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Mindfulness and Work Engagement: How Emotional Intelligence Bridges the Gap

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Abstract. This study investigates the interplay between mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement, focusing on the mediating role of EI. Utilizing Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory as a theoretical framework, the research explores how mindfulness enhances employee engagement by fostering emotional regulation, resilience, and attentional stability. Conducted within the Saudi Arabian context, the study employs a cross-sectional survey of 329 employees from diverse sectors, offering culturally specific insights into these relationships. The findings reveal that mindfulness positively influences both EI and work engagement, while EI significantly mediates this relationship, amplifying the positive effects of mindfulness on engagement. These results underscore the critical role of mindfulness and EI in fostering a resilient and motivated workforce. Practical implications suggest that organizations can enhance employee well-being and productivity by integrating mindfulness and EI training into workplace development programs. This study contributes to existing literature by extending the application of COR Theory and addressing the contextual nuances of Saudi Arabia, offering actionable insights for improving employee engagement in diverse organizational settings.

Keywords: Conservation of Resources Theory (COR), Emotional Intelligence, Mindfulness, Saudi Arabia, Work Engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace productivity and employee well-being are critical factors influencing the success of organizations worldwide. In an era of heightened stress and evolving workplace demands, understanding the psychological factors that promote engagement and resilience has become increasingly important. This research explores the interplay between mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of how these factors enhance employee well-being and performance. The study is particularly significant in the context of Saudi Arabia, where rapid economic and cultural changes have created unique challenges and opportunities in the workplace.

Mindfulness, often defined as a state of present-moment awareness and nonjudgmental acceptance, has gained attention for its profound impact on psychological and professional outcomes. Studies have shown that mindfulness not only reduces stress but also improves cognitive clarity, emotional regulation, and overall well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021). These benefits make mindfulness a valuable tool for fostering work engagement, which is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in tasks. Work engagement, in turn, contributes to organizational success by promoting employee motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Liu et al., 2020). However, the mechanisms through which mindfulness influences work engagement require further investigation, particularly in culturally distinct settings such as Saudi Arabia.

Emotional intelligence (EI), defined as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions effectively, has emerged as a key mediator in the mindfulness-work engagement relationship. Research indicates that mindfulness enhances EI by fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness (Xie et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). These competencies enable individuals to manage workplace challenges, maintain motivation, and build positive relationships, all of which are critical for sustaining engagement (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Moreover, EI has been shown to predict work engagement by promoting resilience and psychological capital (PsyCap), which are essential for navigating high-stress environments (George et al., 2022). Thus, examining EI as a mediator provides valuable insights into how mindfulness contributes to employee engagement and well-being.

The theoretical foundation for this research is rooted in the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which posits that individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect valuable resources such as time, energy, and emotional stability (Hobfoll, 1989). Mindfulness and EI serve as psychological resources that enable employees to preserve and optimize their energy and emotional well-being, thereby fostering work engagement. COR Theory offers a robust framework for understanding how these variables interact to enhance resilience, motivation, and

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performance in the workplace. By applying this theory, the study aims to elucidate the pathways through which mindfulness and EI contribute to sustained engagement, particularly in culturally nuanced environments.

Despite the growing interest in mindfulness and EI, significant research gaps remain. One notable gap is the limited exploration of these variables in the Saudi Arabian context, where organizational structures, cultural norms, and workplace stressors differ from those in Western countries. Additionally, while the mediating role of EI has been proposed in various studies, empirical investigations that integrate mindfulness, EI, and work engagement in a single framework are sparse. Addressing these gaps is crucial for designing culturally relevant interventions that enhance employee well-being and productivity in the Kingdom. To address these gaps, this research poses the following key questions:

RQ1: How does mindfulness influence work engagement among employees in Saudi Arabia?

RQ2: What is the role of emotional intelligence in mediating the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement?

RQ3: How do these relationships vary across different industries and demographic groups in Saudi Arabia?

The primary objective of this study is to explore the relationships between mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement within Saudi workplaces. Specifically, the research aims to examine the direct influence of mindfulness on work engagement, investigate the mediating role of EI in this relationship, and provide insights into how these variables interact across diverse organizational settings in Saudi Arabia. By addressing these goals, the study seeks to enhance understanding of the mechanisms linking mindfulness, EI, and engagement in a culturally specific context.

This study has practical implications for enhancing workplace interventions in the Kingdom. By identifying the pathways through which mindfulness and EI influence engagement, organizations can implement evidence-based strategies to improve employee well-being and productivity. Furthermore, the findings will contribute to the broader literature on psychological resources and workplace dynamics, offering culturally specific insights that can inform global best practices. Ultimately, the research aims to bridge existing gaps by exploring the interplay between mindfulness, EI, and work engagement in the Saudi Arabian context. By leveraging COR Theory and focusing on the unique cultural and organizational landscape of the Kingdom, this study seeks to advance theoretical understanding while offering practical solutions for fostering healthier and more engaged workplaces.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW, HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT, RESEARCH GAP AND FRAMEWORK

2.1. Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence

Mindfulness, defined as present-moment awareness and nonjudgmental attention, significantly enhances emotional intelligence (EI), which involves perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions. Research shows that mindfulness improves emotional balance, reduces exhaustion, and fosters competencies like emotion recognition and regulation, making it valuable in high-stress professions (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2020). Mindfulness enhances both ability EI (cognitive skills) and trait EI (self-perceived capacities) by fostering self-awareness, which improves emotional regulation and interpersonal interactions (Liu et al., 2020). Teachers with higher mindfulness and EI show improved resilience and well-being, highlighting mindfulness as a pathway to psychological health (Pan et al., 2022). Beyond personal benefits, mindfulness positively predicts EI, mediating relationships and improving interactions in roles like teaching and healthcare. In high-stress settings, mindfulness training enhances emotional control and resilience, supporting professional relationships and well-being (Bartos et al., 2022; Ahmadzadeh et al., 2024). Finally, mindfulness interventions, especially when paired with EI training, reduce anxiety, improve emotional regulation, and promote resilience, emphasizing their value for academic and workplace environments (Sturgill et al., 2021; Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Together, these findings demonstrate mindfulness's pivotal role in enhancing EI and fostering psychological and professional efficacy.

Hypothesis 1: Mindfulness positively affects emotional intelligence.

2.2. Emotional Intelligence and Work Engagement

Emotional intelligence (EI), the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions, significantly predicts work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. EI enhances emotional regulation, resilience, and positive interpersonal interactions, helping individuals manage workplace challenges while maintaining focus and motivation (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Alamer & Alrabai, 2024). Studies show that EI fosters engagement across various contexts, such as healthcare, where it improves emotional regulation and well-being, and academia, where it supports career adaptability and focus (Gao et al., 2024; Merino-Tejedor et al., 2018). Online EI training further emphasizes its value by improving engagement and emotional competencies (Junça Silva & Almeida, 2023). Moreover, EI contributes to psychological capital (PsyCap) and perceived organizational support (POS), enabling employees to manage emotions, sustain motivation, and foster productivity (George et al., 2022). Key dimensions like self-awareness and social skills improve interpersonal relationships, emotional resilience, and engagement, leading to greater job satisfaction (Selvi & Aiswarya, 2023). These findings underscore the importance of fostering EI in organizations to create a more engaged and productive workforce. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Emotional intelligence positively affects work engagement.

2.3. Mindfulness and Work Engagement

Mindfulness, defined as present-moment awareness and nonjudgmental attention, plays a critical role in fostering work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Research shows that mindfulness enhances focus, emotional regulation, and self-awareness, enabling employees to recharge and approach tasks with renewed energy, even in challenging situations (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Schaufeli et al., 2002). This aligns with the conservation of resources theory, which highlights how mindfulness helps preserve psychological resources like resilience and optimism, directly boosting work engagement (Liu et al., 2020). Mindfulness also fosters emotional resilience, cognitive flexibility, and positive emotions, which improve stress management and interpersonal dynamics, particularly in modern workplaces with remote work demands (Gunasekara & Zheng, 2019; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020). By cultivating compassion, nonattachment, and emotion regulation, mindfulness enhances employees' ability to adapt and thrive in high-stress environments (Elphinstone et al., 2019; Zhang & Fathi, 2024). Additionally, mindfulness supports psychological capital by fostering optimism and cognitive clarity, helping employees maintain motivation during workplace crises (Fiaz & Fahim, 2023). Its role in strategies like cognitive reappraisal further underscores its impact on stress management and engagement (Jung, 2020). Combining direct benefits—like improved focus and emotional stability—with indirect effects such as enhanced resilience, mindfulness emerges as a vital tool for promoting engagement, well-being, and productivity (He et al., 2024; Nnadede, 2018). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Mindfulness positively affects work engagement.

2.4. The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence

Research suggests that mindfulness enhances emotional regulation, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills, which are core components of EI. These enhanced emotional competencies enable individuals to manage stress effectively and maintain focus, which are essential for fostering work engagement (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2020). For example, in high-stress professions like healthcare, EI has been shown to mediate the impact of mindfulness on burnout, reducing emotional exhaustion and promoting professional efficacy, ultimately leading to improved engagement (Xie et al., 2020). Furthermore, mindfulness significantly predicts EI, which in turn positively influences work engagement. This relationship is supported by findings that mindfulness fosters emotional resilience and attentional control, key mechanisms through which individuals build the emotional capacity to sustain vigor, dedication, and absorption in their roles (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Additionally, mindfulness training has been found to enhance both ability EI and trait EI, equipping individuals to better navigate workplace challenges, improve interpersonal relationships, and remain motivated (Bartos et al., 2022; Ahmadzadeh et al., 2024). The mediating role of EI is particularly evident in studies exploring psychological resources. For instance, psychological capital (PsyCap), which includes resilience and optimism, serves as a bridge between mindfulness and engagement through the influence of EI. Employees with higher EI are more adept at leveraging mindfulness to maintain a positive outlook, manage emotions, and build supportive workplace interactions, all of which contribute to sustained engagement (George et al., 2022; Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Moreover, EI mediates the link between mindfulness and interpersonal effectiveness, which has direct implications for work engagement. Emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to handle social dynamics and workplace stressors, enabling them to align with organizational goals and maintain a sense of purpose and enthusiasm in their roles (Selvi & Aiswarya, 2023; Pan et al., 2022). These findings highlight the role of EI as a conduit through which mindfulness translates into improved engagement.

Hypothesis 4: Emotional intelligence mediates the connection between mindfulness and work engagement.

2.5. Research Gap

Despite extensive research on mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement, critical gaps remain. First, the mediating role of EI in the mindfulness-work engagement relationship has been underexplored across diverse industries and cultural settings, including Saudi Arabia's unique socio-cultural dynamics (Xie et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2022). Second, most studies rely on cross-sectional designs, limiting insights into causality and long-term effects. Longitudinal or experimental research is needed to examine how mindfulness influences EI over time and sustains engagement (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021; Ahmadzadeh et al., 2024). Third, limited attention has been given to tailoring mindfulness-based interventions to Middle Eastern contexts, where workplace norms and stressors differ from Western environments, affecting program applicability and effectiveness (Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Lastly, there is a lack of integration between mindfulness, EI, and broader organizational outcomes such as productivity, retention, and job satisfaction, leaving untapped potential for designing interventions that benefit both employees and organizations (George et al., 2022). Addressing these gaps will enhance understanding of the mechanisms linking mindfulness, EI, and engagement while offering culturally relevant strategies for improving workplace well-being and performance.

2.6. Research Framework

The research framework examines the interplay between mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement, with EI mediating the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement. Rooted in Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), the framework emphasizes leveraging psychological resources to enhance well-being and performance. (a) Mindfulness (IV): Mindfulness, defined as present-moment awareness and nonjudgmental attention, directly enhances work engagement by fostering emotional regulation, reducing stress, and improving focus (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Liu et al., 2020). (b) Emotional Intelligence (Mediator): EI, the ability to understand and manage emotions, mediates the mindfulness-work engagement relationship by promoting emotional regulation, resilience, and effective interpersonal interactions (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Xie et al., 2020). (c) Work Engagement (DV): Work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, is influenced directly by mindfulness and indirectly through EI (Schaufeli et al., 2002; George et al., 2022). This framework underscores the importance of mindfulness and EI in enhancing employee engagement and performance.

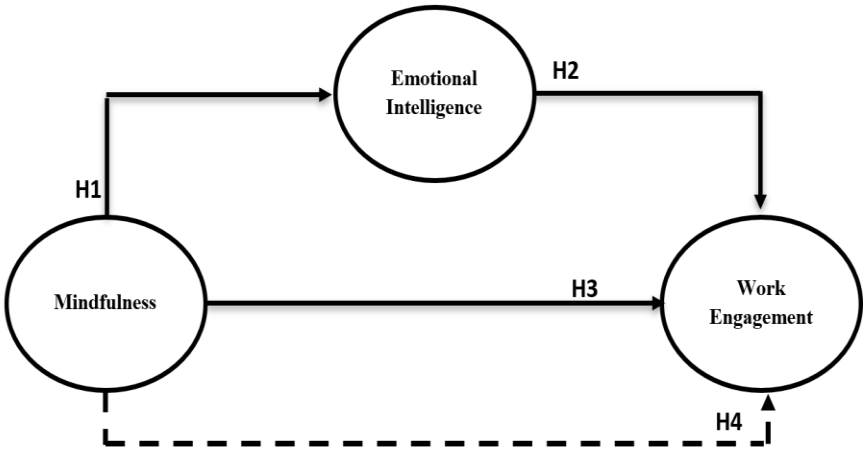

Figure 1: The Research Framework.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study will adopt a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach to investigate the relationships between mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement. The survey method is suitable for collecting data from a large sample, allowing for statistical analysis of the proposed relationships and hypotheses.

3.2. Data Analysis

This study employed a deductive approach to confirm hypotheses based on existing theory. The research was conducted using a cross-sectional time horizon. For data analysis, we utilized the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique. PLS-SEM is a modeling approach designed to estimate complex cause-and-effect relationships involving constructs (latent variables). It operates with two models: the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model is used to validate the collected data, while the structural model assesses the strength, direction, and significance of the relationships within the model.

3.3. Population and Sample

The target population for this study comprises employees from various industries in Saudi Arabia, including healthcare, education, and service sectors. The study will use purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of individuals with at least one year of work experience. A sample size of approximately 300 respondents will be targeted to achieve sufficient statistical power for structural equation modeling (SEM) (Kline, 2015). Efforts will be made to ensure a balance in gender, age groups, and organizational roles.

3.4. Data Collection

Data for this study will be gathered through an online survey targeting employees across various industries in Saudi Arabia, including healthcare, education, and services. The survey, distributed via professional networks and social media, will ensure broad participation while adhering to ethical standards, including informed consent. It will incorporate three validated instruments: the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) for mindfulness (Lau et al., 2006), the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) for emotional intelligence (Alonazi, 2020), and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) for work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Demographic data such as age, gender, education, industry, and experience will also be collected to

contextualize findings. This approach will provide robust data for analyzing the relationships between mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and work engagement in Saudi Arabia.

Table 1: Sample Description.

Variable	Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	188	57.1
	Female	141	42.9
	Total	329	100.0
Age	Between 20 and 30 years	41	12.5
	Between 30 and 40 years	181	55.0
	Between 40 and 50 years	92	28.0
	Above 50 years	15	4.5
	Total	329	100.0
Educational Level	Bachelor's Degree	263	79.9
	Master's Degree	41	12.5
	Doctorate/Professional	25	7.6
	Total	329	100
Years of experience	Less than 5 years	31	9.4
	From 5 to less than 10 years	77	23.4
	From 10 to less than 15 years	86	26.1
	15 years and more	135	41.1
	Total	329	100.0
Sector	Healthcare	93	28.3
	Education	79	24.0
	Service	91	27.7
	Others	66	20.0
	Total	329	100.0

The Table 1 summarizes the study's sample of 329 participants. Gender distribution is balanced (57.1% male, 42.9% female), with most participants aged 30–40 years (55%). Educationally, 79.9% hold a bachelor's degree, and 41.1% have over 15 years of experience. Participants are spread across sectors, including healthcare (28.3%), education (24%), and services (27.7%), ensuring diverse representation for analysis.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Evaluation of Measurement Model

The model incorporated a second-order factor for all variables, allowing for the evaluation of the reflective measurement model at both the first and second order. In the first-order assessment, the reflective measurement model was evaluated based on indicator consistency, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Table 2 presents the results related to convergent validity, which indicates the extent to which a measure correlates positively with other measures of the same construct. This evaluation included an examination of indicator reliability, composite reliability, and the average variance extracted for the three main variables: Mindfulness, Emotional Intelligence, and Work Engagement, along with their associated sub-variables.

Table 2: Measurement Items of the First -Order Constructs.

Construct and Items	Standardized Loading (sig.)	Alpha	CR	AVE
Mindfulness				
Curiosity		0.889	0.915	0.643
Curi1: I observed my reactions to thoughts, feelings, and sensations to learn about myself.	0.806**			
Curi2: I paid attention to what my mind was doing moment by moment.	0.822**			
Curi3: I explored each thought and feeling with curiosity.	0.798**			
Curi4: I remained curious about the nature of my experiences as they occurred.	0.804**			
Curi5: I reflected on my reactions to situations with interest.	0.780**			
Curi6: I was curious about what I could learn by noticing where my attention naturally went.	0.802**			
Decentering		0.890	0.914	0.602
Decen7: I felt separate from my changing thoughts and emotions, observing them as an outsider.	0.769**			
Decen8: I focused on being open to my experiences rather than trying to control them.	0.781**			
Decen9: I viewed my thoughts as mental events rather than as reflections of reality.	0.769**			
Decen10: I was receptive to unpleasant thoughts and emotions without interfering with them.	0.758**			
Decen11: I observed my experiences as they occurred without analyzing their meaning.	0.803**			
Decen12: I accepted each experience, whether pleasant or unpleasant, as it came.	0.762**			
Decen13: I acknowledged my thoughts and emotions without overidentifying with them.	0.789**			
Emotional Intelligence				
Self-Emotional Appraisal		0.843	0.895	0.680
SEA1: I usually understand why I feel certain emotions in most situations.	0.808**			
SEA2: I have a clear understanding of my own emotions when interacting with my colleagues.	0.830**			
SEA3: I am aware of how I feel towards my colleagues.	0.834**			
SEA4: I can always recognize whether or not I feel happy at work.	0.827**			
Other's Emotional Appraisal		0.841	0.893	0.677
OEA5: I can often identify my colleagues' emotions by observing their behavior.	0.816**			
OEA6: I am attentive to the emotions of my colleagues.	0.797**			
OEA7: I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of those I work with.	0.836**			
OEA8: I understand my colleagues' emotions well.	0.842**			
Use of Emotions		0.843	0.895	0.680
UE9: I regularly set goals for myself and strive to achieve them.	0.802**			
UE10: I consistently remind myself of my capabilities at work.	0.812**			
UE11: I stay motivated to complete my daily tasks.	0.844**			
UE12: I encourage myself to give my best effort in everything I do.	0.839**			
Regulation of Emotions		0.832	0.888	0.665
RE13: I can control my temper and handle challenges calmly and rationally.	0.831**			
Re14: I am confident in my ability to manage my own emotions.	0.800**			
RE15: I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	0.830**			
RE16: I have good control of my own emotions.	0.801**			
Work Engagement				
Vigor		0.891	0.916	0.647
Vig1: I feel excited to start my day and go to work.	0.826**			
Vig2: I feel full of energy while performing my job tasks.	0.834**			
Vig3: Even when things get tough at work, I push through and keep going.	0.839**			
Vig4: I can work for extended periods without losing focus or motivation.	0.824**			
Vig5: I feel mentally strong and resilient while handling challenges at my job.	0.758**			
Vig6: I experience a sense of vitality and energy while working.	0.738**			
Dedication		0.916	0.937	0.750
Ded7: I find my job stimulating and rewarding.	0.838**			
Ded8: My job motivates and inspires me to do my best.	0.836**			
Ded9: I feel a strong sense of enthusiasm for my work.	0.880**			
Ded10: I take pride in the work that I accomplish.	0.914**			
Ded11: My job provides me with a deep sense of purpose and meaning.	0.859**			
Absorption		0.886	0.913	0.636
Abs12: When I am immersed in my work, I tend to lose track of everything around me.	0.791**			
Abs13: Time passes quickly when I am focused on my job tasks.	0.801**			
Abs14: I often get so involved in my work that I feel completely absorbed in it.	0.842**			
Abs15: It can be challenging for me to mentally disconnect from my job.	0.836**			
Abs16: I feel deeply engrossed in the tasks I perform at work.	0.752**			
Abs17: Working with intensity makes me feel genuinely happy and fulfilled.	0.758**			

Note: **P <0.01. Alpha refers to Cornbach's Alpha, CR refers to Composite reliability and AVE is average variance extracted.

Table 2 provides a detailed analysis of the measurement model in terms of its convergent validity. First are the standardized loadings, which reflect the strength of the relationship between the indicators and their respective constructs. Higher loadings indicate a stronger association, and while a threshold of 0.708 is typically recommended, values above 0.60 are acceptable in exploratory research. All loadings in the table meet this criterion (Hair et al., 2019). Second is composite reliability (CR), which measures the internal consistency of each construct; a CR value above 0.70 is considered satisfactory, and all constructs meet this standard, with values ranging from 0.888 to 0.937. Third is the average variance extracted (AVE), calculated as the mean of the squared loadings of the indicators, divided by the number of items. AVE values exceeding 0.50 indicate that a construct explains more than half the variance of its indicators, and this threshold is achieved by all constructs. Lastly, Cronbach's alpha, a traditional metric for assessing internal consistency, shows values above 0.70 for all constructs, affirming their reliability.

In addition, we assess discriminant validity using cross-loadings, the Fornell–Larcker criterion, and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). In Table 3, we analyze the discriminant validity of the measurement scale by examining all paired combinations of constructs based on the criteria established by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlations between constructs (Fornell-Lacker method).

No.	Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Curiosity	*0.802*								
2	Decentering	0.691**	*0.776*							
3	Self-Emotional Appraisal	0.394**	0.464**	*0.825*						
4	Other's Emotional Appraisal	0.476**	0.504**	0.616**	*0.823*					
5	Use of Emotions	0.484**	0.552**	0.532**	0.566**	*0.824*				
6	Regulations of Emotions	0.542**	0.617**	0.576**	0.602**	0.666**	*0.816*			
7	Vigor	0.505**	0.569**	0.457**	0.518**	0.548**	0.568**	*0.804*		
8	Dedication	0.570**	0.579**	0.459**	0.496**	0.529**	0.538**	0.648**	0.866	
9	Absorption	0.454**	0.531**	0.413**	0.485**	0.472**	0488**	0.645**	0.666**	0.797
	Mean	3.350	3.393	3.656	3.616	3.164	3.386	3.491	3.527	3.455
	Standard Deviation	0.820	0.776	0.794	0.806	0.865	0.806	0.629	0.741	0.654

Note: **P < 001; Square root of AVE is typed in *italics* bold along the diagonal.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion method involves comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the correlations between latent variables. Specifically, the square root of each construct's AVE should be greater than the highest correlation it has with any other construct. Table 3 presents the results of this assessment, showing that the Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity criterion has been met.

To enhance the evaluation of discriminant validity, Henseler et al. (2015) proposed the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) as a more effective method. The HTMT assesses the average of heterotrait-heteromethod correlations in comparison to the average of monotrait-heteromethod correlations, which should be less than 0.85 (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4: Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion values.

No.	Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Curiosity									
2	Decentering	0.776								
3	Self-Emotional Appraisal	0.455	0.536							
4	Other's Emotional Appraisal	0.548	0.582	0.730						
5	Use of Emotions	0.555	0.636	0.627	0.669					
6	Regulations of Emotions	0.630	0.718	0.687	0.717	0.791				
7	Vigor	0.559	0.633	0.521	0.589	0.627	0.657			
8	Dedication	0.630	0.641	0.520	0.564	0.600	0.617	0.708		
9	Absorption	0.498	0.586	0.468	0.548	0.538	0.561	0.721	0.727	

Table 4 displays the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) criterion values used to evaluate discriminant validity among the constructs in the study. All HTMT values fall below the conservative threshold of 0.85, which indicates that the constructs are distinct from each other and possess discriminant validity. Figure 2 below illustrates the first-order reflective measurement model.

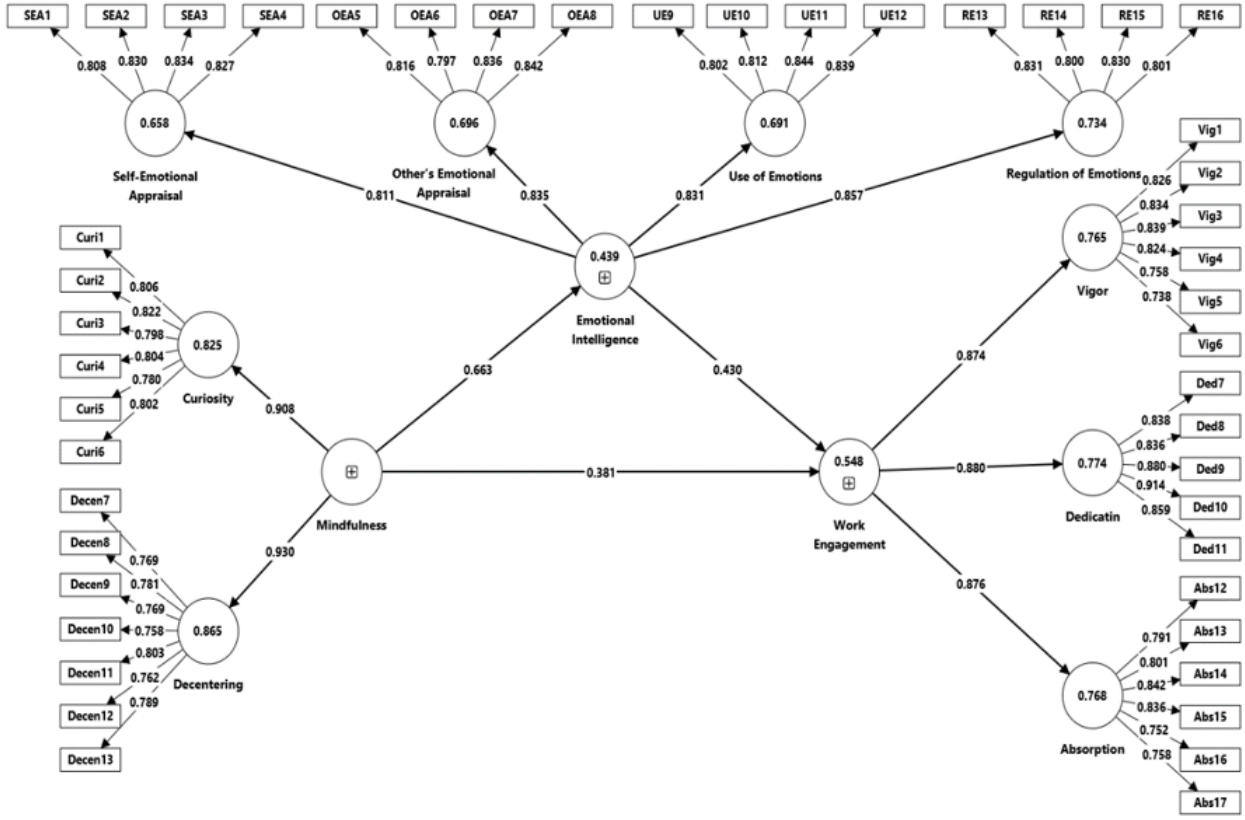

Figure 2: The reflective measurement model (First-order).

The initial analysis model included second-order constructs using a repeated indicators approach, but they had not yet been thoroughly examined or evaluated. To assess the constructs of the second-order reflective measurement model represented by all three variables, we utilized the two-stage approach proposed by Becker et al. (2012). After evaluating the first-order constructs, we identified the latent variables, which were then used as manifest variables for the second-order constructs (see Figure 3). The validity and reliability results for these constructs are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Measurement items of the second-order constructs.

Construct and Items	Standardized Loading (sig.)	Alpha	CR	AVE
Mindfulness		0.817	0.916	0.845
Curiosity	0.911**			
Decentering	0.928**			
Emotional Intelligence		0.854	0.901	0.694
Self-Emotional Appraisal	0.799**			
Other's Emotional Appraisal	0.831**			
Use of Emotions	0.836**			
Regulation of Emotions	0.866**			
Work Engagement		0.850	0.909	0.769
Vigor	0.876**			
Dedication	0.869**			
Absorption	0.885**			

Note: **P <0.01. Alpha refers to Cornbach's Alpha, CR refers to Composite reliability and AVE is average variance extracted.

Table 5 presents the measurement items for the second-order constructs, including mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and work engagement. Standardized loadings range from 0.799 to 0.928, demonstrating strong contributions from each dimension. Reliability metrics are robust, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.817 for mindfulness, 0.854 for emotional intelligence, and 0.850 for work engagement. Composite reliability (CR) values are 0.916, 0.901, and 0.909, respectively, while the average variance extracted (AVE) values are 0.845, 0.694, and 0.769. These results confirm internal consistency and validity, supporting the constructs' effectiveness in representing their intended dimensions.

Table 6: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) criterion values for second-order.

No.	Construct	1	2	3
1	Mindfulness			
2	Emotional Intelligence	0.788		
3	Work Engagement	0.796	0.799	0.798

Table 6 confirms discriminant validity for the second-order constructs, with all HTMT values below the recommended threshold of 0.85. The highest HTMT values, observed between Mindfulness and Work Engagement (0.796) and between Emotional Intelligence and Work Engagement (0.799), remain within acceptable limits. These results validate that the constructs uniquely measure mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and work engagement without significant overlap. Figure 3 below illustrates the second-order reflective measurement model.

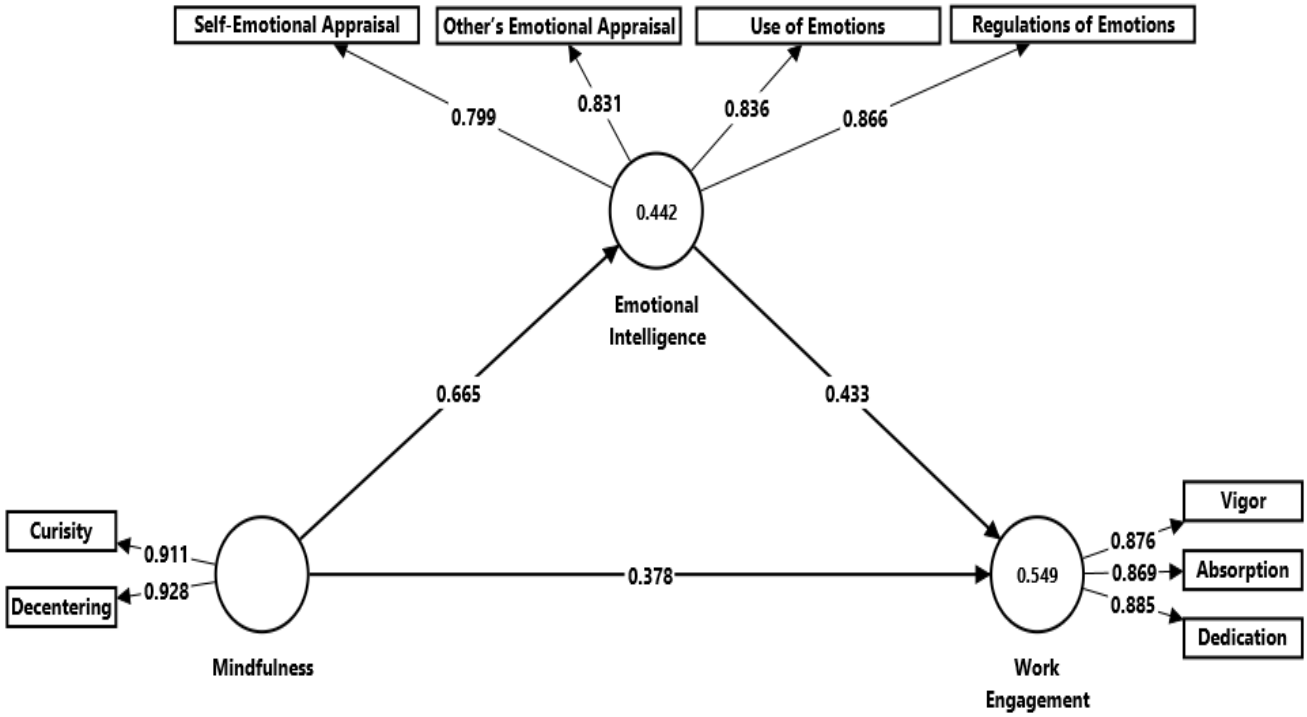

Figure 3: The reflective measurement model (Second-order).

4.2. Evaluating the Structural Model

The evaluation of the structural model (see Figure 4) was conducted using the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and variance inflation factor (VIF).

Table 7: Structural model evaluation.

Construct	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Collinearity Assessment	Confidence Intervals 95% (BCa) Bootstrap 2.5%	97%	F^2 Effect Size	Level of R^2
Mindfulness	1.000	0.584	0.728	0.791	
	1.791	0.248	0.505	0.177	
Emotional Intelligence	1.791	0.307	0.554	0.233	0.442
Work Engagement					0.549

First, we assessed the coefficient of determination (R^2) for the endogenous latent variables. The results indicated $R^2 = 0.442$ for emotional intelligence and $R^2 = 0.549$ for work engagement (refer to Table 7). This means that 44.2% of the variation in emotional intelligence and 54.9% of the variation in work engagement can be explained by the independent variables in our conceptual models. Second, we examined the effect size (f^2), which quantifies the contribution of each variable in explaining the endogenous variables. The results showed that the effect sizes for the constructs ranged from 0.177 to 0.791, categorized as weak, medium, and strong, based on Cohen's criteria (2013). Finally, all VIF values were below the conservative threshold of 3, indicating that our structural model did not exhibit any significant issues of collinearity among the predictor constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

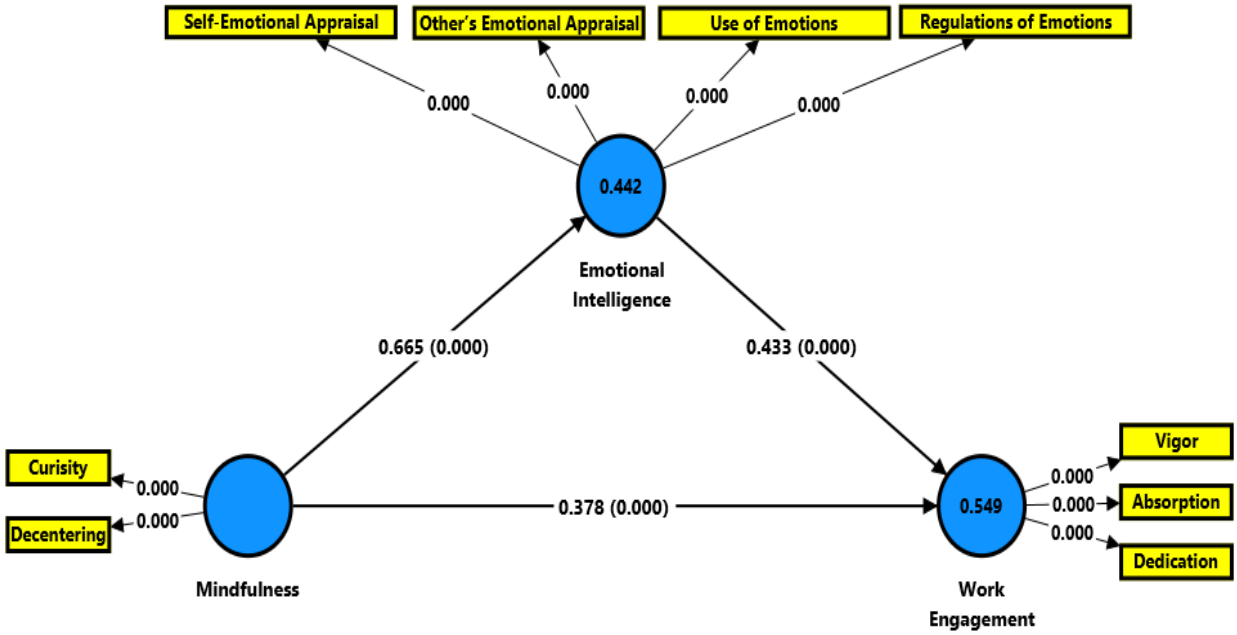

Figure 4: The structural model.

4.3. Hypotheses Tests

The "direct effect" hypotheses were initially tested by analyzing the standardized path coefficients (beta) and their significance levels. To assess the significance of the path coefficients, bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples were employed. As presented in Table 8, the results confirmed that mindfulness has a direct, positive, and significant impact on emotional intelligence (H1: $\beta = 0.665$, $p < 0.01$, confidence interval (CI) = 0.584 to 0.728), thereby validating H1. Additionally, emotional intelligence was found to have a positive and significant effect on work engagement (H2: $\beta = 0.433$, $p < 0.01$, confidence interval (CI) = 0.248 to 0.505), supporting H2. Furthermore, mindfulness was shown to have a direct, positive influence on work engagement (H3: $\beta = 0.378$, $p < 0.01$, confidence interval (CI) = 0.307 to 0.554), thus confirming H3.

Table 8: Structural model estimates.

Hypothesis					β	Critical ratio	P-Value	Results
H1	Mindfulness	⟶	Emotional Intelligence		0.665	18.325	<0.01	Supported
H2	Emotional Intelligence	⟶	Work Engagement		0.433	5.724	<0.01	Supported
H3	Mindfulness	⟶	Work Engagement		0.378	6.808	<0.01	Supported
H4	Mindfulness	⟶	Emotional Intelligence	⟶ Work Engagement	0.288	5.991	<0.01	Partial mediation

The mediating role of emotional intelligence, as hypothesized in H4, was tested using the bias-corrected (BCa) bootstrap method with 95% confidence intervals (CIs; Cheung and Lau, 2008). The bootstrapping analysis showed that the standardized coefficient (β) for the indirect effect of mindfulness on work engagement through emotional intelligence was significant ($\beta = 0.288$, CI = 0.197 to 0.383; $p < 0.001$). This indicates partial mediation, as the direct effect in H3 was also found to be significant. Therefore, these findings partially support

H4: A summary of these results can be found in Table 8.

5. DISCUSSION

This study examines the direct and indirect relationships between mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement, focusing on the mediating role of EI. The findings confirm that mindfulness enhances work engagement by improving emotional regulation and attentional stability. Additionally, mindfulness significantly boosts EI, equipping individuals with the skills needed for better emotional management. EI is shown to directly predict work engagement, fostering resilience, motivation, and stronger interpersonal relationships. Finally, EI mediates the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement, amplifying the positive effects of mindfulness on employee focus, connection, and productivity. These results highlight the critical interplay between mindfulness, EI, and engagement in promoting a resilient and motivated workforce.

The findings confirm Hypothesis 1, demonstrating that mindfulness significantly enhances emotional intelligence (EI). This aligns with prior research showing that mindfulness improves emotional regulation, self-awareness, and the ability to manage emotions effectively (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2020). Mindfulness enhances both cognitive and self-perceived emotional competencies, enabling individuals to respond thoughtfully to emotions and build stronger interpersonal relationships (Xie et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2022). It also fosters resilience and emotional awareness, particularly in high-stress settings, and positively predicts EI,

improving emotional regulation and reducing stress (Wang et al., 2023; Sturgill et al., 2021). Statistical analysis revealed a significant direct effect of mindfulness on EI, highlighting the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions in developing emotional intelligence. These findings underscore the value of mindfulness in fostering emotional competencies and resilience in professional and personal contexts.

The findings confirm Hypothesis 2, showing that emotional intelligence (EI) significantly enhances work engagement. This aligns with previous research highlighting that EI promotes emotional regulation, resilience, and positive interpersonal interactions, which sustain vigor, dedication, and absorption at work (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Alamer & Alrabai, 2024). EI's role in engagement is evident across professions. For instance, higher EI scores among nurses correlate with better engagement by enhancing emotional regulation and well-being (Gao et al., 2024). Similarly, in academic contexts, EI fosters engagement through adaptability and emotional competence (Merino-Tejedor et al., 2018; Junça Silva & Almeida, 2023). Moreover, EI supports psychological capital and interpersonal skills, contributing to sustained motivation and job satisfaction (George et al., 2022; Selvi & Aiswarya, 2023). Statistical analysis confirmed a strong direct effect of EI on engagement. These findings emphasize the importance of EI in fostering a resilient and engaged workforce, reinforcing the value of EI training in organizational development.

The findings support Hypothesis 3, confirming that mindfulness positively influences work engagement. This aligns with previous studies showing that mindfulness enhances emotional regulation and attentional stability, enabling employees to approach tasks with vigor, dedication, and absorption (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Schaufeli et al., 2002). According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, mindfulness helps conserve psychological resources such as resilience and optimism, which are critical for sustaining engagement in demanding environments (Liu et al., 2020). Mindful employees are better equipped to recharge and adapt to workplace challenges, fostering renewed focus and productivity (Jung, 2020; Fiaz & Fahim, 2023). Additionally, mindfulness promotes positive emotions and connectedness, enhancing engagement in collaborative settings (Miralles-Armenteros et al., 2019). Statistical analysis demonstrated a significant direct effect of mindfulness on work engagement, underscoring the practical value of mindfulness interventions in building a resilient and engaged workforce. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating mindfulness practices into organizations to enhance employee well-being and performance.

The findings support Hypothesis 4, showing that emotional intelligence (EI) mediates the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement. Mindfulness enhances emotional regulation and self-awareness, key components of EI, which in turn promote vigor, dedication, and absorption at work (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2020). EI helps employees leverage mindfulness to build resilience, sustain motivation, and manage emotions effectively, thereby enhancing engagement (George et al., 2022; Sharma & Gupta, 2021). For example, in high-stress settings, EI reduces emotional exhaustion and improves focus, amplifying the benefits of mindfulness on engagement (Xie et al., 2020). Statistical analysis confirmed a significant indirect effect of mindfulness on engagement through EI, indicating partial mediation. This highlights the synergistic impact of mindfulness and EI in fostering an engaged workforce, emphasizing the value of integrating both in organizational practices.

6. CONCLUSION

This study explored the relationships between mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement, with a focus on the mediating role of EI. The findings revealed that mindfulness positively influences both EI and work engagement, highlighting its role in fostering emotional regulation, attentional stability, and overall focus. Furthermore, EI was identified as a significant predictor of work engagement, emphasizing its importance in building resilience, sustaining motivation, and enhancing interpersonal interactions. Importantly, the mediating role of EI was confirmed, demonstrating that it amplifies the positive effects of mindfulness on work engagement by enabling individuals to effectively manage emotions and adapt to workplace challenges.

These results provide valuable insights into the interconnected nature of mindfulness, EI, and work engagement, offering both theoretical and practical implications. Organizations can leverage mindfulness training and EI development programs to enhance employee well-being and engagement. By fostering emotional competencies and mindfulness, workplaces can cultivate a more resilient, motivated, and high-performing workforce. This study contributes to the growing body of research on employee engagement and underscores the importance of integrating emotional and cognitive strategies into workplace practices, particularly within the context of dynamic and high-pressure environments.

6.1. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This study offers significant theoretical contributions to understanding the interplay between mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement within workplace behavior. It extends Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory by demonstrating how mindfulness enhances work engagement both directly and indirectly through EI, showcasing its dual role in conserving psychological resources and fostering emotional competencies (Hobfoll, 1989; Liu et al., 2020). Additionally, the research bridges gaps in mindfulness

literature by highlighting its relationship with EI as a mediator, providing a holistic perspective on its multifaceted impact on workplace outcomes (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2020). By identifying EI as a mediator, the study reveals how emotional regulation and self-awareness translate mindfulness into higher employee engagement, expanding the theoretical understanding of these pathways (George et al., 2022; Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Moreover, it contributes culturally relevant insights by exploring these relationships within the Saudi Arabian context, broadening the cross-cultural applicability of mindfulness and EI theories in dynamic organizational environments (Zhang & Fathi, 2024; Alamer & Alrabai, 2024). These findings underscore the importance of incorporating mindfulness and EI into organizational behavior frameworks and provide a foundation for future research on their influence on workplace outcomes like job satisfaction and well-being.

6.2. Practical implications

This study provides practical insights for enhancing employee well-being, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement. It emphasizes mindfulness training as a strategic tool to improve focus, emotional regulation, and resilience, enabling employees to manage stress and maintain productivity in high-pressure settings (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Liu et al., 2020). Additionally, integrating EI development programs, such as workshops or digital tools, can help employees navigate interpersonal dynamics, regulate emotions, and adapt to workplace challenges, fostering engagement and collaboration (George et al., 2022; Selvi & Aiswarya, 2023).

The research highlights the value of combining mindfulness and EI training to address both emotional and cognitive well-being, enhancing engagement and alignment with organizational goals (Sharma & Gupta, 2021; Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021). Furthermore, the study offers culturally relevant recommendations for Saudi Arabia, guiding businesses in leveraging mindfulness and EI to address the challenges of evolving work environments. These strategies support the nation's Vision 2030 objectives by fostering a more engaged and adaptive workforce (Alamer & Alrabai, 2024; Zhang & Fathi, 2024).

6.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations. First, its cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causality between mindfulness, emotional intelligence (EI), and work engagement. Future research could employ longitudinal or experimental approaches for stronger causal inferences. Second, reliance on self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias. Incorporating multi-source data, such as peer or supervisor evaluations, could improve validity. Third, the study's focus on Saudi Arabia limits generalizability to other cultural settings. Cross-cultural studies are needed to explore how cultural norms influence these relationships. Lastly, while this study included participants from diverse industries, future research could focus on specific sectors, like healthcare or education, to uncover industry-specific dynamics.

Future studies could investigate additional mediators such as resilience, psychological capital, or job satisfaction, and moderators like organizational support or leadership style to deepen understanding of the observed relationships. Experimental research could assess the effectiveness of mindfulness and EI training programs, comparing different intervention approaches or evaluating long-term impacts on well-being and performance. Moreover, the role of technology in delivering mindfulness and EI training, such as through mobile apps or virtual reality, warrants further exploration. Expanding research across diverse cultural and organizational contexts, especially in rapidly evolving or developing economies, could provide valuable insights into fostering mindfulness, EI, and engagement. Addressing these limitations and pursuing these research directions will enhance theoretical and practical knowledge of these constructs.

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