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Bhuvan Israni

Bhuvan.Israni@TUDublin.ie

Technological University Dublin

Dr Tarun Israni

Technological University Dublin

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Bhuvan Israni¹ and Tarun Israni¹

¹**Faculty of Business**
Technological University Dublin
Grangegorman Lower
Dublin 7, D07 H6K8
Ireland

Corresponding Author:

Bhuvan Israni
Faculty of Business
Technological University Dublin
Grangegorman Lower
Dublin 7, D07 H6K8
Ireland
Email: Bhuvan.israni@tudublin.ie

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Abstract

Workplace stress poses persistent challenges to employee wellbeing, organisational performance, and workforce sustainability. While mindfulness is widely promoted to enhance resilience, individual coping mechanisms alone may be insufficient to address systemic stressors. Drawing on qualitative interviews ($N = 28$) across private-sector organisations, this study explores employee perceptions of benefits, enablers, and inhibitors associated with workplace wellbeing. Beyond qualitative thematic analysis, an integrated empirical framework combining Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), thematic network centrality mapping, and person-centred cluster analysis was deployed. The findings indicate that while employees value mindfulness for stress regulation and focus, its operational efficacy remains bounded by structural workplace conditions. Sample-wide burden statistics revealed an overall Barrier-to-Benefit Ratio of 1.11, confirming that structural obstacles outweigh combined facilitators and benefits by 11%, with nearly 40% of participants experiencing severe operational friction. Network analysis identified workplace stigma as the primary structural barrier and competitive work culture as the critical bridge connecting job demands to personal coping autonomy. Furthermore, person-centred clustering revealed substantial workforce heterogeneity, contrasting an autonomous minority with a dominant, systemically constrained majority (64.3%). Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources framework, this study demonstrates that mindfulness functions as one element within a broader organisational system rather than a standalone remedy. Sustainable wellbeing requires an integrated approach that pairs individual resilience training with structural workload management and supportive managerial leadership.

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1 Introduction

Employee wellbeing has become a central strategic imperative for organisations seeking to sustain productivity, engagement, and workforce retention within increasingly demanding operational environments. Contemporary workplaces are defined by rising performance expectations, rapid technological transformation, acute temporal pressures, and expanding friction between professional and personal responsibilities. Consequently, chronic workplace stress has emerged as a major systemic challenge

across industries, with extensive evidence demonstrating its detrimental impact on employee mental health, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and performance [1, 2].

In response, organisations have widely adopted interventions designed to enhance employee resilience and stress regulation. Among these, mindfulness practices, defined as maintaining intentional, present-moment awareness in a non-judgemental manner [3], have gained prominent traction across academic literature and managerial practice. Empirical research links mindfulness to significant individual benefits, including enhanced emotional regulation, reduced acute stress, heightened self-awareness, and improved interpersonal dynamics [4, 5]. Consequently, mindfulness interventions are frequently implemented as frontline strategies for mitigating employee strain.

Despite their popularity, critical questions persist regarding the efficacy of mindfulness practices when deployed in isolation from structural workplace conditions. Scholars increasingly caution against over-relying on individual coping strategies while ignoring broader structural stressors, such as unmanaged workloads, schedule rigidity, unsupportive leadership, and adversarial workplace cultures [6]. Emerging evidence indicates that while individual mindfulness fosters internal coping capacity, its operational effectiveness is fundamentally bounded by the broader organisational ecosystem [7].

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model provides a robust theoretical foundation for analysing these dynamics. The model posits that employee wellbeing is determined by the balance between job demands (e.g., temporal strain, excessive workloads) and job resources (e.g., managerial support, job autonomy, positive interpersonal relationships) [8, 9]. Within this framework, mindfulness operates as a personal resource that buffers acute stress, whereas organisational resources dictate the structural boundaries within which such coping mechanisms function. Thus, employee wellbeing is best understood not as the outcome of isolated self-regulation, but as an emergent property of dynamic individual-environment interactions.

While previous scholarship has frequently evaluated mindfulness, stress, and organisational resources as independent variables, few studies have empirically mapped how these elements co-occur and interact within complex workplace settings. Furthermore, traditional variable-centred paradigms often assume workforce homogeneity, masking critical variations in how distinct employee cohorts experience structural friction versus personal agency.

To address these gaps, this study investigates employee perceptions of mindfulness and workplace wellbeing using an integrated, multi-method approach. Utilising qualitative interview data ($N = 28$) across 25 active qualitative themes, the paper maps perceived benefits, enablers, and inhibitors. Beyond qualitative thematic synthesis, the study advances an empirical pipeline combining Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), thematic network centrality mapping, and person-centred Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) cluster analysis. This framework allows us to evaluate sample-wide structural metrics, such as the Barrier-to-Benefit Ratio (R_{burden}) and individual Net Friction Index (NFI), while uncovering distinct employee friction profiles.

Through this approach, the study offers three primary contributions to the workplace wellbeing literature. First, it contextualises mindfulness within structural

organisational conditions, demonstrating that individual mindfulness cannot serve as a standalone remedy for structural friction [6]. Second, it advances wellbeing methodologies by integrating graph centrality, MCA perceptual mapping, and PAM clustering to capture workforce heterogeneity and map the co-occurrence topology of stress and support. Finally, it provides data-driven managerial insights by establishing that sustainable wellbeing outcomes require structural interventions, such as workload rebalancing and managerial endorsement, alongside individual resilience training.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Workplace Stress, Individual Resilience, and the JD-R Framework

Workplace stress has become a pervasive challenge for contemporary organisations, with extensive evidence demonstrating its adverse effects on psychological health, job satisfaction, and overall performance [2, 10]. Grounded in transactional stress theory, strain occurs when employees perceive an imbalance between environmental demands and their available coping resources [1]. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model formalises this balance by categorising workplace factors into job demands, such as workload, temporal pressure, and emotional labour, and job resources, including autonomy, managerial support, and positive interpersonal relationships [8, 9]. While excessive demands consistently trigger emotional exhaustion and burnout, adequate job resources serve a dual function: buffering demand-induced strain and stimulating workplace engagement [11].

In response to elevated job demands, organisations have increasingly promoted mindfulness as a personal coping resource. Defined as intentional, non-judgemental awareness focused on present-moment experience [3], mindfulness enhances individual self-regulation, emotional intelligence, and cognitive focus [4, 5]. Within demanding operational settings, individual mindfulness practices have been shown to reduce emotional exhaustion and foster personal resilience [12]. However, recent scholarship cautions against treating mindfulness as an isolated, universal remedy for occupational strain. Critical perspectives argue that an over-emphasis on individual coping risks shifting the burden of stress management onto employees while leaving systemic organisational issues, such as excessive workloads, schedule rigidity, and poor management, unaddressed [6]. Consequently, individual mindfulness functions not in a vacuum, but within the structural boundaries established by the broader workplace ecosystem [7].

2.2 Organisational Resources and Systemic Enablers

While individual practices foster internal resilience, organisational resources establish the baseline conditions that determine whether coping mechanisms can be effectively deployed. Foundational job design models highlight that job autonomy, task discretion, and role clarity reduce strain by restoring a sense of personal control over work demands [13–15]. Furthermore, leadership behaviours exert a critical structural influence on employee wellbeing. Transformational and supportive leaders who actively

model healthy work habits, foster open communication, and recognise employee contributions directly mitigate psychological strain and encourage program participation [16].

At the collective level, organisational culture and psychological safety govern how employee stress and wellbeing initiatives are interpreted [17]. In psychologically safe environments, employees feel empowered to discuss workload constraints and utilise available support programs without fear of professional stigma [18]. Conversely, competitive work cultures, unsupportive management, and pervasive social stigma regarding mental health act as primary structural inhibitors, neutralising the benefits of individual-level wellbeing interventions [6]. Thus, sustainable employee wellbeing emerges from a balanced alignment where supportive leadership, cultural safety, and structural job resources actively enable individual coping efforts.

2.3 Employee Heterogeneity, Person-Centred Approaches, and Research Gap

Despite the recognised interaction between personal coping mechanisms and structural resources, much of the occupational health literature relies on traditional, variable-centred paradigms. These approaches evaluate broad relationships between isolated variables under the implicit assumption of workforce homogeneity [19]. However, employees do not respond uniformly to workplace stressors; individual differences in coping capacity, personal values, and local team dynamics create substantial variation in how work demands are experienced [20, 21]. To capture this complexity, scholars advocate for person-centred methodologies that group individuals based on recurring, multi-dimensional patterns of experiences and behaviours [19, 22].

In qualitative and mixed-methods research, transforming thematic occurrences into structured profiles allows researchers to conduct cluster analysis to uncover underlying participant typologies [23, 24]. Applied to workplace wellbeing, this person-centred approach facilitates the identification of distinct employee profiles characterised by varying combinations of personal coping resources, organisational enablers, and structural friction points [19].

A critical research gap remains regarding how mindfulness practices interact with structural job demands and organisational resources to form distinct employee wellbeing typologies within private-sector organisations. Furthermore, few studies integrate qualitative interview data with person-centred analytical techniques to model these interactions. To address this gap, this study combines thematic analysis of qualitative interviews ($N = 28$) with a multi-method analytical framework, incorporating Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), network centrality mapping, and Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) cluster analysis. By mapping how perceived benefits, structural enablers, and operational inhibitors co-occur across different employee cohorts, this study provides a nuanced, data-driven understanding of workforce heterogeneity and offers guidance for designing targeted workplace wellbeing strategies.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design, Data Collection, and Qualitative Quantitisation

This study adopts a mixed-methods empirical framework designed to evaluate the interplay between individual coping practices and organisational support mechanisms in workplace settings [7, 8]. To capture both rich contextual nuances and broader structural patterns, the empirical strategy integrates qualitative inquiry with multivariate statistical techniques [24].

Primary qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with $N = 28$ participants [25]. The interview protocol targeted participant experiences, operational challenges, and organisational support structures. Following data collection, transcripts underwent thematic analysis to categorise participant responses into three core domains: perceived **benefits**, **enablers**, and **inhibitors** of mindfulness and workplace wellbeing.

To prepare the qualitative findings for statistical modelling, the identified sub-themes were quantitised into a structured binary incidence matrix [23]. For each participant ($i = 1, \dots, 28$), specific themes were assigned a dummy indicator variable:

$$T_{ij} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if participant } i \text{ explicitly identified or endorsed theme } j, \\ 0 & \text{if theme } j \text{ was absent or not reported by participant } i. \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

This binary encoding converts qualitative thematic responses into discrete multivariate data, establishing the foundational input matrix required for subsequent Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), Jaccard distance calculation, and participant profile clustering.

3.2 Data Integrity, Computational Environment, and Ethical Compliance

Prior to matrix construction and analytical execution, the qualitative dataset underwent rigorous validation procedures to ensure thematic integrity. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and cross-checked against original recordings for accuracy. To prevent distortion in downstream multivariate analyses, theme definitions were standardised, and a dual-coder agreement process was applied to verify the consistent identification of benefits, enablers, and inhibitors across all $N = 28$ participant transcripts. Any ambiguous or unreported thematic assignments were reconciled through iterative review before final binary matrix encoding.

All statistical computations, participant profile clustering, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), and network visualisation graph constructions were performed in the R statistical computing environment (v4.3.0+). The reproducible analytical pipeline relied on established packages including `corrplot`, `igraph`, `FactoMineR`, and `tidyverse`.

Research protocols complied fully with institutional ethical standards. Ethical approval was formally granted by the relevant Institutional Review Board prior to participant recruitment. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants

prior to commencing interviews. Participation was entirely voluntary, with complete anonymity maintained through pseudonymization and the removal of all direct personal identifiers during data transcription and reporting.

3.3 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis following the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) [25]. This approach was selected because of its flexibility and suitability for identifying recurring patterns across qualitative datasets. The analytical procedure commenced with familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, followed by the initial coding of meaningful statements and experiences. These initial codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories, after which candidate themes were iteratively reviewed, refined, defined, and named to produce the final thematic structure.

This systematic coding process yielded three overarching core domains: perceived **benefits**, perceived **enablers**, and perceived **inhibitors**. Within these primary domains, distinct sub-themes emerged to capture the nuanced experiences of participants. Perceived benefits encompassed coping with stress, enhanced emotional intelligence, strengthened interpersonal relationships, and increased self-awareness and focus. Perceived enablers included proactive leadership, job autonomy, a supportive workplace culture, positive interpersonal relationships, and broader social and cultural influences. Conversely, perceived inhibitors captured both organisational and individual factors that constrained employee wellbeing and the overall effectiveness of mindfulness practices. To ensure analytical rigour, all themes were reviewed iteratively and compared across participants to maintain thematic consistency and coherence.

3.4 Multiple Correspondence Analysis

To systematically investigate the structural interrelationships, hidden multidimensional affinities, and underlying tensions among qualitative themes without imposing *a priori* thematic hierarchies, we conducted Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). MCA serves as an unsupervised multivariate dimension-reduction methodology specifically tailored for categorical and binary indicator datasets [26]. In the current study, the qualitative coding framework derived from participant interviews ($N = 28$) comprised $K = 25$ distinct binary theme categories, classified into perceived benefits ($n = 5$), perceived enablers ($n = 8$), and perceived inhibitors ($n = 12$).

The qualitative coding matrix was transformed into a binary indicator matrix $\mathbf{Z} \in \{0, 1\}^{N \times K}$, where $z_{ik} = 1$ denotes the explicit endorsement of qualitative theme $k \in \{1, \dots, K\}$ by participant $i \in \{1, \dots, N\}$, and $z_{ik} = 0$ otherwise. The grand total of affirmative codings across the sample is given by $n_{++} = \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{k=1}^K z_{ik} = 137$. Defining the grand probability matrix as $\mathbf{P} = \frac{1}{n_{++}} \mathbf{Z}$, the vector of row masses $\mathbf{r} = \mathbf{P} \mathbf{1}_K$ and column masses $\mathbf{c} = \mathbf{P}^T \mathbf{1}_N$ establish the marginal distributions across participants and qualitative themes, respectively.

Eigenvalue decomposition was executed on the standardized residual matrix $\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{D}_r^{-1/2} (\mathbf{P} - \mathbf{r} \mathbf{c}^T) \mathbf{D}_c^{-1/2}$, where $\mathbf{D}_r = \text{diag}(\mathbf{r})$ and $\mathbf{D}_c = \text{diag}(\mathbf{c})$. Singular Value Decomposition (SVD) yields $\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{U} \mathbf{\Gamma} \mathbf{V}^T$, where the singular values γ_m dictate the principal

inertias $\lambda_m = \gamma_m^2$ for orthogonal dimension m . The principal coordinates of the qualitative theme categories along dimension m are calculated via $\mathbf{F}_c = \mathbf{D}_c^{-1/2} \mathbf{V} \mathbf{T}$.

To preserve analytical clarity and eliminate geometric redundancy associated with absence codes, category coordinates were filtered to project active theme presence ($z_{ik} = 1$) into a two-dimensional Euclidean subspace. Dimension 1 accounted for $\lambda_1 = 12.9\%$ of total inertia, while Dimension 2 accounted for $\lambda_2 = 11.6\%$, yielding a cumulative explained inertia of 24.5% across the principal perceptual plane.

3.5 Net Friction Index and Structural Burden Quantification

To evaluate the net structural resistance encountered by employees when engaging with workplace mindfulness initiatives, we established a composite metric termed the Net Friction Index (NFI). While individual theme frequencies capture isolated perceptions, they do not account for the compensatory balance between personal facilitators and operational barriers within an individual's specific work environment.

For each participant $i \in \{1, \dots, N\}$, let $B_i = \sum_{j=1}^5 z_{ij}^{\text{Benefit}}$, $E_i = \sum_{k=1}^8 z_{ik}^{\text{Enabler}}$, and $I_i = \sum_{m=1}^{12} z_{im}^{\text{Inhibitor}}$ represent the total number of endorsed perceived benefits, perceived enablers, and perceived inhibitors, respectively. The Net Friction Index (NFI_i) is formulated as:

$$NFI_i = \frac{I_i}{B_i + E_i + 1} \quad (2)$$

where the Laplace smoothing parameter (+1) in the denominator prevents division-by-zero anomalies for participants reporting zero cumulative enablers and benefits. An $NFI_i < 1.0$ indicates an environment where personal enablers and perceived benefits outweigh structural obstacles, whereas an $NFI_i \geq 1.0$ signifies critical friction where organisational barriers dominate the participant's experience.

Additionally, the aggregate sample Barrier-to-Benefit Ratio (R_{burden}) was computed across the entire workforce cohort to assess systemic structural load:

$$R_{\text{burden}} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N I_i}{\sum_{i=1}^N B_i + \sum_{i=1}^N E_i} \quad (3)$$

3.6 Demographic Subgroup Independence Testing

To examine whether the endorsement of qualitative themes varies systematically across employee demographic classifications (e.g., gender, job category, educational attainment), non-parametric tests of independence were conducted. Given the modest sample size ($N = 28$) and the presence of expected cell counts smaller than five ($n < 5$) across multiple contingency cells, standard Pearson's Chi-Square (χ^2) tests were unsuitable due to asymptotic approximation violations. Consequently, Fisher's Exact Test was utilised for each of the $K = 25$ binary qualitative theme variables against demographic categories.

For a binary theme variable $X \in \{0, 1\}$ and a demographic grouping Y , Fisher's Exact Test evaluates the null hypothesis H_0 that theme endorsement is independent of demographic membership. In a 2×2 contingency structure with cell frequencies

a, b, c, d and marginal row/column totals $n = a + b + c + d$, the exact hypergeometric probability p of observing a given cell configuration under H_0 is calculated as:

$$p = \frac{\binom{a+b}{a} \binom{c+d}{c}}{\binom{n}{a+c}} = \frac{(a+b)! (c+d)! (a+c)! (b+d)!}{a! b! c! d! n!} \quad (4)$$

The cumulative two-tailed p -value is derived by summing the hypergeometric probabilities of all contingency table configurations equal to or more extreme than the observed matrix. The nominal threshold for statistical significance was established at $\alpha = 0.05$.

3.7 Qualitative Theme Network Co-Occurrence and Centrality Analysis

To complement the thematic and cluster analyses, an undirected thematic co-occurrence network $G = (V, E)$ was established, where V represents the set of $K = 25$ qualitative themes (nodes) and E represents the co-occurrence linkages (edges) between them across $N = 28$ participant transcripts, to examine the relational topology between the identified benefits, enablers, and inhibitors of employee wellbeing. Network analysis enables the visualisation and formal evaluation of how qualitative codes co-occur within participant accounts, highlighting core structural drivers versus peripheral contextual factors [23].

The symmetric co-occurrence matrix $\mathbf{C} \in \mathbb{N}_0^{K \times K}$ was computed from the binary participant-by-theme matrix $\mathbf{Z} \in \{0, 1\}^{N \times K}$:

$$\mathbf{C} = \mathbf{Z}^T \mathbf{Z} \quad \text{where} \quad c_{jk} = \sum_{i=1}^N z_{ij} z_{ik} \quad (5)$$

Here, c_{jk} represents the absolute count of individual participants who simultaneously cited both theme j and theme k , while diagonal elements $c_{jj} = \sum_{i=1}^N z_{ij}$ reflect total participant frequencies for each individual theme.

To evaluate graph topology and node prominence, two structural centrality measures were computed for each theme $v_j \in V$:

1. **Weighted Degree Centrality / Strength (C_D):** Evaluates node connectivity and total interaction volume across the network by summing adjacent co-occurrence frequencies:

$$C_D(v_j) = \sum_{k \neq j} c_{jk} \quad (6)$$

2. **Betweenness Centrality (C_B):** Quantifies the degree to which node v_j functions as an informational or structural bridge along shortest geodesic paths (σ_{st}) connecting all other node pairs (v_s, v_t) :

$$C_B(v_j) = \sum_{s \neq j \neq t \in V} \frac{\sigma_{st}(v_j)}{\sigma_{st}} \quad (7)$$

where σ_{st} denotes the total number of shortest paths from v_s to v_t , and $\sigma_{st}(v_j)$ represents those passing through v_j .

Network analysis and visualisation were implemented in R using the **igraph** package. A force-directed layout based on the Fruchterman-Reingold algorithm was employed to map nodes according to relative co-occurrence strength, with edge thickness scaled to c_{jk} . Node label positions were dynamically calculated relative to the network centre to ensure legibility. Finally, hierarchical clustering using complete linkage was applied to **C** to identify latent thematic blocks across the network.

3.8 Participant Profile Clustering

To examine whether respondents structured their experiences around shared thematic orientations, an exploratory cluster analysis was conducted on the binary participant-theme occurrence matrix ($N = 28$ participants across 25 qualitative codes). Cluster analysis is a person-centred technique that groups individuals based on shared patterns of perceived benefits, organisational enablers, and inhibitors (Ketchen & Shook, 1996).

Because the data consist of asymmetric binary attributes, where shared theme absences (d) do not indicate behavioural or experiential similarity, Jaccard distance (d_J) was calculated across participants using Gower’s distance metric via the `cluster::daisy()` function in R:

$$d_J(i, j) = 1 - \frac{a}{a + b + c} \quad (8)$$

where $a = |X_i \cap X_j|$ represents the number of themes present in both participants, $b = |X_i \setminus X_j|$ represents themes present in participant i but absent in participant j , and $c = |X_j \setminus X_i|$ represents themes present in participant j but absent in participant i . Both Agglomerative Hierarchical Clustering (HCLUST) with complete linkage and Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) were performed on the resulting distance matrix.

To evaluate cluster separation and determine optimal partitioning, average silhouette widths ($\bar{s}$) were evaluated across solutions from $k = 2$ to $k = 6$. Across all PAM configurations, silhouette values remained low ($\bar{s} = 0.054$ to 0.114), indicating substantial thematic overlap and a continuous spectrum of participant experiences rather than hard, mutually exclusive boundaries. Consequently, the $k = 4$ PAM cluster solution ($\bar{s} = 0.079$) was retained as an exploratory heuristic framework to describe dominant thematic archetypes, ranging from high organisational support to reliance on personal coping mechanisms, rather than rigid participant typologies.

4 Results

4.1 Overview of Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis revealed three overarching categories that shaped employees’ experiences of workplace wellbeing and mindfulness practices: (1) perceived benefits, (2) perceived enablers, and (3) perceived inhibitors. Across the interviews, participants consistently described mindfulness as a valuable mechanism for managing workplace stress; however, its effectiveness was perceived to depend heavily on broader

organisational and social factors. The findings demonstrate that employee wellbeing emerges from the dynamic interaction between personal coping resources and workplace conditions rather than from mindfulness practices in isolation.

4.1.1 Perceived Benefits of Mindfulness

Coping with Workplace Stress

The most frequently discussed benefit was the ability of mindfulness practices to help employees cope with workplace stress. Participants described mindfulness as a practical mechanism for managing work-related pressures, regulating acute emotions, and maintaining perspective during demanding situations. Rather than reacting impulsively to competing responsibilities, participants used these practices as an intentional buffer during periods of heightened strain, with P#28 asserting, *“Sometimes I suffer some stress and I try to practice just to relax my mind... I’ll try to do it [mindfulness] when I’m in a little bit of distress.”*

Mindfulness as a Pause Mechanism

Participants frequently described mindfulness as creating a structural “pause” between stressful triggers and behavioural responses. This cognitive break provided a vital opportunity to step back, with P#5 noting that taking brief micro-practices *“really kind of breaks you out from that kind of treadmill mindset... take 10 or 15 minutes to kind of take some space and time away from the work.”*, by temporarily disengaging from high-pressure environments, participants were able to reflect prior to decision-making, thereby reducing automatic or defensive reactions before returning to operational tasks.

Enhancement of Emotional Intelligence

A recurring theme concerned the role of mindfulness in improving self-regulation and emotional awareness. Participants reported becoming more conscious of their internal emotional states, with P#3 reflecting on how mindfulness altered their internal reactions: *“I would have got angrier and angrier, but I let it go, and I was like maybe that’s mindfulness... then another very stressful thing happened, and I was like, I reacted differently”*. This heightened self-awareness enabled participants to recognise personal emotional triggers, allowing them to navigate workplace interactions with colleagues, line managers, or external clients far more thoughtfully and constructively.

Strengthening Interpersonal Relationships

Participants also reported positive spillover effects on workplace relationships. Improved active listening skills, heightened empathy, and increased patience were frequently cited as direct outcomes of sustained mindfulness practice. For instance, P#22 illustrated how this patience transforms everyday communication: *“For example, you have an argument, you receive an e-mail from a colleague that is not nice. Instead of reacting as I would normally do. I relax a little bit before answering back, or something like that.”*. Employees perceived these interpersonal improvements as key drivers of positive workplace interactions and stronger professional alliances across teams.

Enhanced Self-Awareness and Focus

Another primary benefit identified was increased self-awareness and task concentration. Participants described becoming more cognizant of their cognitive habits and physiological stress responses, with P#3 explaining, *“So basically, uh, mindfulness made me more aware of myself. I am more self-aware... so I know now way before, when I am stressed, I feel it in my breathing. I feel it in my body.”*. This heightened self-awareness was perceived to improve daily productivity, sustained task focus, and tactical decision-making, enabling employees to prioritise responsibilities effectively despite surrounding workplace distractions.

4.1.2 Perceived Enablers of Workplace Wellbeing

Proactive Leadership

Supportive and proactive leadership emerged as a foundational facilitator of employee wellbeing. Participants described effective managers as playing a critical role in promoting healthy work practices, with P#19 highlighting how active managerial role-modelling drives engagement: *“It [mindfulness practice] is very formally encouraged and endorsed in our organisation, and my own personal line manager would be very encouraging... She would very much endorse mindfulness. You know, she uses herself, so she, I suppose she models what she would like to see in her staff.”*. Employees who experienced such positive leadership were significantly more likely to report favourable wellbeing outcomes and sustained utilisation of individual coping mechanisms within a psychologically safe environment.

Job Autonomy and Role Flexibility

Job autonomy was identified as a major structural enabler. Participants indicated that possessing discretion over work processes and daily scheduling directly mitigated occupational stress while enhancing feelings of competence, with P#8 noting, *“I think, um, having more time flexibility. So, the fact that I have control over my time, I can start early, finish late, means I can do mindfulness at any time and then, you know, more time flexibility helps.”*. Employees with higher job autonomy described this operational flexibility as essential for seamlessly integrating mindfulness micro-practices into their daily routines.

Stress as a Stimulator

Interestingly, a distinct subset of participants viewed moderate levels of workplace stress as beneficial. Rather than evaluating all stress negatively, these individuals framed manageable strain as a driving force for proactive coping, with P#27 explaining, *“I work in sales... so that’s why you end up going into stress and that’s where you end up then looking for solutions and that’s how you end up in mindfulness practice.”*. This finding demonstrates that employees distinguish between productive challenge stressors that stimulate personal growth and performance, and debilitating hindrance stressors that deplete wellbeing.

Positive Interpersonal Relationships and Culture

Supportive relationships with peers functioned as a crucial social resource. Participants emphasised the role of trust, collaboration, and informal peer networks in helping them navigate organisational pressure, with P#25 highlighting how peer role-modelling sustains motivation: *“It’s very motivating to be around her... because I suppose I see the benefit and the outcome regularly, you know, of the consistency. Having a colleague who truthfully really believes in it and embodies it uhm is very motivating.”*. Furthermore, broader organisational and national cultures characterised by openness, flexibility, and institutional support were consistently linked to positive wellbeing outcomes.

Complementary Enablers: Belief Systems, Country and Company Culture

Beyond structural job resources, participants highlighted how personal belief systems, cultural frameworks, and institutional culture synergistically facilitate wellbeing engagement. At the macro-level, national and regional cultural identities shaped how mindfulness was received, with P#21 observing, *“I’m a Mediterranean person... I think that culturally, yes, it [mindfulness] fits... we are a culture that cares about other people in general, and I think that fits very well with mindfulness.”*. Concurrently, supportive company cultures actively reinforced practice through institutional incentives and digital wellbeing platforms. P#1 noted how organisational initiatives drive participation: *“The culture is such that actually it facilitates mindfulness... recently, they even had a challenge where if you log into a certain number of sessions then by the end of it you will get like some gifts ... they in fact push more to do such things.”*. Together with personal spiritual beliefs and digital applications, these alignment factors create a permissive environment that legitimises individual wellbeing practices across both personal and professional spheres.

4.1.3 Perceived Inhibitors of Workplace Wellbeing

Despite the recognised benefits of individual mindfulness, participants identified a prominent set of structural, cultural, and operational inhibitors that systematically constrained the feasibility and efficacy of wellbeing practices.

Operational Demands and Time Scarcity

Workplace strain was most acutely driven by **excessive workloads, tight deadlines, and a pervasive dearth of time**. Participants (P#1, P#3, P#10, P#12, P#16, P#21) repeatedly noted that heavy operational volumes forced wellbeing to become a low priority due to work. As P#16 explained, *“I don’t get time, actually, for this.....my work responsibilities do not allow me to make extra time to practice mindfulness, to talk about mindfulness, to engage with mindfulness.”*. Similarly, P#9 highlighted the pressure associated with workload, stating, *“I think the pace of the workload, the pressure, this makes it more difficult.”*. Participants also described how the urgency of organisational demands could displace attention from personal wellbeing. P#25 explained, *“So in the corporate world, everyone wants you to think that everything is urgent. So— you give away the urgency towards yourself, towards your body, towards your training, towards your breathing, towards your meditation”*.. When daily schedules were unyielding (Strict Schedule), employees lacked

the temporal bandwidth required to engage in mindfulness, rendering personal coping strategies ineffective against unmanaged operational volume. A few participants (P#5, P#9, P#11, P#22, P#19) perceived tight deadlines to finish the assigned jobs as an inhibitor to the practice of mindfulness at work. P#15 cited ‘pressure deadlines’ as one of the reasons for not being able to practice mindfulness at work. Using the word ‘pressure’ before the word deadline may be justified, given that tight deadlines are linked to stress.

Leadership Gaps and Cultural Stigma

Organisational culture frequently functioned as a primary barrier. Participants cited **\Leaders Not Leading by Example** as a core driver of employee detachment, where managerial rhetoric regarding wellbeing was contradicted by unsupportive operational behaviours. This was reflected by P#5, who stated, *“I don’t think I was ever encouraged by manager. There is kind of just focus on getting the work done. They do not attach very much importance to the issue.”*. P#6, who worked as a consultant at a public healthcare system, spoke about her previous manager and said, *“He just wanted everybody at their desk, crunching numbers. So, and at the end of the day, he was the one who needed it (mindfulness practice) most of all.. he was militaristic in his thinking”*.. This disconnect was exacerbated by Stigma and Misconceptions surrounding mindfulness. Many participants (P#3, P#2, P#4, P#6, P#20, P#9, P#15, P#8, P#5, P#11) indicated that they refrain from practising mindfulness at work because of the stigma attached to the practice. P#20 reported, *“I feel they’re kind of judging me a little bit.”*. Some participants said that they found it difficult to follow unconventional practices at work. For example, P#6 said, *“I think I am not able to practice mindfulness at work because...you don’t fly your freak flag there, uh, to just to be vanilla, to look like everyone else. Uh, and not to show that side of your practice and your personality”*.. Alongside this, participants described a Competitive Work Culture in which demanding work environments could make mindfulness difficult to prioritise. P#21 observed, *“I am not able to practice... the work is highly demanding, and the work culture is very, very busy”*.

Environmental Constraints and Role Friction

Physical and structural limitations further hindered engagement. A **lack of designated space** within workplace facilities prevented employees from finding quiet environments to practice mindfulness during the workday. P#21 explained, *“When I’m in the office it really bothers me like having so much noise and so many people I can’t practice.”*. Similarly, P#7 narrated, *“I will take myself off to the bathroom for 10 minutes and just do a bit of breathing exercises and just to kind of like check in with the body and, um, then come back into the environment again”*.. When combined with role-based frictions (**job role**) and persistent **unbalanced work-life** dynamics, participants indicated that individual coping mechanisms could not offset unmitigated environmental stressors. P#2 described the competing demands of their role: *“All of a sudden you have five or six things on the go I wouldn’t be able to step away for 10 or 30 minutes, say to do it (mindfulness practice), it’s just not feasible.”*. Similarly, P#10 highlighted the difficulty created by remote working:

“being fully remote it’s just like you’re available more so you’re kind of busy more and at the end of the day you get exhausted and you just don’t feel like you have time.”.

Summary of Inhibitor Dynamics

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that when organisational demands exceed available personal and structural resources, the protective buffer of mindfulness is severely compromised. Individual coping mechanisms cannot substitute for systemic workload management and supportive leadership. The participant accounts demonstrate that the barriers to mindfulness were not solely matters of individual motivation; rather, they were embedded within workload intensity, time pressures, organisational priorities, leadership practices, workplace culture, environmental constraints, and work–life boundaries.

4.2 Exploratory Participant Typology

To explore participant heterogeneity and evaluate whether respondents experienced workplace wellbeing in a uniform manner, hierarchical clustering based on asymmetric Jaccard distances was conducted ($k = 4$ clusters, tree height threshold $h = 0.80$; see Figure 1). While low overall silhouette widths ($\bar{s} = 0.079$) confirm that employee experiences exist along a continuous spectrum rather than discrete groups, four exploratory participant archetypes emerged. These profiles highlight key variations in how individuals combine perceived benefits, personal resources, and organisational constraints (summarised in Table 1).

Table 1 Exploratory Participant Archetypes and Key Thematic Indicators

Cluster	Archetype Name	Primary Themes	Dominant Experience
1	Stress-Reframers (Supported & Resilient)	Stress as a Stimulator (100%), Company Culture (67%)	High agency; views stress as motivating while experiencing personal resilience aligned with corporate support.
2	Growth-Oriented Practitioners (Balanced Adapters)	Emotional Intelligence (50%), Interpersonal Coping (25%)	Self-directed focus on personal growth (EQ, relationships) with minimal barrier reporting.
3	Reactive Copers (Self-Reliant Copers)	Coping Stress (100%), Stigma & Misconceptions (67%)	Relies primarily on personal mindfulness tools as a defensive buffer against acute strain and stigma.
4	Systemically Constrained Majority (Resource-Constrained)	Stigma (50%), Leadership Gaps (42%), Workload (33%)	Dominant group ($n = 18$); experiences heavy operational demands, leadership disconnects, and limited structural resources.

4.2.1 Profile Summaries

The hierarchical relationships and distance branchings across the participant sample are illustrated in the dendrogram in Figure 1. Based on these groupings, four distinct profile archetypes were identified:

1. **Stress-Refrainers / Supported & Resilient** ($n = 3$, **Cluster 1**): Participants in this profile exhibited a proactive cognitive orientation, with 100% framing **stress as a stimulator** and 66.7% highlighting supportive **company Culture**. These individuals demonstrate high personal agency, view workplace demands as positive motivators, and feel well-supported by organisational leadership and positive interpersonal relationships.
2. **Growth-Oriented Practitioners / Balanced Adapters** ($n = 4$, **Cluster 2**): Characterised primarily by developmental outcomes, 50.0% of this cluster reported that mindfulness enhances emotional intelligence, alongside strengthened interpersonal coping. Utilising a combination of personal and organisational resources, they reported minimal organisational barriers, suggesting a self-directed focus on personal growth and workplace adaptation.
3. **Reactive Copers / Self-Reliant Copers** ($n = 3$, **Cluster 3**): This cluster demonstrated a defensive engagement pattern. While 100% cited **coping stress**, this was strongly paired with environmental friction, including high rates of **stigma and misconceptions** (66.7%) and **tight deadlines** (33.3%). Relying primarily on self-awareness and individual coping mechanisms due to fewer available organisational resources, mindfulness in this group serves as a reactive buffer against acute workload pressure.
4. **Systemically Constrained Majority / Resource-Constrained** ($n = 18$, **Cluster 4**): Comprising 64.3% of the sample, this dominant cluster reflects widespread operational friction. Members predominantly reported structural obstacles, including **stigma and misconceptions** (50.0%), **leaders not leading by example** (41.7%), **excessive work loads** (33.3%), and a **lack of designated Space** (33.3%). Although recognising the intrinsic benefits of mindfulness, these employees face significant difficulty maintaining long-term wellbeing under sustained, unmitigated workplace demands.

4.2.2 Cluster Diagnostics and Robustness

To evaluate cluster separation and partition stability, average silhouette widths ($\bar{s}$) were calculated across solutions ranging from $k = 2$ to $k = 6$ (Table 2). Across all configurations, silhouette values remained low ($\bar{s} \in [0.05, 0.11]$).

Both Agglomerative hierarchical clustering (complete linkage) and Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) yielded comparable, highly overlapping profiles. The low silhouette coefficients indicate that participants do not naturally separate into completely isolated typologies. Consequently, the four profiles should not be interpreted as rigid, mutually exclusive employee types, but rather as an exploratory heuristic framework describing overlapping operational profiles along a continuum—ranging from resource-rich, supported engagement to systemically constrained coping.

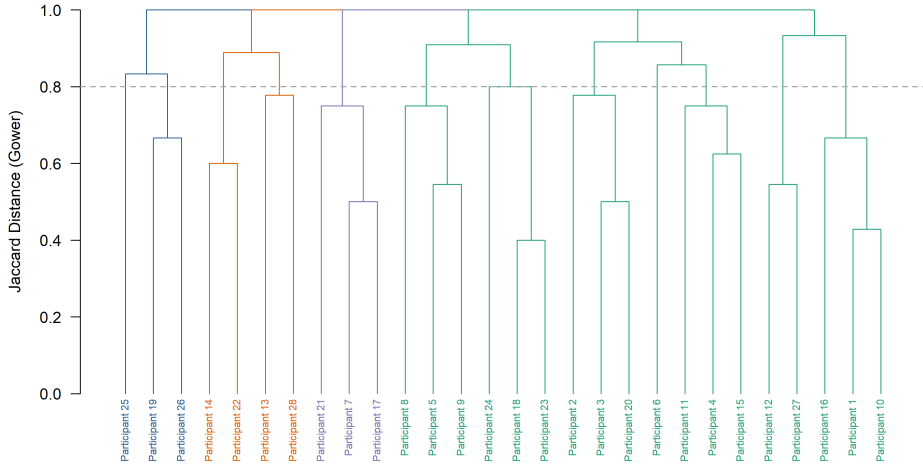


Fig. 1 Participant Hierarchical Clustering Dendrogram (Jaccard distances across qualitative codes; tree cutoff at height $h = 0.80$).

Table 2 Average Silhouette Widths across Cluster Solutions ($N = 28$)

Number of Clusters (k)	Average Silhouette Width ($\bar{s}$)
2	0.062
3	0.054
4	0.079
5	0.098
6	0.114

4.3 Perceptual Mapping via Multiple Correspondence Analysis

The spatial distribution of qualitative themes across the two-dimensional MCA perceptual plane reveals the systemic tensions and structural alignment between organisational impediments, managerial enablers, and personal outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The primary horizontal axis, Dimension 1 (12.9% explained inertia), captures an operational continuum spanning from rigid *Institutional Constraints* on the negative pole to *Individual Coping Autonomy* on the positive pole. Themes occupying the negative horizontal quadrant (Dim 1 < 0), such as *Strict Schedule* ($f_1 = -1.035$), *Competitive Work Culture* ($f_1 = -0.952$), *Lack of Designated Space* ($f_1 = -1.090$), and *Country Culture* ($f_1 = -0.973$), represent systemic environmental barriers that constrain participation in mindfulness initiatives regardless of personal motivation. Conversely, themes situated along the positive horizontal quadrant (Dim 1 > 0), including *Job Autonomy and Job Role* ($f_1 = 1.613$), *Unbalanced Work-Life* ($f_1 =$

Multiple Correspondence Analysis: Qualitative Theme Map

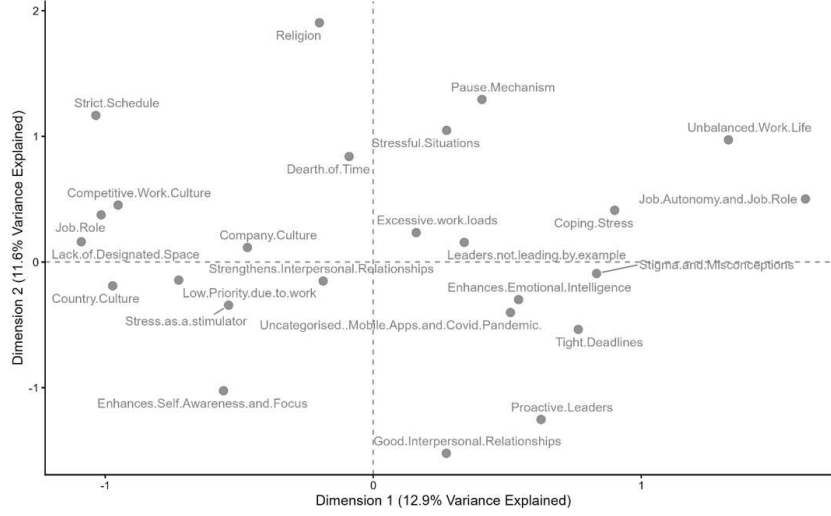


Fig. 2 Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) Perceptual Map displaying active qualitative themes ($K = 25$) across Dimension 1 (12.9% inertia explained) and Dimension 2 (11.6% inertia explained).

1.326), and *Coping Stress* ($f_1 = 0.901$), demonstrate that employees who possess greater task discretion utilise mindfulness primarily as a reactive buffer to navigate intense work-life conflict and acute operational pressures.

The vertical axis, Dimension 2 (11.6% explained inertia), delineates a continuum separating *Acute Drivers and Temporal Strain* on the positive pole from *Relational and Environmental Support* on the negative pole. The upper vertical domain (Dim 2 > 0) is anchored by *Religion* ($f_2 = 1.881$), *Pause Mechanism* ($f_2 = 1.294$), *Stressful Situations* ($f_2 = 1.048$), and *Dearth of Time* ($f_2 = 0.840$). This grouping illustrates reactive mindfulness engagement, wherein acute work strain and pervasive time scarcity force employees to deploy mindfulness as a momentary reset. In contrast, the lower vertical domain (Dim 2 < 0) is defined by *Good Interpersonal Relationships* ($f_2 = -1.521$), *Proactive Leaders* ($f_2 = -1.252$), alongside intrinsic outcomes like *Enhances Self-Awareness and Focus* ($f_2 = -1.024$). The spatial co-location of managerial endorsement and positive interpersonal dynamics with intrinsic cognitive benefits confirms that leadership facilitation shifts mindfulness practice from a reactive survival strategy into a proactive personal development tool.

4.4 Quantifying Structural Burden: Net Friction Index Analysis

The aggregate counts of qualitative thematic codes and sample-wide burden statistics are summarised in Table 3. Across the total sample ($N = 28$), participants endorsed 31.00 perceived benefits, 34.00 perceived enablers, and 72.00 perceived inhibitors.

Applying Equation 3 yields an overall sample Barrier-to-Benefit Ratio (R_{burden}) of 1.11, confirming that structural obstacles outweigh combined workplace facilitators and benefits by 11% across the organisation.

Table 3 Aggregate Qualitative Theme Counts and Structural Burden Ratios

Metric	Value
Total Sample Reported Benefits	31.00
Total Sample Reported Enablers	34.00
Total Sample Reported Inhibitors	72.00
Overall Barrier-to-Benefit Ratio (R_{burden})	1.11

Figure 3 illustrates the empirical distribution of individual NFI_i scores across the sample cohort. The distribution exhibits a marked right skew (mean = 0.99, $SD = 0.80$, range = 0.00 – 3.00), revealing significant operational heterogeneity in how structural friction is experienced across the workforce.

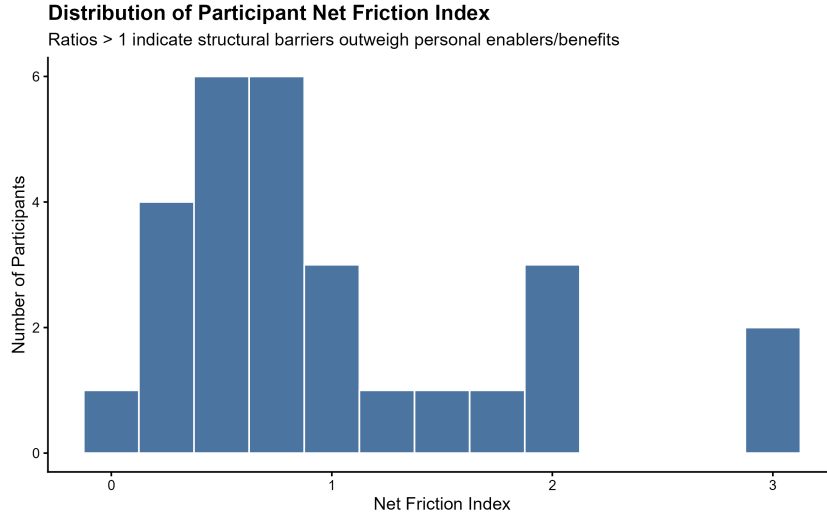


Fig. 3 Distribution of Participant Net Friction Index (NFI). Ratios greater than 1.0 denote individuals whose perceived structural inhibitors outweigh combined personal enablers and benefits.

Analysis of the distribution identifies two distinct employee subgroups:

1. **Low-to-Moderate Friction Cohort ($NFI_i < 1.0$):** Comprising 60.7% of participants ($n = 17$), this primary cluster centers between $NFI = 0.30$ and $NFI = 0.80$. For these individuals, personal job autonomy and intrinsic benefits are sufficient to absorb routine daily workplace constraints.

2. **High-Friction Outlier Cohort** ($NFI_i \geq 1.0$): Representing 39.3% of participants ($n = 11$), this subgroup experiences acute operational resistance ($1.00 \leq NFI \leq 3.00$). The upper tail ($NFI = 3.00$, $n = 2$) represents employees operating under severe scheduling rigidity, excessive workloads, and lack of designated space, where reported inhibitors are three times higher than their total available facilitators.

4.5 Demographic Subgroup Divergence

The non-parametric independence evaluation across demographic cohorts is detailed in Table 4.

Table 4 Fisher’s Exact Test Results for Qualitative Theme Endorsements Across Demographic Subgroups ($N = 28$)

Qualitative Theme Category	P-Value	Significance Status ($\alpha = 0.05$)
Stigma and Misconceptions	0.0054	Statistically Significant ($p < 0.01$)
Strict Schedule	0.0525	Borderline / Trend ($p < 0.10$)
Dearth of Time	0.1965	Non-Significant
Country Culture	0.2381	Non-Significant
Job Role	0.2850	Non-Significant
Enhances Emotional Intelligence	0.3541	Non-Significant
Competitive Work Culture	0.3553	Non-Significant
Company Culture	0.4184	Non-Significant
Job Autonomy and Job Role	0.5604	Non-Significant
Coping Stress	0.6618	Non-Significant
Strengthens Interpersonal Relationships	0.6730	Non-Significant
Uncategorised (Mobile Apps / Covid)	0.6730	Non-Significant
Low Priority due to Work	0.6730	Non-Significant
Excessive Workloads	0.6908	Non-Significant
Pause Mechanism	1.0000	Non-Significant
Enhances Self-Awareness and Focus	1.0000	Non-Significant
Proactive Leaders	1.0000	Non-Significant
Stress as a Stimulator	1.0000	Non-Significant
Good Interpersonal Relationships	1.0000	Non-Significant
Religion	1.0000	Non-Significant
Tight Deadlines	1.0000	Non-Significant
Stressful Situations	1.0000	Non-Significant
Unbalanced Work-Life	1.0000	Non-Significant
Lack of Designated Space	1.0000	Non-Significant
Leaders Not Leading by Example	1.0000	Non-Significant

The empirical findings demonstrate substantial organisational baseline consistency across the demographic spectrum. Of the 25 qualitative themes tested, 23 exhibited no statistically significant differences across demographic classifications ($p > 0.05$). This widespread non-significance demonstrates that primary perceived benefits (such as *Coping Stress* and *Enhances Self-Awareness and Focus*) and key operational inhibitors (such as *Excessive Workloads* and *Lack of Designated Space*) reflect universal, systemic workplace conditions rather than demographic artefacts.

In contrast, the analysis revealed a statistically significant demographic divergence regarding *Stigma and Misconceptions* ($p = 0.0054$), rejecting the null hypothesis of independence at the $\alpha = 0.01$ level. This indicates that social friction, peer judgment, and cultural resistance regarding mindfulness participation are concentrated within specific organisational subgroups. Additionally, *Strict Schedule* displayed a marginal statistical trend ($p = 0.0525$), suggesting that operational time rigidity varies according to employee job role and seniority levels.

4.6 Thematic Co-Occurrence Network and Centrality Analysis

To examine how personal coping mechanisms, workplace enablers, and organisational inhibitors interact within employee experiences, a thematic co-occurrence network was constructed ($K = 25$ qualitative themes across $N = 28$ transcripts). The network topology, participant endorsement counts, and node-level centrality indicators—including degree (k), strength (s), betweenness (B), and closeness (C)—are detailed in Table 5. Heatmap visualisations of pairwise co-occurrence and correlation dependencies are presented in Figure 4 and Figure 6, respectively.



Fig. 4 Thematic co-occurrence matrix heatmap with complete-linkage hierarchical clustering dendrograms, illustrating pairwise co-occurrence intensities across qualitative themes.

Table 5 Qualitative Theme Network Centrality Metrics ($N = 28$)

Qualitative Theme	Freq.	Degree (k)	Strength (s)	Betweenness (B)	Closeness (C)
<i>Top Structural Hubs & Constraints</i>					
Stigma and Misconceptions	10	21	47	1.51	0.0227
Excessive Workloads	8	20	36	6.49	0.0250
Stressful Situations	5	20	33	10.77	0.0270
Company Culture	7	19	38	3.70	0.0243
Low Priority due to Work	6	19	29	8.61	0.0270
Leaders Not Leading by Example	7	18	28	2.80	0.0240
Dearth of Time	6	18	26	3.40	0.0245
Tight Deadlines	5	16	22	2.30	0.0230
Lack of Designated Space	7	16	21	0.90	0.0220
Job Role (Inhibitor)	4	16	20	2.90	0.0235
Strict Schedule	5	15	18	0.80	0.0217
Unbalanced Work-Life	4	12	15	0.60	0.0220
<i>Top Structural Bridges & Connectors</i>					
Competitive Work Culture	5	19	24	19.09	0.0294
Religion	3	15	19	13.88	0.0270
Stress as a Stimulator	6	18	25	10.76	0.0278
Strengthens Interpersonal Rel.	6	19	27	10.70	0.0270
Proactive Leaders	3	14	18	3.50	0.0230
Country Culture	3	6	8	0.50	0.0210
<i>Top Coping Resources & Outcomes</i>					
Pause Mechanism	6	19	32	4.62	0.0256
Coping Stress	7	17	27	9.83	0.0263
Enhances Self-Awareness & Focus	6	16	22	2.30	0.0230
Enhances Emotional Intelligence	6	14	18	1.30	0.0220
Uncategorised (Apps / Covid)	6	18	24	0.90	0.0225
Good Interpersonal Relationships	3	11	14	2.60	0.0220
Job Autonomy and Job Role	3	10	12	1.60	0.0215

As depicted in Figure 5, graph decomposition reveals a distinct core-periphery network structure governing employee experiences:

1. **Core Systemic Hubs (High Degree and Strength):** The network centre is dominated by organisational constraints and perceived cultural barriers. *Stigma and Misconceptions* achieved the highest connectivity ($k = 21, s = 47$, Freq = 10), followed by *Excessive Workloads* ($k = 20, s = 36$, Freq = 8), *Stressful Situations* ($k = 20, s = 33$), and *Company Culture* ($k = 19, s = 38$). These nodes act as primary structural anchors; high edge density in this core indicates that when employees discuss workplace stress, excessive workloads are almost universally co-mentioned alongside unsupportive leadership modelling and systemic cultural pressures.

2. **Inter-Cluster Structural Bridges (High Betweenness Centrality):** Betweenness centrality identifies themes functioning as crucial conceptual pathways connecting macro-level environments to individual coping mechanisms. *Competitive Work Culture* ($B = 19.09, C = 0.0294$) yielded the highest betweenness and closeness values by a wide margin, despite moderate direct endorsement ($\text{Freq} = 5$). This highlights organisational competitiveness as the central gateway through which individual coping strategies intersect with job demands. Macro-constructs such as *Religion* ($B = 13.88$) and *Stress as a Stimulator* ($B = 10.76$) also serve as vital secondary conceptual bridges.
3. **Intermediate Coping Buffers:** Positioned around the core demand cluster are individual resources and outcomes, including *Pause Mechanism* ($k = 19, s = 32$), *Coping Stress* ($k = 17, s = 27$), and *Strengthens Interpersonal Relationships* ($k = 19, B = 10.70$). Strong links connecting these nodes to acute stress hubs indicate that mindfulness practices function as active, situational buffers deployed in direct response to workload and cultural strain.
4. **Peripheral Contextual Factors:** Macro-level constructs such as *Country Culture* ($k = 6$) and *Job Autonomy and Job Role* ($k = 10$) occupy the outer periphery, reflecting lower yet important direct co-occurrence with daily operational stressors.

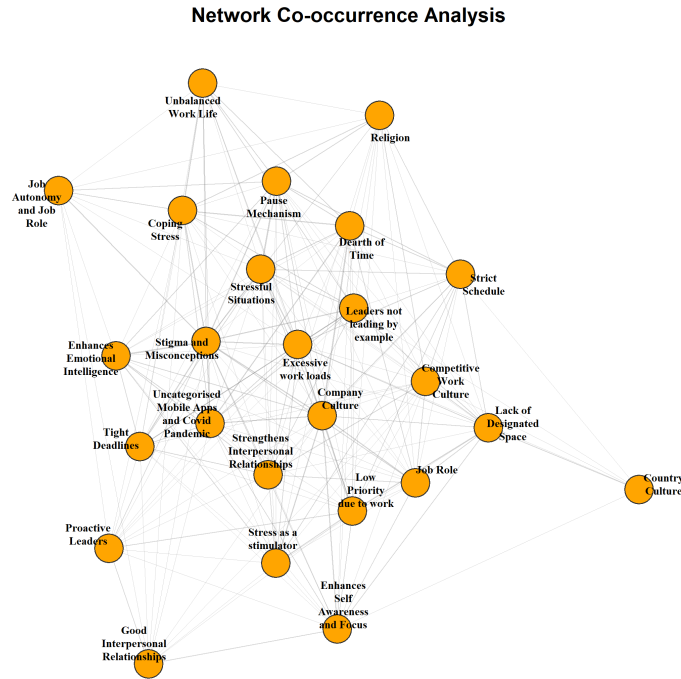


Fig. 5 Thematic Co-occurrence Network of Employee Wellbeing Benefits, Enablers, and Inhibitors (Fruchterman-Reingold force-directed layout in R).

4.6.1 Correlation Heatmap Analysis

To evaluate bivariate linear dependencies among constructs, a phi correlation analysis was conducted (Figure 6). The matrix reveals that acute stress realisation is tightly coupled with self-regulation, as evidenced by a strong positive correlation between *Stressful Situations* and *Pause Mechanism* ($r \approx 0.60 - 0.70$). This confirms that mindfulness techniques are deployed primarily as active, situational interventions during high-pressure moments rather than isolated daily routines.

Relational wellbeing demonstrated strong dependence on supportive leadership, shown by marked positive correlations between *Good Interpersonal Relationships* and *Proactive Leaders* ($r \approx 0.65$). Conversely, systemic organisational constraints (*Company Culture*, *Dearth of Time*, *Strict Schedule*) exhibited inverse relationships with positive emotional outcomes (*Enhances Emotional Intelligence*, *Strengthens Interpersonal Relationships*). Taken together, these findings provide structural evidence for the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework: while individual coping strategies mitigate acute stress responses, their broader efficacy remains bounded by overarching structural demands and workplace culture.

4.7 Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings suggest that mindfulness contributes positively to employee wellbeing through stress management, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and improved interpersonal relationships. However, the effectiveness of mindfulness appears to depend heavily on organisational resources, including leadership support, job autonomy, workplace culture, and social relationships.

The results support the view that employee wellbeing is shaped by the interaction between individual coping resources and organisational conditions. Mindfulness was consistently perceived as beneficial but insufficient on its own to address workplace stress when organisational demands exceeded available resources.

5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore employees' perceptions of mindfulness and workplace wellbeing within private-sector organisations and to examine how individual coping mechanisms interact with organisational resources to influence wellbeing outcomes. Through a mixed-method integration of thematic analysis, multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), network centrality mapping, and person-centred clustering, the findings demonstrate that while mindfulness is perceived as a valuable coping mechanism, its operational efficacy remains heavily bounded by workplace demands. These empirical results confirm that employee wellbeing emerges from the dynamic interaction between personal coping resources and structural workplace conditions rather than individual practices in isolation.

Consistent with previous research [4, 5], participants reported substantial intrinsic benefits associated with mindfulness, including emotional regulation, heightened self-awareness, and improved focus. However, network centrality analysis revealed that positive outcomes such as *Coping Stress* ($s = 27$) and *Pause Mechanism* ($s = 32$)

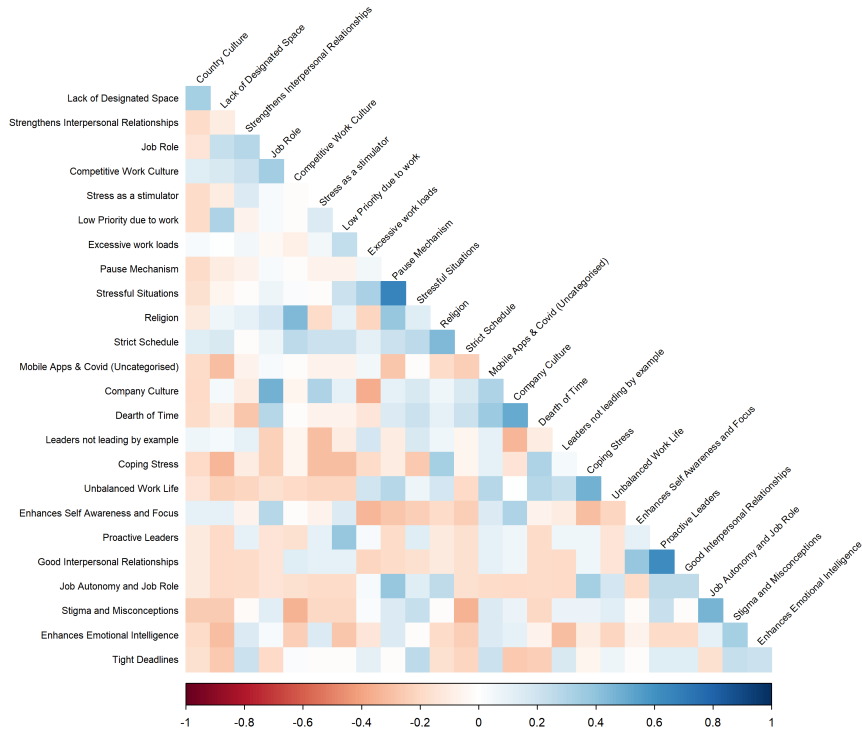


Fig. 6 Bivariate Correlation Heatmap Across Qualitative Themes.

operate primarily as intermediate buffers deployed reactively in response to acute workload pressure.

A central contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that individual mindfulness cannot compensate for unmitigated structural friction. Sample-wide burden statistics revealed an overall Barrier-to-Benefit Ratio ($R_{\text{burden}} = 1.11$), indicating that structural obstacles outweigh combined workplace facilitators and benefits by 11%. Furthermore, the distribution of the Net Friction Index (NFI) highlighted acute vulnerability in 39.3% of participants ($NFI \geq 1.0$). These findings align closely with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model [8, 9], illustrating how structural demands exhaust individual coping capacity when organisational resources are lacking.

The network topology further underscores the systemic nature of workplace stress. *Stigma and Misconceptions* emerged as the primary structural hub ($k = 21, s = 47$), while *Competitive Work Culture* yielded the highest betweenness centrality ($B = 19.09$), functioning as the critical conceptual bridge between macro-level expectations

and personal coping autonomy. This structural positioning supports criticisms of workplace wellbeing initiatives that over-emphasise individual accountability while leaving systemic demands unaddressed [6].

An important nuanced finding was that stress is not experienced uniformly as a negative phenomenon. Participants frequently framed moderate stress as a stimulator ($n = 6$), aligning with the distinction between challenge and hindrance stressors [27]. However, MCA mapping demonstrated that when challenge stressors are coupled with severe temporal constraints (*Strict Schedule*, $f_1 = -1.035$), employee agency is severely constrained.

Finally, person-centred cluster analysis ($k = 4$ PAM solution) extended existing literature by revealing substantial workforce heterogeneity. Rather than a uniform employee experience, the cohort split between a self-reliant minority and a *Systemically Constrained Majority* (64.3%, Cluster 4) marked by pervasive operational friction. The low average silhouette widths ($\bar{s} = 0.054$ to 0.114) confirm that wellbeing experiences exist along a continuous spectrum, supporting calls for tailored, multi-tiered wellbeing interventions rather than one-size-fits-all programmes.

5.1 Practical Implications

The empirical findings offer several concrete implications for managers and organisational leaders seeking to design effective workplace wellbeing strategies. Most notably, management must recognise that individual-level mindfulness interventions yield diminishing returns when implemented within high-friction operational environments ($NFI \geq 1.0$). Organisations should prioritise mitigating systemic constraints—such as excessive workload distribution, schedule rigidity, and physical space limitations—before relying on individual coping training to absorb workplace stress. Furthermore, leadership behaviors serve as a critical structural bridge for psychological safety and program engagement; given the strong co-location of managerial facilitation (*Proactive Leaders*, $f_2 = -1.252$) with positive intrinsic outcomes, organizations must train line managers to actively model mindfulness practices, reduce peer stigma ($k = 21, s = 47$), and foster open dialogue regarding mental health. Finally, organisations must transition away from standardised, one-size-fits-all wellbeing programs toward profile-specific support frameworks. Because workforce experiences exist along a continuous spectrum of structural friction, interventions should be tailored to distinct employee profiles, providing structural workload relief and designated time sanctuaries for resource-constrained groups while supporting task discretion and professional development for more autonomous cohorts.

6 Conclusion

This study explored employees' perceptions of mindfulness, workplace stress, and structural resources within private-sector organisations through an integrated qualitative and quantitative analytical framework. The empirical findings demonstrate that while mindfulness is perceived as a valuable mechanism for regulating acute stress, enhancing emotional intelligence, and improving focus, its practical efficacy depends

heavily on environmental conditions, including leadership facilitation, workplace culture, job autonomy, and social support.

Drawing on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework, the study confirms that employee wellbeing emerges from the dynamic interaction between personal coping capabilities and structural conditions. With sample-wide statistics revealing an overall Barrier-to-Benefit Ratio ($R_{\text{burden}} = 1.11$), the findings challenge the assumption that individual coping strategies alone can absorb systemic workplace friction. Moreover, network centrality mapping highlighted *Stigma and Misconceptions* ($k = 21, s = 47$) as a primary core barrier and *Competitive Work Culture* ($B = 19.09$) as the central conceptual bridge between macro-level demands and individual coping autonomy.

By incorporating a person-centred perspective via PAM cluster analysis ($k = 4$) and Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), the study highlights substantial workforce heterogeneity, contrasting a resilient minority with a dominant *Systemically Constrained Majority* (64.3%) operating under acute operational pressure. These findings contribute to the workplace wellbeing literature by demonstrating that interventions cannot adopt a universal approach, but must instead be tailored to distinct friction profiles across the employee spectrum.

Overall, the study concludes that mindfulness should function as one integrated component of a broader organisational strategy rather than a standalone remedy for structural stress. To cultivate sustainable employee wellbeing, organisations must look beyond individual resilience training and actively reconstruct work environments to remove systemic barriers, reduce operational friction, and enable employees to thrive.

7 Limitations and Future Research

Several methodological and conceptual limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. While the sample size ($N = 28$) yielded a rich qualitative corpus and sufficient thematic saturation across 25 active codes, it remains relatively modest for quantitative network and spatial mapping techniques. Consequently, the edge weights in the thematic co-occurrence network and the coordinate positions in the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) map reflect exploratory structural patterns that warrant validation across larger organisational samples.

In addition, the person-centred cluster analysis relied on Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) across Jaccard distance matrices derived from asymmetric binary code occurrences. While the $k = 4$ PAM solution offered a valuable exploratory heuristic, the low average silhouette widths ($\bar{s} = 0.054$ to 0.114) reflect substantial thematic overlap rather than discrete, mutually exclusive participant boundaries. Future research utilising larger sample sizes ($N > 200$) could employ model-based clustering frameworks, such as Latent Class Analysis (LCA) or finite mixture modelling, to identify and validate sharper latent profile typologies.

The cross-sectional reliance on self-reported qualitative interviews also introduces potential recall bias and social desirability effects, particularly regarding sensitive constructs like *Stigma and Misconceptions* ($k = 21, s = 47$) and managerial accountability. Beyond reporting biases, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences

regarding whether structural friction actively causes diminished coping efficacy or whether lower individual resilience amplifies perceived workplace constraints. Longitudinal, multi-wave research designs are needed to track how the Barrier-to-Benefit Ratio (R_{burden}) and Net Friction Index (NFI) evolve over time, particularly following structural workplace interventions.

Furthermore, the empirical scope was constrained to employees within private-sector organisations. Given that macro-environmental factors like *Country Culture* ($f_1 = -0.973$) and *Competitive Work Culture* ($B = 19.09$) exerted noticeable structural influence in our models, future comparative research should examine whether similar network topologies and friction distributions emerge within public-sector, non-profit, or cross-cultural contexts.

Finally, future research should build upon this study’s mixed-method framework by combining qualitative network analysis with objective organisational metrics, such as employee absenteeism, turnover rates, and longitudinal job performance indicators. Integrating structural equation modelling (SEM) with qualitative co-occurrence data would further clarify the precise mediating and moderating pathways connecting leadership support, workload allocation, and employee wellbeing outcomes.

8 Declarations

8.1 Human Ethics

This study involved human participants and was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles and guidelines applicable to research involving human participants. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards and guidelines of Technological University Dublin. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics and Integrity Committee of Technological University Dublin (Reference No. REIC-22-25).

8.2 Consent to Participate

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.

8.3 Consent for Publication

Not applicable. The manuscript does not contain any individually identifiable personal data, images, or other information that could identify individual participants.

8.4 Availability of Data and Materials

The interview data supporting the findings of this study were collected from participants under conditions of confidentiality and are not publicly available due to restrictions on the sharing of participant-level qualitative data. The data are therefore not available for public access.

8.5 Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

8.6 Funding

This research was funded by the Fiosraigh Scholarship awarded to B.I. by Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin).

8.7 Authors' Contributions

B.I. conducted the data gathering, developed and coded the themes, conducted the literature review, and undertook the integration and preparation of the qualitative data for analysis. T.I. conducted the statistical analyses and reported and interpreted the statistical results for incorporation into the manuscript. B.I. incorporated the statistical findings into the manuscript and contributed to the overall interpretation of the findings. T.I. and B.I. reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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