model (see Figure 8.), is used to support Hypothesis 1.2. where Employee Awareness was used for mediation on Employee Acceptance and Employee Talent, showed that the mediation did exist and the total effect (meaning direct and indirect combined) was significant for having a higher Employee Talent (effect=0.13, p=0.0000; the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero, (BCLB) = 0.07 and (BCUC)=0.18).

Additionally, the analysis showed that for Employee Acceptance, the direct effect on Employee Talent was significant (effect=0.17, p=0.0328; BCLB=0.01, BCUC=0.33). The indirect effect on the Employee Talent score was (effect=0.17; BCLB=0.08, BCUC=0.27).

This validates the assumption that Employee Acceptance helps people to be more aware and thus may be more beneficial in some circumstances for Employee Talent, while Employee Awareness itself could be directly helpful to Employee Talent, maybe in some other circumstances. However, together, Employee Awareness and Employee Acceptance combination drive higher Employee Talent.

Additionally, testing the relationship of Employee Awareness and Employee Acceptance on Employee Talent (see Figure 9.), contributors validated hypotheses

H.1.1.a., H.1.1.b, H.1.2.a. and H.1.2.b. about the indirect relation of mindfulness facets on performance and potential. Only in the case of Employee Performance was there a limited direct relation from Employee Acceptance, indicating that Employee Acceptance alone is not a good predictor for good Employee Performance. However, complete mediation of Employee Acceptance by Employee Awareness demonstrates how important both mindfulness facets are to the talent.

6.3. Finding: mindfulness facets have compensation mechanism

An initial look at the distribution of awareness and acceptance scores (Figure 10.) indicates that strong awareness and acceptance scores are needed to be part of the talent pool (Boxes 6, 8, 9).

Further analysis (Figure 11.) shows that for employees with low Employee Acceptance, it is more important to have higher Employee Awareness to be ranked higher in the Nine-Box performance management matrix (Acceptance Score = 3.7, effect =0.34, p = 0.000). When Employee Acceptance levels increase, the effect of Employee Awareness on Employee Talent gets smaller. (Acceptance Score = 4.5, effect =0.23 , p = 0.001 and Acceptance Score 5.2 , effect =0.14 , p = 0.049). A similar effect happens otherwise. When employees are low on Employee Awareness, having higher Employee Acceptance is important to be ranked higher in the Nine-Box performance management matrix (Acceptance Score = 2.8, effect =0.27, p = 0.003). This indicates that, especially on the low levels of either Employee Acceptance or Employee Awareness, those facets of mindfulness can compensate for each other with high levels of another facet. It is also clear that ending up with a high ranking in the Nine-Box talent management matrix is very unlikely when an employee is low on both Employee Awareness and Employee Acceptance. Opposite is also true and employees having both high Employee Awareness and Employee Acceptance will be most likely ending up with high ranking in the Nine-Box talent management matrix.

Additionally, back testing with ANOVA Model (r squared 0.249) validates the argument that employees with higher Employee Potential and Employee Performance demonstrate higher Employee Mindfulness (Figure 12.) as employees in the higher scored performance management boxes (Talent Pool Box 6, 8, 9) have higher levels of Employee Mindfulness.

The higher Employee Potential, the higher is Employee's Mindfulness, which happens within all performance boxes. Especially for employees in the low-performance bucket, there is a strong case of rising Employee Mindfulness when Employee Potential levels increase. At the same time, this effect was smaller for Solid and High performers. Similarly, Employee Mindfulness rises when Employee Performance levels increase for employees in the low and medium potential buckets, while in low-performance bucket, error bars are higher because of smaller sample sizes.

Box 7 (High Potential and Low Performance) is a case worth noting for High Potential Box as the sample size is very low (n=2). As previously indicated, this box contains newly promoted employees without time to prove their performance in the new role while they demonstrate high potential.

6.4. Finding: supervisor mindfulness has positive relation employee talent

To validate Hypothesis 3, the mediation model using Employee Mindfulness (mean of Employee Awareness and Acceptance Score) on Supervisor Mindfulness and Employee Talent (represented by Nine-Box performance management score) relationship was analysed (Figure13.). Due to limited data points in the survey with 83 supervisor-employee pairs, it was statistically not meaningful to split the performance-potential responses due natural low distribution across the talent pool, also breaking the mediation model further down to mindfulness subscales for detailed analysis of awareness and acceptance relation was limited, and therefore mean score of Employee Awareness and Acceptance score was used.

The analysis showed a complete mediation meaning Supervisor Mindfulness has a positive relation on Employee Mindfulness, which is then positively related to Employee Talent (effect=0.58, p=0.0092; BCLB=0.15, BCUC=1.02). The indirect effect on Employee Talent score was also significant (effect=0.28; BCLB=0.03, BCUC=0.57). The direct effect was only directionally significant (p=0.11), which showed that the Supervisor Mindfulness and Employee Talent relationship was fully explained through Employee Mindfulness. Complete mediation means Supervisor Mindfulness has a positive relation with Employee Mindfulness, which is then positively related to Employee Talent.

Additionally, testing the Supervisor Mindfulness's relation with Employee Talent contributors - Employee Performance and Employee Potential - demonstrates a positive indirect relationship (Figure14.). Supervisor Mindfulness is positively related to Employee Talent contributors through positive relationship on Employee Mindfulness. The positive relation of Supervisor Mindfulness on Employee Performance and Potential is only directional, indicating that using Supervisor Mindfulness alone as a predictor for promising Employee Talent has limitations. In other words, employees demonstrate better performance and potential when Supervisor's Mindfulness is mediated with the employee's mindfulness.

As pointed out earlier, unfortunately there are not enough data points to validate on a more detailed level how different levels of supervisors' mindfulness impact employee mindfulness. A simple comparison of average mindfulness between employees and supervisors (Figure 15.) demonstrates that the mindfulness level is higher for all talent pool members (both for employees and supervisors). However, supervisors demonstrate higher levels of mindfulness even if they are not in the talent pool. This may be explained by the fact that some supervisors have already been during their tenure in the talent pool before being promoted to senior roles, and they demonstrate a high level of mindfulness while being outside the talent pool. Suppose the non-talent pool population includes supervisors with high levels of mindfulness. In that case, it will amplify even more previous findings about the differentiation of mindfulness levels between talent pool and non-talent pool members.

Mapping supervisor and employee mindfulness levels (Figure 16.) indicates that a supervisor's high level of mindfulness alone does not increase the number of talent pool members if a high level of employee mindfulness does not mediate it. In other words, a higher population of talent pool members is when a mindful supervisor works with a mindful employee.

7. Discussion

7.1. Intertwined nature of mindfulness facets are related postively to talent

The primary contribution of this research is in-depth understanding of how employee mindfulness is related to employee talent when measured in the talent management process by performance and potential. Previous studies have been validating in separate studies the positive impact of mindfulness on employee performance (Glomb, 2011; Dane, 2011; Reb et al., 2014; Dane & Brummel, 2014; Reb et al., 2018) and learning capabilities (Sadler-Smith et al., 2007; McAleer et al., 2017; Corti et al., 2020), but have not combined how mindfulness is related to performance-potential in structured talent management.

This study confirms that mindfulness facets, awareness and acceptance have positive relation to employee talent management contributors - performance and potential as proposed in Hypothesis 1. This research validates that employees who have been selected to the talent pool based on good performance and growth potential also demonstrate strongly intertwined mindfulness facets - awareness and acceptance. In other words, employees who demonstrate additionally to talent depth (how well an employee performs in the current job) and talent breadth (how far employees can grow in the organisation) also have higher consciousness capacity.

Findings suggest that mindfulness is essential in predicting employee talent as improvement in mindfulness score predicts employee talent level. While awareness increases insights about what happens inside and around the employee, acceptance enables employees to create a state of mind for ideal performance and full potential. The evidence demonstrates also that impact goes both ways - awareness helps employees to be more accepting, and acceptance helps employees to improve awareness. The intertwined nature of awareness and acceptance is summarised in the "Mindfulness-Talent Relationship Matrix" (Figure 17.), showing that both mindfulness facets are critical for improving talent. The evidence also suggests that employee acceptance alone is not a good predictor for good employee performance. Without awareness of the situation, the employee might either avoid responsibilities or performance is hindered when the employee is unsure of his/her contribution to the bigger picture. In other words, employees perform better when acceptance is mediated with awareness.

This finding leads me to suggest the following propositions:

> **Proposition 1 (P1):** Higher capacity of consciousness (awareness combined with acceptance) predicts higher talent level (performance combined with potential).
>
> **Proposition 2 (P2):** Employees perform better when acceptance is mediated with awareness.

7.2. Limited compensating nature of mindfulness facets

The second contribution of the research is identifying compensation mechanisms of mindfulness facets on talent improvement. Researchers have validated that the most beneficial to mindfulness is a high level of awareness combined with a high level of acceptance. At the same time, deviations may cause over-sensitivities or ineffective actions (Fletcher & Hayes, 2005), but have not been examined do employees compensate, consciously or subconsciously, own mindfulness facets according to original compensation theories (Adler, 1907; Goldstein 1934) for improving their performance. Findings validate Hypothesis 2 that low awareness and low acceptance do not allow to demonstrate strong performance nor potential, but compensation of lower awareness with higher acceptance and lower acceptance with higher awareness does take place up to a certain extent on improvement in performance and potential. Such mindfulness's impact on enhancing responsiveness through a compensation mechanism indicates the possibility that a person driving for self-actualisation can subconsciously compensate for one mindfulness facet with another. Evidence is also clear that for full talent extraction, only strong contribution from both mindfulness facets leads to success. The proposed "Awareness-Acceptance Compensation Model in Talent Management" (Figure 18.) summarises that solid performers demonstrate average awareness and acceptance or compensate unconsciously for a shortcoming in one facet with an increased level in another. The model proposes that for talent pool selection, high mindfulness with a high level of awareness and acceptance is needed,

while employees struggling with mindfulness are also struggling with performance and opening up their talent.

This finding leads me to suggest the following propositions:

> **Proposition 3 (P3):** A person driving for self-actualisation may consciously or subconsciously compensate one mindfulness facet with another up to a certain extent.
>
> **Proposition 4 (P4):** A higher level of mindfulness facets, awareness and acceptance support selection for the talent pool.

7.3. Supervisors' mindfulness role in unlocking employee talent

The third contribution of the research is clarifying the supervisors' mindfulness role for the employee in the talent management process. Scholars have demonstrated a positive impact of supervisor mindfulness on employee performance, job satisfaction and reduction of mental stress (Reb et al., 2014; Reb et al., 2015; Vonderlin et al., 2021), also how supervisor mindfulness has been supporting employee creativity (Tan et al. 2021). Leadership studies explain that supervisor mindfulness impacts employees by being a role model, either as an authentic leader building honest relationships or as a charismatic leader capable of regulating one's emotions according to needs.

The study validates Hypothesis 3, that a supervisor's mindfulness has a significant positive relation with an employee's mindfulness, and employees with a higher level of mindfulness are doing better in the talent management process. Supervisors influence employees as role models and by timely and insightful feedback, but as demonstrated by this study, a mindful leader select mindful employees to work with and they help employees develop their mindfulness. Improved employee mindfulness helps improve employee's performance and unlock their full potential. Employees demonstrating better performance and higher potential are more likely to be selected for the talent pool. To close the circle, one has to remember that employees selected to the talent pool are most likely to become future managers and team supervisors, where their higher level of mindfulness provides an advantage for their subordinates to improve

their mindfulness and to be selected as talent for the accelerated development in the talent pool.

This perpetual circle of supervisor mindfulness influence is illustrated in the proposed "Winning Mindfulness Formula in the Talent Management Process" (Figure 19.).

This finding leads me to suggest the following propositions:

> **Proposition 5 (P5):** Supervisor mindfulness is positively related to employee mindfulness and positively affects employee talent.
>
> **Proposition 6 (P6):** Improving supervisor mindfulness improves talent management as mindful employees will be developed with priority in the talent pool as future mindful supervisors.

7.5. Practical implications

The war for talent has shifted focus on maximising human capital in the competitive VUCA environment. While a rational mind needs control and structure in an environment difficult to predict or control, the latest talent management trends also complement traditional talent management processes with mindfulness-based approaches.

First, the company can use mindfulness to complement traditional talent identification processes for external hires or internal selection for accelerated development. This study validates that the measured higher capacity of consciousness predicts higher talent depth and breadth potential. Correct talent identification is becoming more critical with shrinking talent resource pools due to negative demographic trends and international mobility. Jim Collins (2001) has summarised well in his book "Good to Great" that the first step in transiting from being an excellent company to a great company is "to get the right people to the bus".

Second, it is more than just the company that has to select or groom the right people. Also, the employee has to select the company to work for. Understanding one's talent better and knowing what weaknesses to improve and strengths to strengthen helps the individual become a more attractive target for external headhunters or valuable internal resources for the next exciting project. While employees have multiple criteria for

selecting potential employers, human nature drives self-actualisation and reward. Therefore employees prioritise employers where they can see the potential for career and personal growth. Knowing the impact of mindfulness on one's performance and potential allows employees to prioritise mindfulness training to complement traditional skills or behavioural improvement. The compensation mechanism of mindfulness facets identified by this study explains how individuals subconsciously compensate one mindfulness facet with another and provides insight into improvement areas. As discovered by this study, the chance to be selected to the talent pool for accelerated growth increases when an employee demonstrates high levels of both mindfulness facets. Understanding this and improving both mindfulness facets one could look at mindfulness improvement as a personal growth and career-making tool.

Generally, both employer and employee are interested in unwrapping the full potential of talent. Company for improving the value of human capital to improve competitive advantage, and an employee for personal growth and self-actualisation. Thus both parties should be interested in understanding mindfulness and mindfulness facets to design development programs, selecting the right people for leading suitable projects or modifying how to approach the challenge.

For example, this study confirms that employee performance improves when employee acceptance is mediated with awareness. Next time, one could prioritise explaining context better when presenting a new idea to a CEO, as decision-makers will be more

comfortable making a decision (acceptance) when they know the context (awareness) better. Experienced employees already know this by experience or do it subconsciously, while junior managers might focus on this more consciously to improve the success of their ideas.

As this study validates that while mindfulness facets compensate each other to a certain extent then for more complex projects higher level talent with higher level of mindfulness is needed. One could combine it with Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's Flow Theory (1990) where for better performance or "flow" a balance between skills and complexity of task is needed. Or according to this study, better "flow" and results will be delivered when employees demonstrating lower levels of mindfulness are selected for simpler projects and more complex tasks are reserved for employees selected to the talent pool and demonstrating higher level talent with higher levels of both awareness and acceptance.

I think the most important practical implication of this study is the proposed "Winning Mindfulness Formula in the Talent Management Process", where supervisor mindfulness influences, through employee mindfulness, positively employee talent. Talented managers develop to the next generation of mindful leaders, and therefore mindful talent management becomes a perpetual internal engine for improving the competitive advantage of a company through talented people. Implementing mindfulness training for leaders, selecting mindful people to the talent pool, and

training their mindfulness as next-generation leaders will enhance their decision-making ability and, through "Winning Mindfulness Formula in the Talent Management Process", continuously uplift the company's performance.

7.6. Limitations and future research

This study also has some limitations. While this research is based on data covering broad demographic areas with different cultures, it is still based on one multinational company operating in different regions. The strength of a single company data is standardised employee data with comparable talent management metrics, but the final result may still have some bias impacted by company culture.

For analysing supervisor mindfulness role, there were responses from 83 supervisor-employee pairs, which limited in depth analysis of different mindfulness subscales and employee talent contributors due natural low distribution of responses. For future studies, I would recommend constructing data collection and normalising processes across different organisations to increase the sample pool to limit potential cultural biases, also specially focus on increasing data collection for increased number of supervisor-employee pairs.

Regression analysis demonstrates strong reliability and significant causal predictability of mindfulness's relation to talent. Still, it leaves questions on the bidirectional nature of awareness and acceptance due their intertwined nature, what is more important for opening up full talent - awareness or acceptance while it is clearly documented that high levels of both mindfulness facets relate to higher talent. Also the question remains whether mindful supervisors select more mindful employees for their team or whether a supervisor's interpersonal effect is the main driver.

Additionally there remain questions: what is the career progression speed when employee mindfulness improves, or what is the impact of team dynamics, seniority or job role for mindfulness in talent management? An intervention-based study to analyse variables before and after mindfulness intervention or a longitudinal study for analysing data over extended periods would give further insight into such questions and could form the basis for interesting new studies.

Additionally, it could be interesting to link mindfulness study in the workplace with employee engagement surveys to extend analysis of mindfulness's impact on talent management through employee job satisfaction and well-being angle. Understanding better what drives talent to unlock potential and improve performance beside mindfulness may help us better to understand also the role of mindfulness in the talent management process.

I hope that my approach with extensive review of mindfulness relation to talent management will motivate other researchers to find out how the capacity of consciousness could be developed better and how mindfulness can help individuals and companies to succeed in the war for talent.

8. Conclusions

Interest in mindfulness has increased significantly over the years. In the VUCA environment, search is ongoing to improve performance and productivity for both a person and a company. Recent findings suggest complimenting a rational mind with a creative consciousness in an environment difficult to predict and to be in control. The war for talent has intensified.

This study offers new insights into mindfulness's role in talent management. The findings of this study suggest that a higher capacity of consciousness leads to improved talent depth and breadth, also how mindfulness facets compensate for each other. However, to harness full talent potential, a high level of awareness and acceptance is needed to become part of the talent pool for accelerated growth. Practical recommendations are provided for individuals and organisations to harness mindfulness's power to maximise talent.

Evidence also suggests that supervisor mindfulness has an essential role in unlocking employee talent potential through improving employee mindfulness and recommends that investment in supervisor mindfulness enables companies to start an improvement cycle driven by the proposed "Winning Mindfulness Formula in the Talent Management Process".

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Appendixes

IRB Exemption letter IRB-22-071-E039(622)

SMU Classification: Restricted

SMU
SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

7 June 2022

Tarmo RAUDSEPP
SMU Student
Lee Kong Chian School of Business

Dear Tarmo (Principal Investigator),

CATEGORY 1: EXEMPT FROM FURTHER IRB REVIEW
Title of Research: Maximising Effectiveness of Talent Pools Through Mindfulness
SMU-IRB Exemption Number: IRB-22-071-E039(622)

Thank you for your IRB application for above research study, which we received on 6 June 2022.

I am pleased to inform you that, based on the description of the research in your IRB application, the IRB has determined that your research is categorized as "Category 1: Exempt from Further IRB Review" and therefore does not require further IRB review or approval.

Please however note the following:

1. You and your research team remain responsible for conducting the research in full compliance with ethical, regulatory and legal standards for treatment of human participants as set out in the SMU-IRB policies, Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), the SMU IRB Handbook, the Singapore Personal Data Protection Act, and any other applicable regulations. If the Principal Investigator is an SMU student, the Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the research study is conducted in compliance with the above.

2. The comments in the attached IRB application and supporting materials (e.g., informed consent form, survey materials) reflect the advice that SMU IRB has provided to help ensure that your research is conducted in compliance with such ethical standards and regulations. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you implement the comments provided by the SMU-IRB prior to collecting data.

3. Please refer to Annex A, which presents a self-check-list of key elements of human participant protections that would typically be relevant for research categorized as Category 1: Exempt from Further IRB Review. We strongly recommend that you ensure your research confirms with all of these elements.

4. Please refer to Annex B to understand the criteria for Exemption and a list of the types of factors that would potentially cause a re-categorization requiring IRB approval.

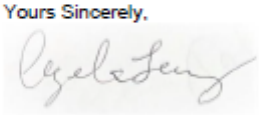
5. If you plan to modify your research protocol in any substantive way, you must consult the SMU-IRB to determine if the research can continue to be considered as "Category 1: Exempt from Further IRB Review." To do so, submit an SMU-IRB Protocol Modification Request Form (see SMU-IRB website), together with a copy of the originally-submitted IRB application (with any modifications in tracked changes) to the SMU-IRB for review prior to implementing the modified protocol. Please see the IRB Intranet for a description of how to differentiate minor from substantive modifications.

6. If any adverse events or unanticipated problems involving human participants occur during the course of the research project, you must submit an SMU-IRB Unanticipated Problem Reporting Form (see SMU-IRB website) to the SMU-IRB within 24 hours of your awareness of the event.

7. Please use the above SMU-IRB exemption number in all your correspondence with the IRB on this research.

If at any point you have a question about the categorization of this research study, ethical or regulatory requirements relevant to the study, whether modifications to your study might require re-categorization, or any other matter, please do not hesitate to contact the IRB Secretariat at irb@smu.edu.sg or telephone +65 6828-1925. You are also welcome to contact me directly.

Yours Sincerely,



Angela Leung
Deputy Chair
Institutional Review Board

Annex A: Self-check-list of elements of human participant protections typically relevant for Category 1 research.

1. There should not be any conflict of interest[1] that may compromise you and your team's professional judgment in conducting the research study.
2. The research undertaken in this application should have sufficient scientific and/or academic merit and a sufficiently sound research design to meaningfully contribute to the relevant field of research.
3. Risks to participants should be minimal, commensurate with benefits, and there should be sufficient and fair measures to address any risks to the human participants.
4. If there is any data collection outside of Singapore, the Principal Investigator (PI) and his or her research team are responsible for meeting the standards of human participant protection (IRB, legal, ethical and cultural norms) in that country/region. In order to meet the standards, the PI or other member of the research team should have sufficient expertise, or there may be a local collaborator with sufficient expertise who is involved in the research and will ensure that the research design meets those standards.[2]
5. Written obtained consent should be collected from each participant. The participant information sheet and informed consent form[3] should indicate the following:
    a. Purpose of research
    b. Expected duration of research
    c. Brief but sufficient description of the research procedures, including types of survey questions asked, etc.
    d. Expected benefits of participation, whether to the participant and/or two generalizable knowledge.
    e. Expected risks of participation
    f. Statement that participants can choose not to answer any questions or participate in any research procedures at any time without penalty, and that participants can withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty.
    g. Description of how the data will be collected, i.e. whether anonymously (i.e., with no identifying information) or with identifiers, and how anonymity/confidentiality will be safeguarded (i.e., how the data will be stored and who will have access to the data)
    h. Name, title, and contact details of the PI (and those of the Supervisor if the PI is a student), and an invitation to contact the PI and/or Supervisor if the participant has any questions or would like to discuss the study.
    i. Contact details of the IRB Secretariat in case the participant would like to discuss the rights/terms of his/her participation in the study.
    j. Each participant should be given a copy of the informed consent form (or invited to bookmark or download an online consent form).
    k. Participant's signed declaration that he/she understands that participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty, that he/she is at least 18 years of age, understanding that if he/she is affiliated with SMU, the participation or lack of participation will have no adverse effect on his/her status at or relations with SMU, and that he/she has read and fully understood the

[1] A conflict of interest is any circumstance in which personal, professional, financial, or other private interests of a person or institution compromise or has the potential to compromise the exercise of professional judgment or obligations, or may be perceived as doing so.
[2] If the PI or other member of the research team does not have sufficient expertise to meet the standards, and there is no local collaborator involved who will ensure that the research design meets those standards, the PI should inform the SMU IRB. SMU IRB will determine if there is anyone within the IRB with sufficient expertise, or the IRB may be able to engage a consultant for advice.
[3] Ordinarily, researchers must obtain written informed consent from participants (e.g. online/hardcopy consent form). Verbal informed consent is only appropriate if the only record linking the participant and the research would be the written informed consent form, and the principal risk of the proposed research is potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Do note that when obtaining verbal informed consent from participants, the researcher should maintain a log documenting the request and receipt of each verbal consent such as
• Date and time that verbal informed consent was requested and obtained;
• Participant category (if applicable) and participant unique code number; and
• Signature of the researcher who obtained the verbal informed consent (the researcher should provide his or her signature next to the above information).
For studies collecting informed consent verbally, before or after the study, participants should also be provided with a document that summarizes the study information, terms of informed consent, and the contact details of the researcher and the IRB.

consent form and gives permission for the researcher to proceed with the study consistent with the terms set out in the form.

l. PI's signed declaration that he/she has explained and defined in detail the research procedures the participant has consented to, and that the data will be handled as stated in the form.

6. If there is any potential institutional risk beyond Human Research Protection Issues (i.e., potential risk to parties other than the research participants, such as risk to the researcher or third parties, or risk to SMU's reputation, relationships with stakeholders, etc.), then such potential risk needs to be assessed by the Institutional Official (IO) (or Deputy IO). . Please inform the IRB Secretariat.

Please note that standard wording for all of the elements of the consent described above can be found in the informed consent boilerplates on the SMU IRB Intranet.

Annex B: Criteria for Exemption and a List of the Types of Factors that Would Potentially Cause a Re-Categorization

Criteria for Categorization as "Category 1: Exempt from Further IRB Review"

1. The research either:
   a. involves survey or interview procedures or observation of public behavior in which the recorded information **does not** identify participants, and disclosure of their responses outside the research **could not** reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation; or
   b. involves survey or interview procedures or observation of public behavior in which the recorded information **could** identify participants, but disclosure of their responses outside the research **could not** reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.
2. The research **does not** target or involve the collection of data from or concerning any vulnerable groups such as the following:
   a. Minors (under 18 years old)
   b. Pregnant women
   c. Prisoners
   d. Individuals who are physically/mentally/intellectually/cognitively disabled or impaired
   e. Participants who are institutionalized (e.g. in a mental facility, nursing home, rehabilitation centre, halfway house)
3. The research **does not** elicit data about participants engaged in or intending to engage in illegal or stigmatized behavior (E.g. drug use, prostitution, child abuse)
4. The research **does not** pose any of the following risks to participants that are beyond what one would typically experience in everyday life:
   a. Risk of physical discomfort or harm
   b. Risk of psychological discomfort or harm
   c. Risk of legal actions (such as criminal prosecution or civil sanctions)
   d. Risk of harm to employment status
   e. Other risks that do not fall within the scope of the above
5. The research **does not** involve any of the following procedures:
   a. Use of deception or any deceptive technique
   b. Any manipulation of psychological or social variables (e.g., beliefs, emotions, behaviors, opinions, framing, psychological stresses)
   c. Use of incomplete or generalized information in informed consent that omits significant information about the study or design
   d. Presentation of materials which participants might consider sensitive, offensive, threatening or degrading
   e. Probing for personal or sensitive information in surveys or interviews that may cause risk, harm or stress to participants that are beyond what one would typically experience in everyday life.
   f. Use of private records (e.g., educational or medical records)
   g. Possible invasion of privacy of the participant, or related parties (e.g., family members, friends, in which case consent may need to obtained from related parties)
   h. Other procedures that are not within the scope of the above but may cause risk, harm or stress to participants that are beyond what one would typically experience in everyday life

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If your research presently does not meet all of the criteria above, or if any intended modification of your design would cause it to not meet all of the criteria above, your research would not qualify as "Category 1: Exempt from Further IRB Review." In such cases, contact the SMU IRB Secretariat for guidance, and/or submit the relevant IRB application forms for review and approval.

If an intended modification of your research design is substantive (see the SMU IRB Intranet for the definition of substantive vs. minor modifications) but the research would still meet all of the criteria above, you should submit a Protocol Modification application. The IRB will review the Protocol Modification application and confirm whether the research is still "Category 1: Exempt from Further IRB Review."

Typical factors that would potentially cause a re-categorization to Category 2A, 2B, or 3, requiring IRB approval:

- If your research involves information or data that are obtained and/or recorded in such a manner that human participants can be identified, whether directly (e.g. face-to-face) or through identifiers linked to the participants, it will be re-categorized as Expedited Review (Category 2A)
- If your research involves deception or manipulation that are not greater than one would experience in typical everyday life, it will be re-categorized as Expedited Review (Category 2B)
- If your research involves deception or manipulation that are greater than one would experience in typical everyday life, it will be re-categorized as Full Review (Category 3)
- If your research targets and collects data from any vulnerable groups, it will be re-categorized as Full Review (Category 3)
- If your research elicits data about participants engaged in or intending to engage in illegal or stigmatized behavior, it will be re-categorized as Full Review (Category 3)
- If your research poses any risks to participants that are beyond what one would typically experience in everyday life, it will be re-categorized as Full Review (Category 3)

Table 1.

Performance Measurement Normalisation and Link to Nine-Box performance management matrix.

	Performance Guidance Percentage		**Nine-Box performance scale**
5	Significantly Exceeds Expectations	2-5%	**Excellent** Performance (including people demonstrating consistently performance above average)
4	Exceeds Expectations	15-18%	
3	Solid performer	70-75%	**Solid** Performance
2	Partially Meets Expectations	5-10%	**Low** Performance (including people recently promoted and still need to develop in new job)
1	Unsatisfactory		

Table 2.

Assessment of Potential Based on Competency and Behaviour

Rating	Actively gathers information needed to do job effectively and enable strategic thinking	Develops ideas and analysis required for the work	Sees different options or points of view	Understands other peoples' points of view	Facilitates collaboration with colleagues	Develops Others	Influences others	Builds confidence in others	Verbal communication	Gets things done	Creates and achieves goals	Provides a service that is values by internal or external customers	Total Score
1	Accepts information readily available	Relies on instinctive thinking	Can change own point of view or see a different option when it is pointed out to them	Listens to views of others	Is a passive observer in group situations	Responds positively to requests from colleagues for help and advice	Expects their ideas or proposals to stand on their own merits	Does not always make clear their own point of view or changes it without explanation	Their meaning can be understood by others but with difficulty	Follows the rules and procedures provided to them	Achieves goals and targets set by others	Not observed or fails to respond to internal or external customers	
2	Seeks out relevant information within the company	Uses experience appropriate-ly	Sees different options or points of view at the same time	Asks open questions to allow others to express their views	Contributes actively within their own team	Suggest suitable training or work experience for others	Uses logic and reasoning to explain and justify their ideas	Makes their own stance clear to others, makes and defends decisions	Gets their message across to others	Acts when pushed by others	Sets goals and targets for themselves and/or others	Responds when customers complain	
3	In addition, actively searches for information outside the company	Develops ideas that relate own job to other roles in the company	Can see the pros and cons in different options or points of view	Asks questions to find out the true thinking and feelings of colleagues	Facilitates collaboration across teams in the company	Personally coaches or advises others to help their develop-ment	Expresses benefits of their proposals as they see them when explaining them to others	Displays confidence in themselves and in colleagues	Makes things easier to understand for colleagues with good examples, graphics etc.	Creates a plan of action what has to be done by whom and by when	Sets stretching goals and measures progress towards them	Makes improve-ments that customers value	
4	Systematically gathers data and information from within and outside the company and distributes it to those who need it	Develops ideas about how company relates to its wider environment	Creates plans by comparing options and adopting one which maximises advantages and reduces risks/disad-vantages	Demonstrates to colleagues that they understand their colleagues' point of view	Facilitates teams to create shared goals	Creates systematic opportuni-ties for developing people in the company	Relates their proposals to the interests and benefits of others. Describes how they help and benefit colleagues from the colleague's perspective	Creates enthusiasm, optimism and a feeling of success in colleagues	Creates memorable images for others in the way in which they communi-cate	Removes obstacles for themselves and others to take action	Sets an example for achieving excellence to colleagues in the company	Develops performance targets or goals that reflect internal and external customer needs	
Total													

Table 3.

The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) - AWARENESS

Instructions:

Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale below, please indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

Scale:
1 - Almost Never
2 - Very Infrequently
3 - Somewhat Infrequently
4 - Somewhat Frequently
5 - Very Frequently
6 - Almost Always

Questions:

Q1. It seems I am “running on automatic,” without much awareness of what I’m doing.

Q2. I rush through activities without really being attentive to them.

Q3. I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I’m doing right now to get there.

Q4. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.

Q5. I find myself doing things without paying attention.

Table 4.

Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS) – ACCEPTANCE

Instructions:

We are interested in your day-to-day experiences. Below is a list of things that people sometimes experience. Please read each statement. Please indicate how often you experienced each of the described items over the past week. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, so please answer in a way that reflects your own experiences.

Scale:
1 - Almost Never
2 - Very Infrequently
3 - Somewhat Infrequently
4 - Somewhat Frequently
5 - Very Frequently
6 - Almost Always

Questions:

Q1. I try to distract myself when I feel unpleasant emotions

Q2. There are aspects of myself I don't want to think about.

Q3. I try to stay busy to keep thoughts or feelings from coming to mind.

Q4. I wish I could control my emotions more easily

Q5. . I tell myself that I shouldn't have certain thoughts.

Q6. There are things I try not to think about.

Q7. I tell myself that I shouldn't feel sad

Q8. If there is something I don't want to think about, I'll try many things to get it out of my mind.

Q9. I try to put my problems out of mind.

Q10. When I have a bad memory, I try to distract myself to make it go away

Table 5.

Means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities

	M	SD	1	2	3
1 Employee Mindfulness Score (Mean of MAAS & PHLMS)	4.16	0.78	(0.88)		
2 Employee Awareness Score (MAAS)	3.86	1.00	.923**	(0.83)	
3 Employee Acceptance Score (PHLMS)	4.45	0.74	.854**	.589**	(0.84)

N= 282, Reliabilities (Cronbach alphas) are in the parentheses on the diagonal

*** p<0.001; ** p< 0.01; * p < 0.05

Figure 1.

Nine-Box Performance Management Matrix with Talent Pool (Box 6, 8, 9).

POTENTIAL		PERFORMANCE		
		Needs Improvement	**Solid Performance**	**Excellent Performance**
	High Potential	7. Watch List	8. Growing Potential	9. Rising Leader
	Medium Potential	4. Marginal Performer	5. Valued Professional	6. Key Talent
	Low Potential	1. Low Performer	2. Solid Performer	3. High Performer

Figure 2.

Four Basic Leadership Styles.

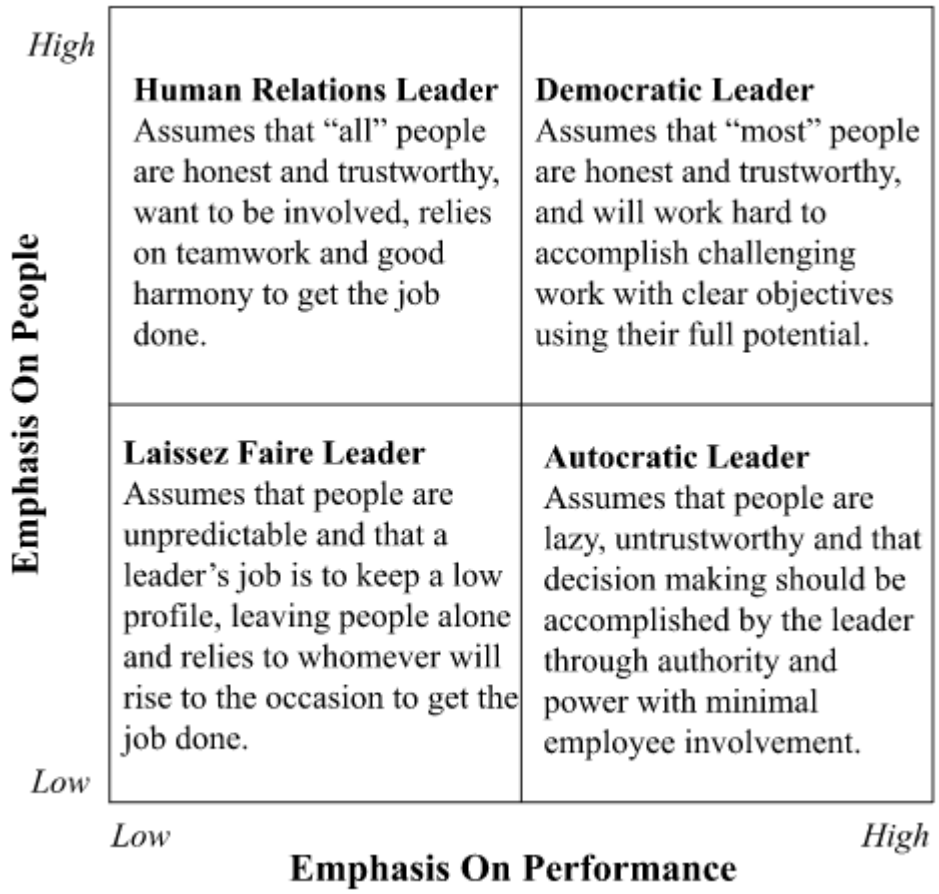

Figure 3.

Talent Management Nine-Box pool conversion for statistical scoring.

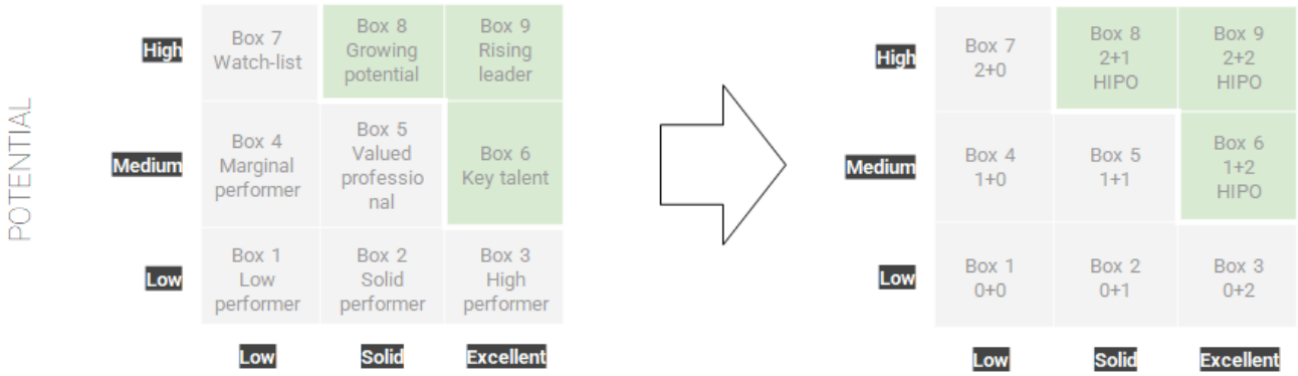

Figure 4.

Mindfulness score and number of respondents per Nine-Box performance management matrix.

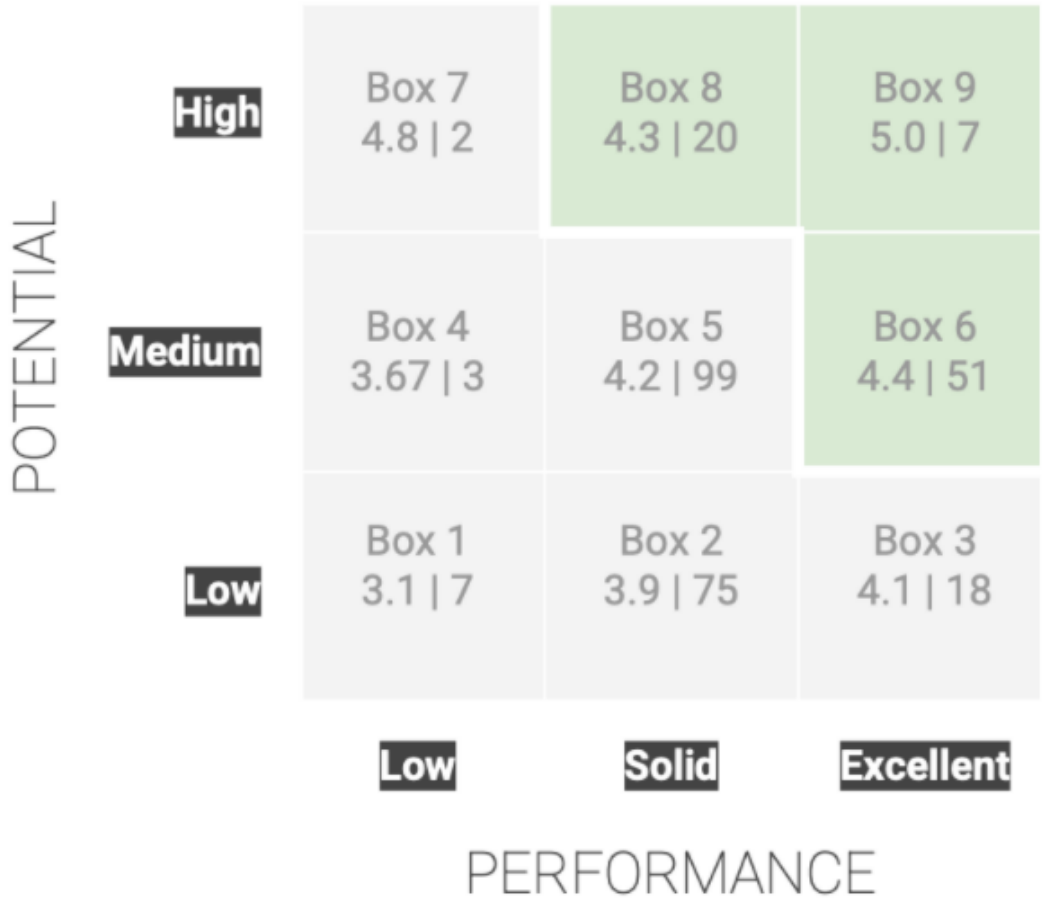

Figure 5.

Awareness and Acceptance distribution across talent management boxes.

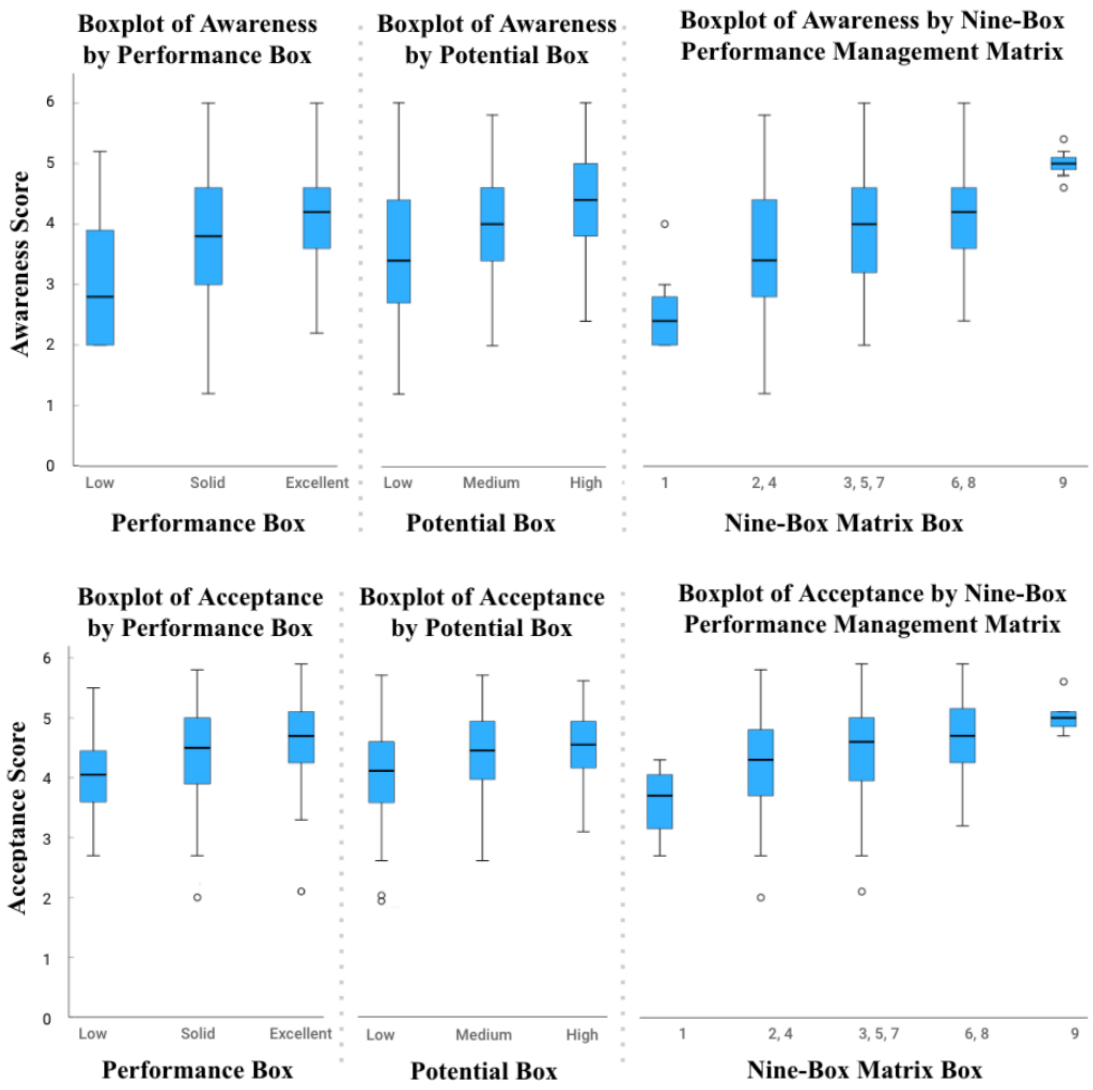

Figure 6.

Employee Awareness and Acceptance relation with Employee Talent.

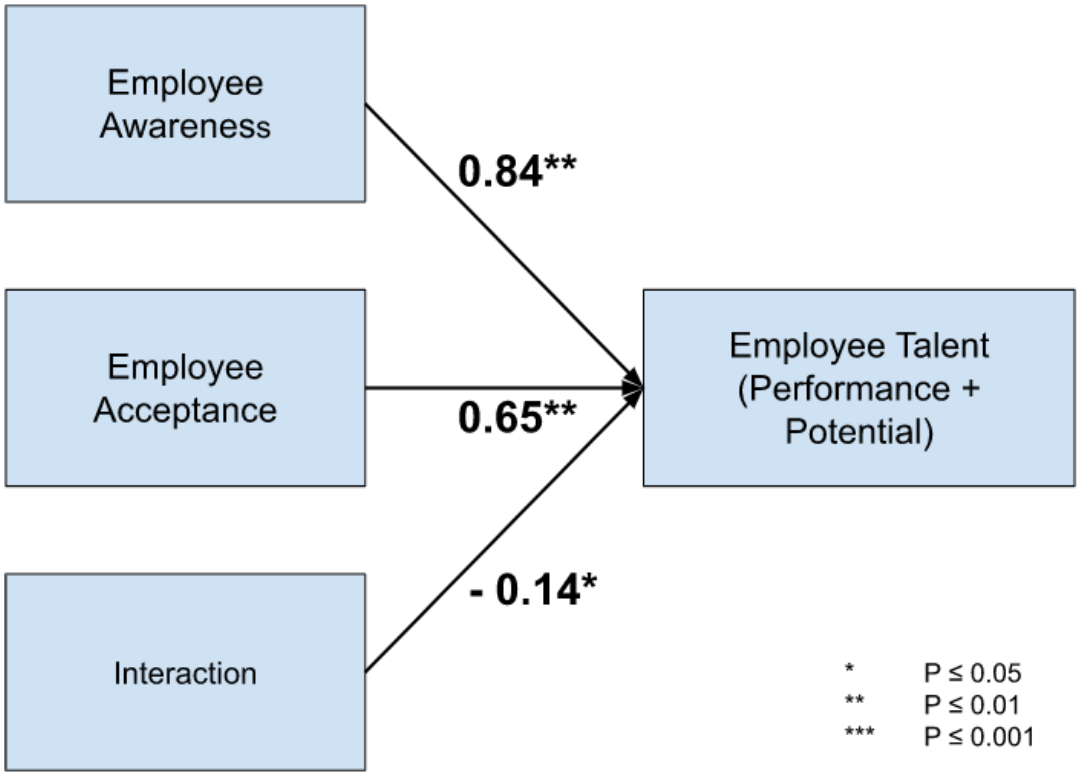

Figure 7.

Mediating impact of Employee Acceptance to Employee Talent.

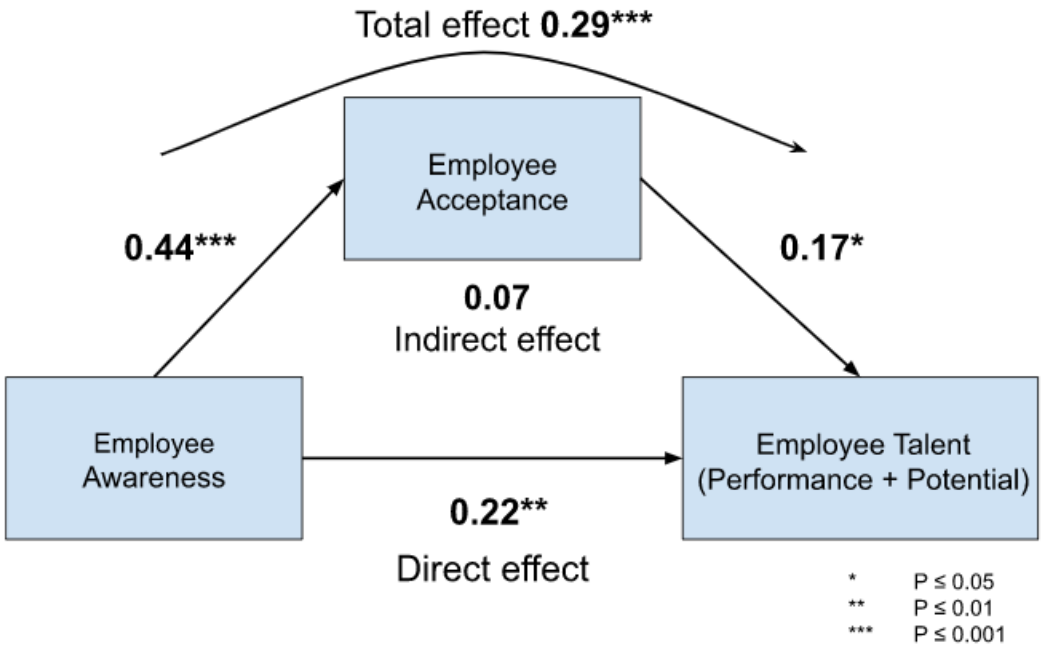

Figure 8.

Mediating impact of Employee Awareness to Employee Talent

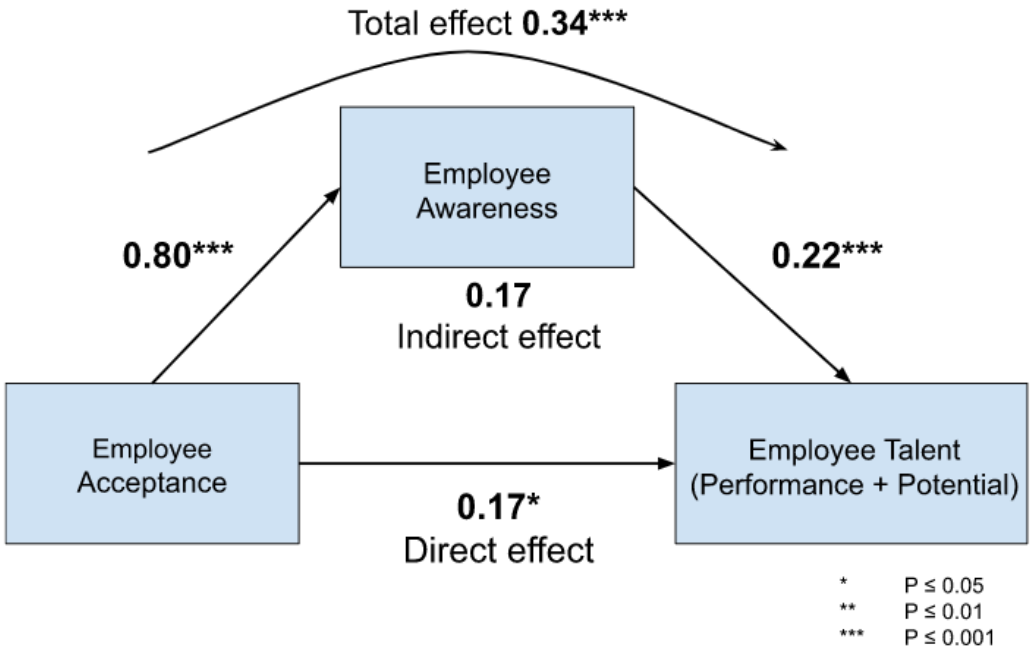

Figure 9.

Mediating impact of mindfulness facets to talent contributors.

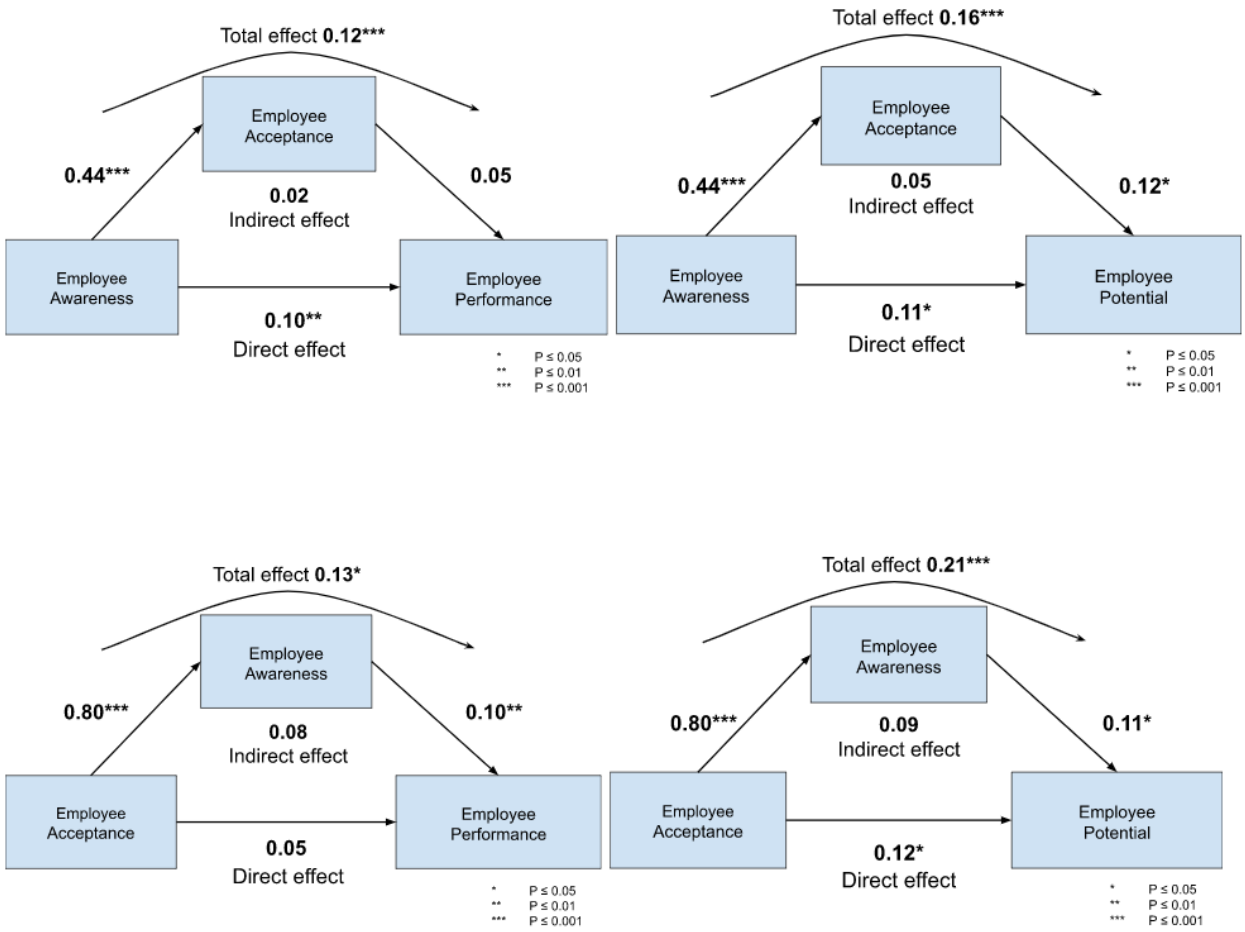

Figure 10.

Distribution of Awareness and Acceptance Scores.

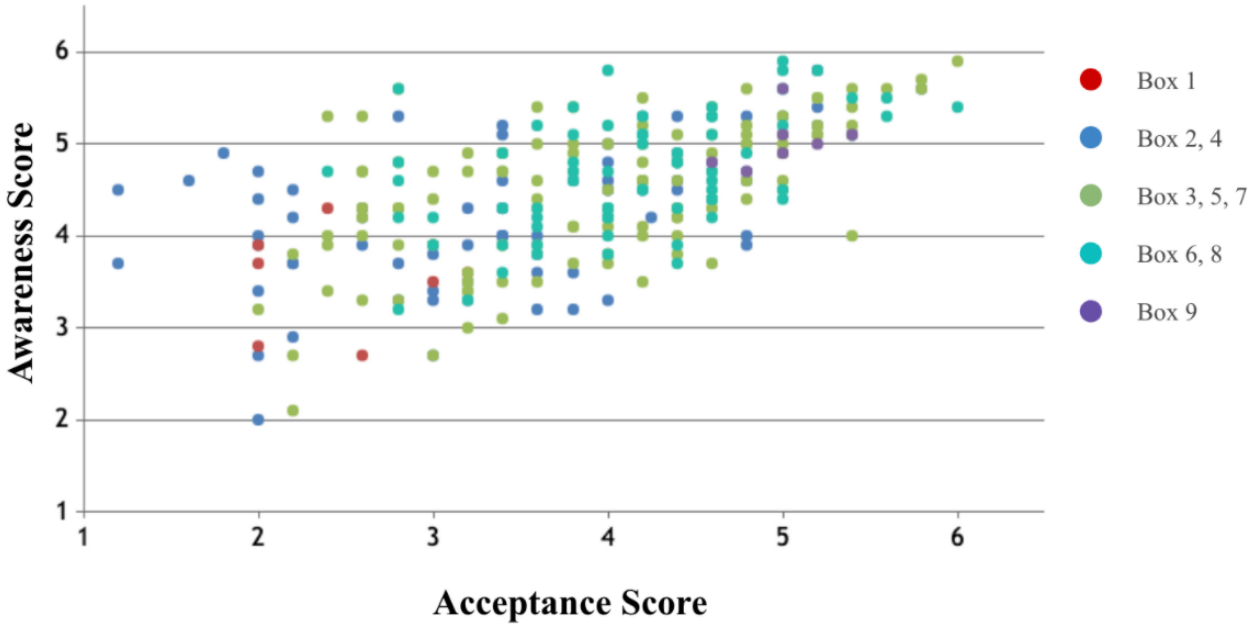

Figure 11.

Employee Awareness and Acceptance relationship to Nine-Box performance management Matrix within different levels of Employee Talent.

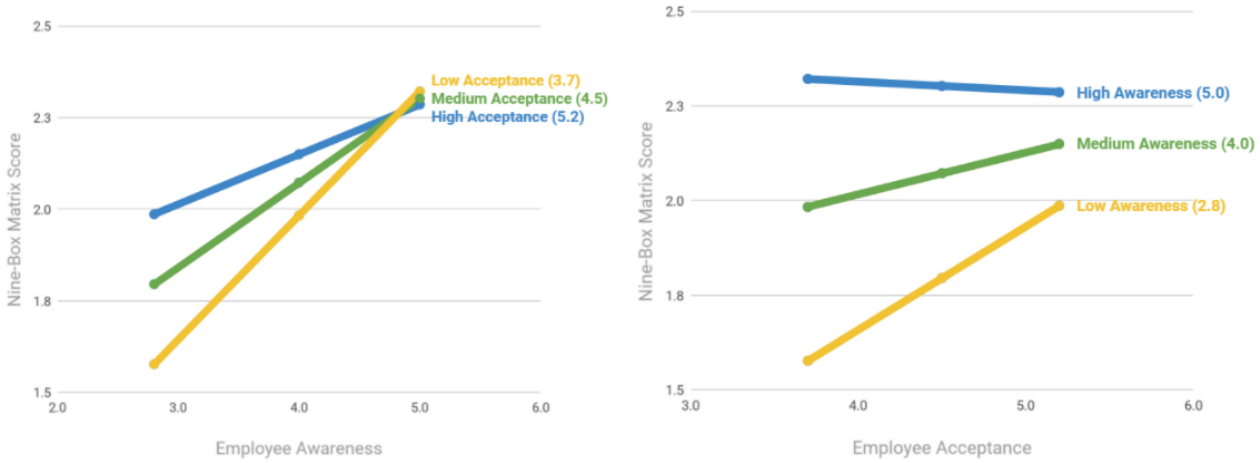

Figure 12.

Estimated Marginal Means of Employee Performance and Potential for Employee Mindfulness.

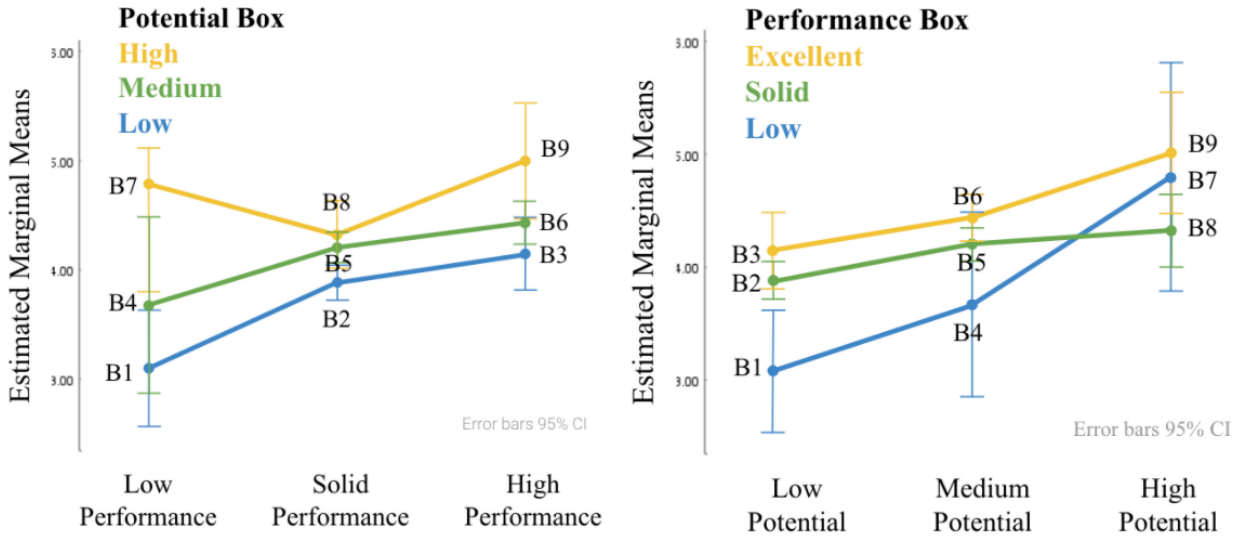

Figure 13.

Employee Mindfulness Meditation on Supervisor Mindfulness and Employee Talent Relationship.

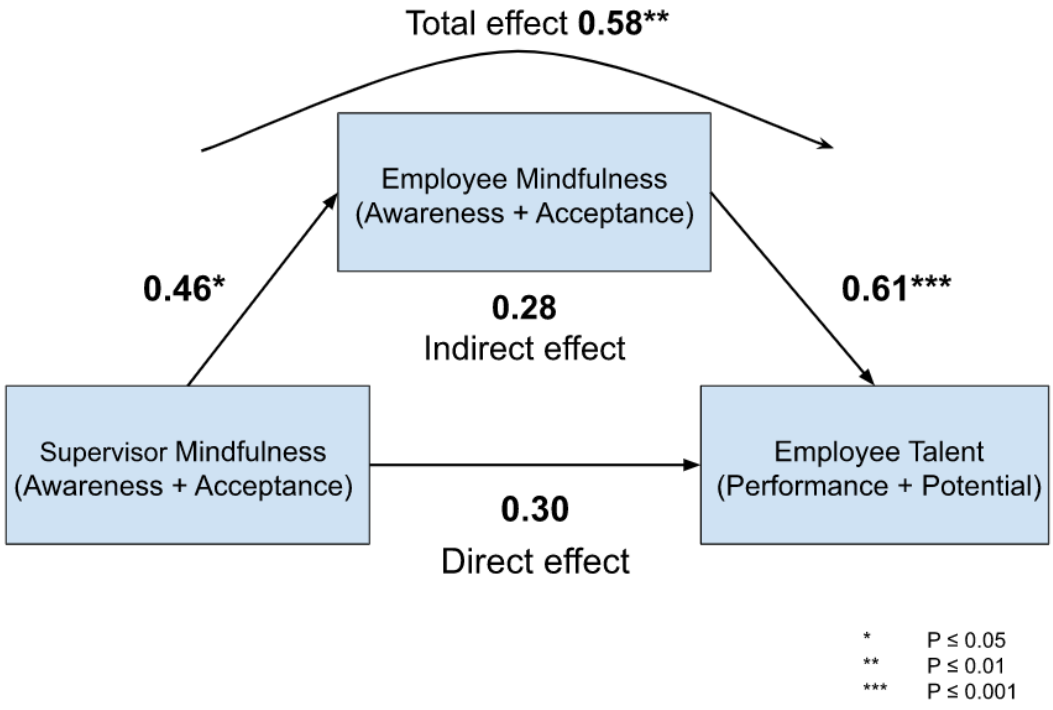

Figure 14.

Employee Mindfulness Meditation on Supervisor Mindfulness and Employee Talent Contributors (Performance and Potential).

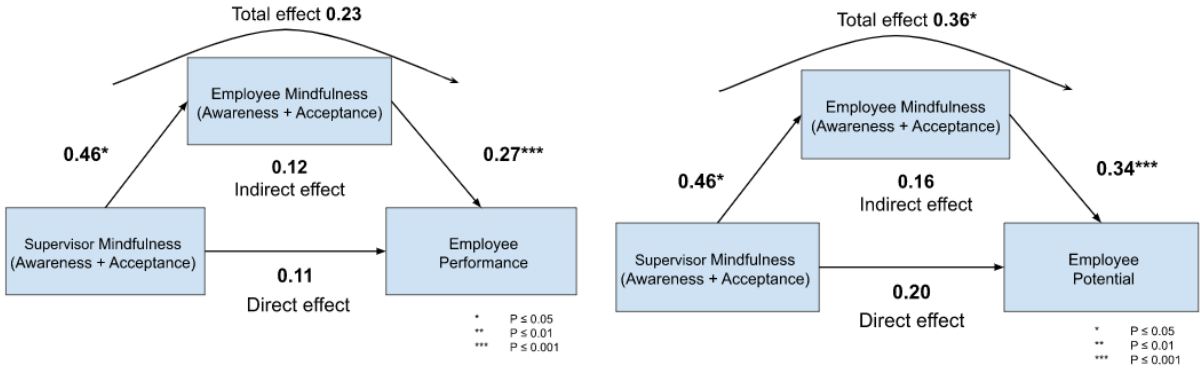

Figure 15.

Average mindfulness of employees and their supervisors inside and outside Talent Pool.

Figure 16.

Supervisor and Employee mindfulness mapping matrix.

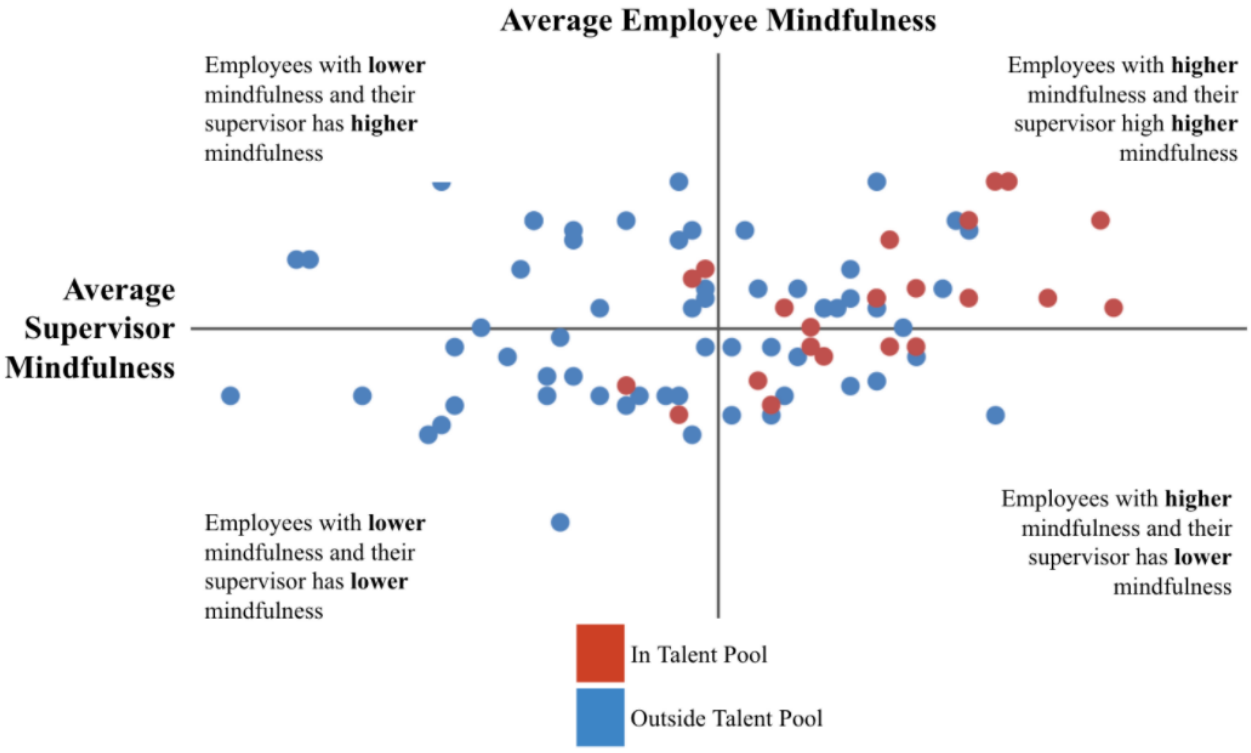

Figure 17.

Mindfulness-Talent Relationship Matrix.

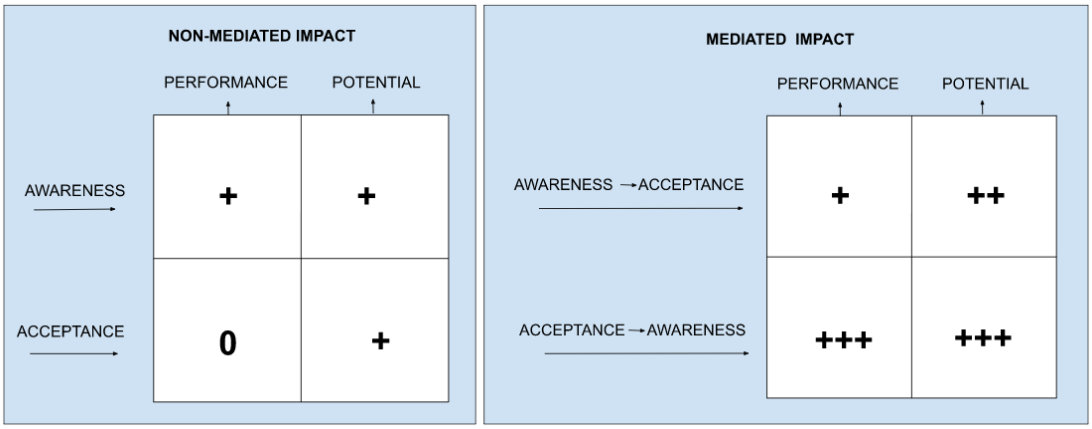

Figure 18.

Awareness-Acceptance Compensation Model in Talent Management.

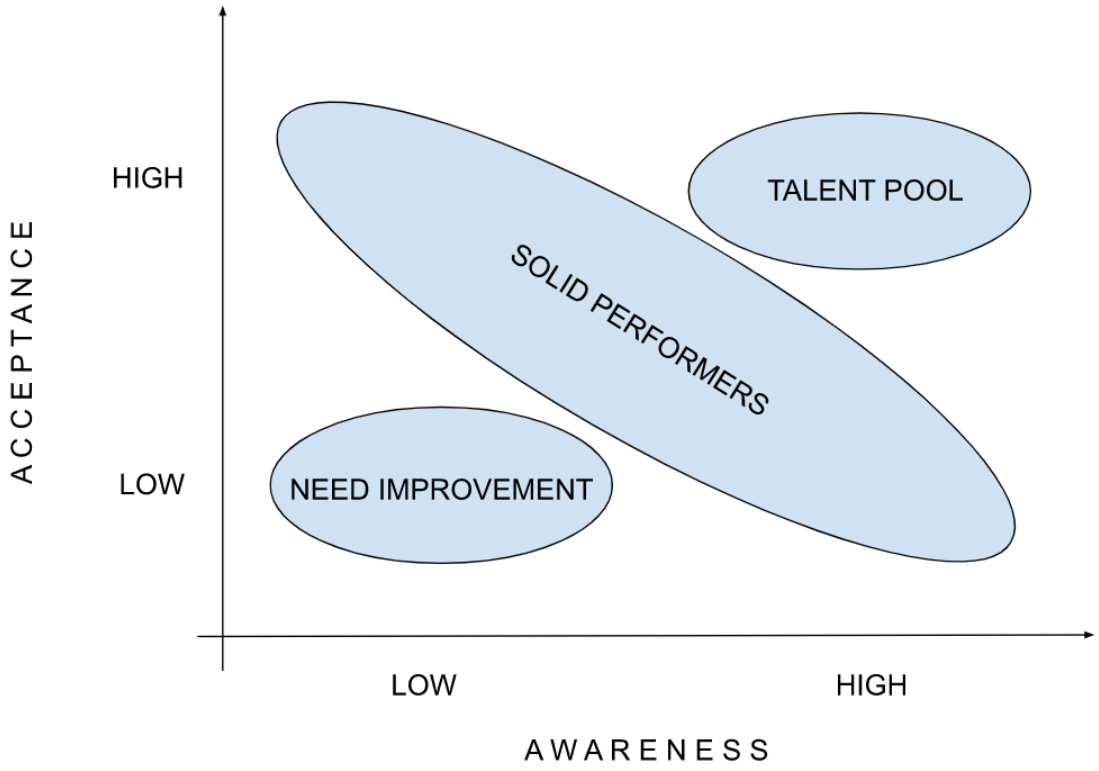

Figure 19.

Winning Mindfulness Formula in the Talent Management Process.