



Exploring the Role of Leader Mindfulness in Shaping Strategic Choices

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Abstract

Psychological resilience among human resources is a critical factor in achieving and sustaining competitive advantage. This study explores the relationship between mindfulness practices and strategic decision-making among ethical leaders within human resource management. Employing a positivist and quantitative research approach, the study investigates the impact of specific mindfulness techniques—including mindful breathing, mindful use of technology, the 3-minute breathing space, mental gym activities, and daily journaling—on various dimensions of strategic decision-making, namely vision formulation, planning, and execution. Data were collected using purposive sampling from 235 Managers and assistants through a standardized questionnaire. Correlation analysis revealed strong positive associations between mindfulness practices and strategic choices. Further regression analysis identified that mindful breathing, the 3-minute breathing space, and daily journaling significantly influenced strategic decision-making. In contrast, practices such as mindful technology usage, mental gyms, and mindfulness apps did not show a statistically significant effect. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the role of mindfulness in ethical leadership, particularly highlighting the effectiveness of simple, consistent practices like mindful breathing and journaling in enhancing strategic decision-making within managerial contexts. The study recommends that organizations consider integrating mindfulness-based interventions into workplace culture through tech-supported tools, while also encouraging participation in mental gym activities as part of broader culture management initiatives.

Keywords: Decision-making processes, leadership, organizational mindfulness, psychological well-being.

Introduction

Management has the elasticity to develop human capital that is more resilient and morally conscious in an organization if they engage in mindful practices and encourage leaders to participate in such sustainable activities. Mindfulness has roots in ancient times when it was seen as an essential part of building society (Stamolampros et al., 2019). Leaders with higher levels of mindfulness amplified the impact of follower carefulness on perceptions of authentic leadership (Zhang et al., 2020). The idea of mindfulness, according to Cahn and Polich (2006), is a fixed state or feature. Carefulness is a unique disposition of the mind that changes perception, thought, and self-reference, and it is an ongoing change in how we think about ourselves. Psychological caring and exercises teach the mind to pay attention to both what is going on inside and what is going on around it so that a person can gain deep basic knowledge and facts (Bhattarai et al., 2020; Gunaratana, 2001). Many things, like how well a company does business and how ethically it does business, are connected to how its leaders make decisions (Dahal, 2020; Eisenbeiss et al., 2015). These problems are worse in the world after COVID-19, and top managers need to think ethically and lead with integrity more than ever (Eichenauer et al., 2022; Ghimire et al., 2021).

Mindfulness comes from many different areas of study, such as clinical psychology, sociology, philosophy, and many areas of the natural sciences, such as neuroscience and mathematics. It is essential to note that there is only a little study on how this idea can be used in management and human resource management techniques (Karki et al., 2023; Shahbaz & Parker, 2021). Being mindful makes leaders more creative (Ritchhart & Perkins, 2000) and helps them pay attention better (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Researchers have found that regular mindfulness practice can raise the average level of the trait (Quaglia et al., 2016). These statements show that mindfulness-based treatments can bring about more than just short-term changes in state. Mindfulness requires active thought, making involvement more crucial than passively taking in knowledge, which keeps someone from abusing others.

Today's global workplace makes it hard for leaders to come up with a vision for their companies, set goals and communicate them to maximum groups of people, align resources with opportunities, protect and grow people's skills, health, the environment, and money, and fight risks without giving up on morals or ethics. (Ghimire et al., 2023; Gelles, 2015). Most talk about awareness at work focuses on shortened versions of spiritual techniques like meditation. While the history of research on leadership is important, ethical leadership is essential in the 21st century and after COVID-19 because it focuses on addressing inequalities in a way that is kind in a world that is becoming more and more dependent on each other (Johnson, 2021; Nahavandi & Krishnan, 2017). Many ethical issues involving public service leaders have shown that ethical leadership in the public sector needs more study (Dahal et al., 2022; Hassan et al., 2014; Moon & Jung, 2018; Thaler & Helmig, 2016; Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2016).

There is a big question: Do mindfulness techniques affect moral leaders?

To address these issues, the study looked at how mindful practices relate to and influence leaders' strategic decisions. It identified the essential roles that mindful breathing, mindful technology use, 3-minute breathing spaces, daily journaling, mental gyms, and apps play in helping moral leaders develop and carry out organizational strategies. This study has six sections: an

introduction and a literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusion with future scope. Previous literature on mindful practices and moral leadership for strategic decision-making follows the study's section two. The methodology and analysis precede the conclusion and discussion of this research.

The study is important in bridging this gap by examining the relationship and impacts of mindfulness practices on ethical leaders' capacity to make competitive strategic decisions. This study has a significant role in the real world, where employees' physiological well-being and work productivity are linked to decision-making processes that address ethical leadership issues.

Literature Review

Complete awareness and consciousness are the foundation of mindfulness, a cognitive state that varies from person to person and between temporal settings (Brown et al., 2007). According to the intention attitude attention (IAA) three-axis paradigm, the three aspects of mindfulness are intention, attention, and attitude. As a result of these three interrelated and simultaneous events, awareness develops (Shapiro et al., 2006). Researchers went on to create a wide range of psychotherapies based on mindfulness training, including dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), mindfulness therapy, and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) (Miao & Wang, 2013). The main things that Hambrick and Mason (1984) looked at were the psychological traits (to a certain extent) and visible quantitative traits of top managers, like their age, tenure, educational background, functional background, and financial background. In the Upper Echelons (UE) theory framework. According to other studies that have examined and developed the UE framework, senior management teams' judgment, psychographics, and power dynamics can also affect strategic decisions in addition to the effect of demographic traits (Oppong, 2014; Priem et al., 1999).

According to Tomlinson et al. (2018), systematic and meta-analytic evaluations have demonstrated a connection between mindfulness and less rumination. Mindfulness has been linked to numerous favourable behavioural and motivational effects, including enhancing perseverance (Imtiaz et al., 2018; Joshi et al., 2023), decreased impulsivity (Lu & Huffman, 2017), and independent forms of motivation (Donald et al., 2019). Mindfulness in the workplace fosters prosocial conduct and increased employee involvement in their employment (Dahal et al., 2023; Hafenbrack et al., 2020; Leroy et al., 2013); meta-analytic data also shows that caring about the mental side of individuals is positively connects with efficiency on the work (Lomas et al., 2014). Each of these individuals inspires executives to act morally and strategically in a company.

Researchers have recently combined several crucial components of mind training, including breathing, psychological intention, and mindfulness, with integrative body-mind training (IBMT) (Tang et al., 2007). Practising mindfulness at work has a lot of potential (Dahal, 2018; Good et al., 2016). According to Bolm et al. (2022), mindfulness techniques have demonstrated their effectiveness in reducing workplace stress and increasing job satisfaction among workers in the hospitality and service industries. Compared to other forms of self-reporting and mindfulness-based training, relative burn-in has declined (Flook et al., 2013); perceived stress has decreased (Ruocco & Direkoglu, 2013); and work participation has increased (Malinowski & Hui, 2015;

Shrestha & Dahal, 2023). It seems breathing and mental exercises can predict the well-being of individuals by lowering mind wandering; psychological caring and training can raise working memory and better results (Mrazek et al., 2012). Higher levels of mindfulness in personal characteristics correlate with improved sleep quality outside of the office (Allen & Kiburz, 2012). Thus, raising one's daily mindfulness practice can benefit both the work-family balance and the quality of one's sleep (Michel et al., 2014). Roche et al. (2014) showed that mindfulness improved the well-being of entrepreneurs, junior managers, and chief executive officers. The researchers discovered that the participants experienced decreased levels of cynicism, anxiety, sadness, and emotional weariness while also showing increased attentiveness. It ultimately leads to human psychological caring and sustaining ethical decisions in the workplace.

Not only is mindfulness in the workplace positively connected with specific work output (Dane, 2011), but it also improves team performance (Cleirigh & Greaney, 2015; Shahi et al., 2023). Increasing empathy, communicating more effectively, avoiding confrontation, and maintaining close relationships with people are all ways to cultivate mindfulness in daily life (Reb & Narayanan, 2014). A novel method of employing mindfulness to foster leader development emphasizes examining daily routines, paying attention to the five senses, and engaging in mindful thought. According to Panno et al. (2013), individuals can also enhance the quality of their decision-making by being aware of their emotions and attention. According to Wu et al. (2022), practicing mindfulness under the guidance of a smartphone app and mental applications might lessen unpleasant feelings. The results point to the potential advantages of mindfulness training directed via a smartphone app for reducing anxiety and depressive symptoms in a group of people without clinical emotional problems.

Sitting with various types of meditation, including meditative practice (Lippelt et al., 2014) and, visual relaxation (Standaert, 2015), and mindfulness reflection aids in creating goals and directions as well as strategy creation and execution. Unethical behaviour can severely harm the performance of individuals and organizations. Organizations that come under fire for unethical or inappropriate behaviour due to leadership mishandling or ethical failure generally do so (Trevino & Brown, 2014). The development and upkeep of moral leadership qualities need effort. In this situation, mindfulness—a well-established, tried- and-true discipline that emphasizes the long term— could be useful for the professional growth of senior managers (Chandwani et al., 2015; Krishnan, 2021). Martineau et al. (2017) suggest that organizations must adopt a diverse approach to ethics programs to develop such programs successfully. This approach should include various tools and techniques, such as training sessions that include contemplation, meditation, and other spiritual activities, as well as experiential ethical development techniques. These evidence and theories lead to the following research framework:

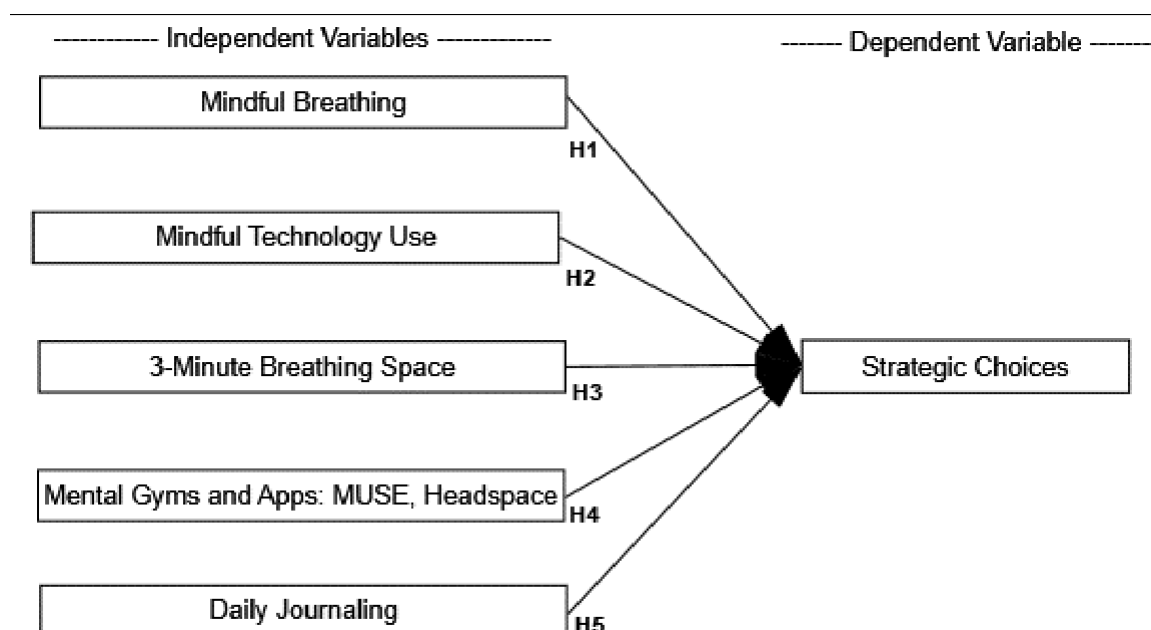


Figure 1: Research Framework Source: Krishnan (2023)

The study hypotheses considered in this study include:

- H1: There is a significant relationship between mindful breathing and the strategic choices of an ethical leader.*
H2: There is a significant relationship between mindful technology use and the strategic choices of an ethical leader.
H3: There is a significant connection between 3-minute breathing space and the strategic choices of an ethical leader.
H4: There is a significant relationship between mental gyms and apps and strategic choices.
H5: There is a significant correlation between daily journaling and the strategic choices of an ethical leader.

Research Methodology

The study used a cross-sectional study method with a causal-comparative research design, guiding data collection at a single point to assess the relationship between mindfulness practices and strategic choices among the targeted population. The study is based on a positivist approach, showing the use of quantitative data analysis to examine the identified variables (mindful breathing, mindful technology use, 3-minute breathing space, mental gyms and apps use, daily journaling) and their impact on strategic choices (establishing visions, crafting strategies, and implementing strategies). A structured questionnaire with 36 statements and a point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to agree 5=strongly) was employed to gather participant data, facilitating a systematic and objective assessment of the variables. The study foundation is based on the empirical evidence of the relationship between mindfulness practices and ethical leadership, which guides core concepts of human resource management.

The study employed purposive sampling to gather data from a specific group of participants: managers and assistants in organizations involved in human capital management roles. The sample size included 235 individuals from this target population. The study ensured that the sample represented individuals who possessed the necessary knowledge regarding mindfulness practices and strategic choices in the context of ethical leadership, and the confidentiality of

information provided by the participants was kept in the study. The study used MS Excel and IBM SPSS V26 to calculate the data results.

Instrumentation

Instrumentally, the study collects data based on the Likert scale grade; previously used statements were modified and used from Yeganeh and Good (2016), transforming characteristics of acceptance and presence in mindfulness practices as the inspiration behind items connected to mindful breathing and the 3-minute breathing gap. Items about paying attention to one's breath and sensory perceptions while engaging in different activities were included. To measure mindful breathing, the importance of breath awareness was used by Salzberg (2014). The effects of regular breath awareness practice on the body and mind were also measured based on Allen et al. (2012), Goleman and Davidson (2017), and Gonzalez (2012). Measures led to the development of items about Mental Gym, App Use, and Daily Journaling, as proposed by Krishnan (2023). The items also included the many advantages of breath awareness and mindfulness practice, including emotional quotient, trust, diminished ego, and servant leadership attributes (Goleman, 1998). The concept that mindfulness tools can support resource mobilization, effective communication, and the alignment of organizations with their mission, all important components of strategy formulation and implementation, also had an impact on the items related to strategic choices (Krishnan, 2021).

The study used statistical tools and conducted descriptive analysis and validity and reliability testing. The study used correlation analysis to examine the relationships between HR practitioners' strategic choices and mindfulness practices using the collected data. The strength and direction of these correlations were quantified using Pearson correlation coefficient calculations. Using multiple regression analysis, the study shows a complete model that forecasts the impact of mindfulness activities on strategic decision-making. The study model is as follows:

$$\text{Strategic Choices (Y)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon$$

X_1 = Mindful Breathing

X_2 = Mindful Technology Use

X_3 = 3–Minute Breathing Space

X_4 = Mental Gym and App Use

X_5 = Daily Journaling

ϵ = error term.

Demographic Profile

This section presents the respondents' characteristics in terms of age, gender, marital status, and education. Demographic results show the respondents' participation according to their features.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Groups	No. of Respondents	Percent (%)
<i>Age (In years)</i>		
18-29	20	8.5
30 to 39	63	26.8
40 to 49	75	31.9
50 to 58	77	32.8
Total	235	100.00
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	139	59.1
Female	96	40.9
Total	235	100.00
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	161	59.1
Married	74	40.9
Total	235	100.00
<i>Education</i>		
Intermediate (+2)	39	16.6
Diploma	37	15.7
Bachelors	75	31.9
Masters	84	35.7
Total	235	100.00

As depicted in Table 1, participants are distributed in age groups, genders, marital status, and educational backgrounds according to their demographic profile. The majority of participants, or 64.7% of the sample, are between 27 and 42. Male involvement is somewhat higher than female participation, according to the gender distribution. Regarding marital status, 31.5% of participants are married, while a sizable chunk of participants are single. The participants' educational backgrounds are diverse; most have at least a bachelor's degree and a significant percentage have earned a master's degree. Demographics show the ages, genders, marital situations, and educational backgrounds of the participants for a good generalizability understanding of the data.

Reliability Test

The data set was calculated based on the number of items and tested Cronbach's alpha, which items within each construct reliably measure in this section.

Table 2: Reliability Test

Statement	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha (α)
Mindful Breathing	6	.777
Mindful Technology Use	6	.789
3–Minute Breathing Space	6	.834
Mental Gym and App use	6	.855
Daily Journaling	6	.864
Strategic Choices	6	.836
Total	36	.966

Table 2 shows a high level of internal consistency for the critical constructs under consideration. These coefficients surpass the generally accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating that the survey items within each construct consistently measure the intended aspects, showing the overall trustworthiness and reliability of the research instrument (Taber, 2018).

Data Analysis

The study findings in this section are presented based on descriptive statistics, reliability tests, correlation analyses, and regression analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

The study used descriptive analysis to present vital statistics for the examined variables related to mindfulness practices and strategic choices in the following section.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Factors	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mindful Breathing	2.33	4.66	3.81	.678
Mindful Technology Use	1.83	4.66	3.72	.724
3-Minute Breathing Space	1.66	4.50	3.69	.711
Mental Gyms and Apps; MUSE Headspace	1.83	4.83	3.69	.817
Daily Journaling	2.00	4.83	3.89	.724
Strategic Choices	2.00	4.83	4.03	.700

As shown in Table 3, respondents reported average moderate to high engagement in mindfulness practices, as indicated by the mean scores. The relatively small standard deviations suggest consistent responses, indicating a cohesive pattern among HR practitioners. Strategic choices have a higher mean, implying a propensity for more sustainable strategic decision-making. Results show the tendencies and variability of the data set.

Correlation Results

This section explored the relationships between factors related to mindfulness practices and their impact on strategic choices among Human Resource practitioners.

Table 4: Correlation Result

Factors	MB	MT	BS	MG	DJ	SC
Strategic Choices	.902**	.803**	.832**	.751**	.870**	1

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows a significant result that possibly influences leaders' strategic decision-making. Incorporating mindfulness practices like Mindful Breathing (MB), Mindful Technology Use (MT), 3-Minute Breathing Space (BS), Mental Gym (MG), Daily Journaling (DJ), and Strategic

Choices (SC) with leadership practices may lead to more objective oriented and successful decision-making, as evidenced by the strong positive relationships between mindfulness practices and strategic choices. Regular mindfulness practitioners seem associated with strategic decision-making that is more in line with ethical standards and corporate objectives. This shows management needs to encourage mindfulness programs that fit into the culture of the company. In the human resource management industry, encouraging leaders to implement mindfulness activities in their daily routines may lead to good well-being, which has a significant impact on the strategic decision- making process. It's seen as self-reengineering, which leads to a moral and successful leadership style and sustainable managerial outcomes in business.

Regression Analysis

This section shows the influence of mindfulness elements on strategic choices.

Table 5: Regression Result

Factors	Beta	T	Sig.
Mindful Breathing	.543	12.142	.000
Mindful Technology Use	.053	1.111	.268
3-Minute Breathing Space	.120	2.241	.026
Mental Gyms and Apps	-.027	-.643	.521
Daily Journaling	.301	4.854	.000
R= .934	R Square = .873	F Value= 315.24	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Strategic Choices

As depicted in Table 5, a significant positive effect has been found between MB, BS, DJ, and SC. This indicates that integrating mindfulness practices into leadership routines has a positive impact on decision- making that is in line with organizational objectives and ethical considerations. The whole model, with its strong explanatory power and statistical significance, highlights the collective importance of mindful practices on leaders' strategic decision-making, even when there are no statistically significant connections between MT and MG. These results show the thinkable advantages of supporting certain mindfulness programs, including MB, BS, and DJ, in a management setting in order to improve the morality of strategic decisions made in the field of human resource management. Encouraging today's leaders to include mindfulness practices into habits and daily routines may help them make decisions that are more sustainable and morally sound, which will eventually be advantageous to the business as a whole with sustained humanhood.

Findings & Conclusion

The current findings support earlier studies on the topic of mindfulness and leadership, demonstrating that such practices have a significant impact on leaders' strategic decision-making, especially as the subject of moral leadership. Systematic and meta-analytic evaluations validating the relationship between mindfulness and decreased rumination make the relationship between ethical leadership and mindfulness practices clear (Tomlinson et al., 2018). Positive behavioural and motivational effects, including decreased impulsivity, enhanced perseverance, and autonomous motivation, have been associated with mindfulness (Donald et al., 2019; Lu & Huffman, 2017; Imtiaz et al., 2018). According to Hafenbrack et al. (2020), Leroy et al. (2013), Lomas et al. (2014), mindfulness in the workplace promotes prosocial behaviour and increased work engagement and is favourably connected with job performance. These favorable results are essential for moral leaders to make strategic decisions that align with company principles. Promising outcomes have been shown to lower occupational stress and raise work satisfaction by incorporating mindfulness techniques and remarkably integrated body-mind training (IBMT) (Bolm et al., 2022).

Reductions in burnout, perceived stress, increased job participation, and improved sleep quality are linked to mindfulness outside of the office (Allen & Kiburz, 2012; Flook et al., 2013; Malinowski & Hui, 2015; Ruocco & Direkoglu, 2013). It's significant to the present findings as concepts in this study are presented. Previously, Roche et al. (2014) showed mindfulness's beneficial effects on the well-being of CEOs and other persons in different managerial roles. Workplace mindfulness positively correlates with both team and individual job performance (Dane, 2011; Cleirigh & Greaney, 2015). These findings supported results that might lead to strategic decisions in the organization. More clearly, intimate partnership connections were linked to enhanced communication, less conflict, and mindfulness in daily life (Rai & Dahal, 2024; Reb & Narayanan, 2014). These results show the significance of mindfulness practices.

Panno et al. (2013) argued that applying mindfulness to leader development can enhance the quality of decision-making by promoting mindful thinking and attentiveness. Furthermore, research like Wu et al. (2022) shows how mindfulness exercises aided by smartphone applications can reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms. The focus on different kinds of meditation, such as visualization and loving-kindness meditation, is consistent with the notion that mindfulness practices may help create direction and vision and eventually help create and carry out strategies (Karki et al., 2024; Lippelt et al., 2014; Standaert, 2015). So, findings from the present analysis are strongly related to the previous studies; mindfulness activities and tech apps can reduce stress and lead to the overall well-being of individuals.

Since there are similar points on ethical leadership, these abilities frequently result in unethical failure or mismanagement by leadership; mindfulness practices can foster ethical leadership, which is essential for corporate success and employee well-being (Trevino & Brown, 2014).

The study acknowledged that integrating mindfulness into ethics programs—which include contemplation, meditation, and experiential ethical development practices—will contribute significantly to the personal development of top managers (Martineau et al., 2017; Chandwani et al., 2015; Krishnan, 2021). The present study also added that mindfulness may positively influence strategic choices. The value of mindfulness in contemporary leadership settings provides significant lessons for organizations trying to encourage moral decision-making and effective leadership strategies.

Human sustainability and corporate growth seem linked with one another; in this view, managers should protect their employees and should close their eyes to their well-being to get sustainable strategic decisions from them. One can drive wheels, but the handle is the mind, so the corporate industry is facing challenges in effective decision-making. The current world is more competitive than expected, so in this case, decision-makers need space to think and rest. To solve that, ethical leaders need to practice mindfulness activities, like mindful breathing, mindful technology use, 3-minute breathing space, mental gym, and daily journaling.

The study objective is to examine the relationship and influence of these activities on the strategic decisions of employees working at the corporate level. To conclude, there is a significant relationship between strategic decisions and positive correlations. Daily journaling, 3-minute breathing spaces, and mindful breathing strongly predict better morally and strategically sound decisions; according to regression analysis, there is an influencing ability of each mindfulness implement. The results, which provide intuitive information for organizations and literature on ethical leadership decision-making, indicate the need to incorporate specific mindfulness techniques into the strategic decision-making processes of HR practitioners.

Limitation

The study is methodologically limited. Future study results can incorporate different industry-wise data sources, and the study can adopt interviews or observational techniques. Longitudinal research should clarify the long-term effects of mindfulness practices on strategic decision-making, as the cross-sectional design makes it difficult to establish causal linkages. In the future, research in this area may look at the moderating factors that affect how closely strategic decision-making and mindfulness practices are associated. A more comprehensive knowledge of how mindfulness operates in different circumstances may be obtained by looking at individual characteristics, corporate cultures, and environmental variables. Businesses hoping to support leaders' moral judgment may find significant knowledge from examining the use of mindfulness therapies in leadership development programs. Studies in this field with different sectors or organizational sizes may also be beneficial for customized involvements and techno adoption like Muse Apps.

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