



**BRITISH ACADEMY
OF MANAGEMENT**

BAM
CONFERENCE

3RD-5TH SEPTEMBER

ASTON UNIVERSITY BIRMINGHAM UNITED KINGDOM

This paper is from the BAM2019 Conference Proceedings

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Mindfully performed organisational routines as a source of continuous change

Ranjeet Nambudiri

Professor: Indian Institute of Management Indore
Prabandh Shikhar, Rau-Pithampur Road,
Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India
Pin – 453556
Email: ranjeet@iimidr.ac.in

Rihana Shaik

Fellow: Indian Institute of Management Indore
Associate Professor: Jindal Global Business School
Prabandh Shikhar, Rau-Pithampur Road,
Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India
Pin - 453556
Email: f13rihanas@iimidr.ac.in

Manoj Kumar Yadav

Fellow: Indian Institute of Management Indore
Prabandh Shikhar, Rau-Pithampur Road,
Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India
Pin - 453556
Email: f17manojy@iimidr.ac.in

Sonakshi Gupta

Fellow: Indian Institute of Management Indore
Prabandh Shikhar, Rau-Pithampur Road,
Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India
Pin - 453556
Email: f15sonakshig@iimidr.ac.in

Title: Mindfully performed organisational routines as a source of continuous change.

Summary: This article focuses on the performative aspects of organisational routines to find an answer to debate related to stability and change dualism. It borrows the theory of mindfulness from psychology literature to state that it is the individual performance of the routines that may lead to the inertia induced stability or successful implementation of change initiatives in an organisation. The performative aspects of organisational routines are further categorised into mindless routines – mindless performance of routines, mindful routines – mindful performance of routines, and metaroutines – collective mindfulness while performing routines. Later, a conceptual argument is made to propose a relationship between performative aspects of organisational routines, organisational inertia, and continuous form of change. It proposes that it is the mindless performance of routines that lead to inertial pressure, while the mindful and collectively mindful performance of routines eases the inertial pressure leading to successful implementation of small but incremental continuous changes in the organisation.

Keywords: Organisational routines, mindful routines, mindless routines, metaroutines, organisational inertia, organisational change

Word Count: 5768 (excluding references)

INTRODUCTION

Today's organisations are functioning in a turbulent and dynamic environment; their survival rests upon their ability of how quickly they can embrace the change and become adaptive. Even if managers know the need for change, they fail to bring in the same and is regarded as one of the primary reasons for the failure of incumbent firms (Johnson 1988; Gilbert 2005). In fact, in the extant literature, organisational change and adaptation are regarded as one of the central research issues (Greenwood & Hinings 1996; Van de Ven & Poole 1995; Weick & Quinn 1999).

Thus, organisational change is the norm in the current environmental settings of the significantly intense globalised era. Ironically, the importance of stability which also is associated with the survivability of the organisations is neither new nor dying concept. Insights from the researchers in the past are suggestive of developing the capacity of ambidexterity within the organisations, i.e., organisations ability to exploit during stable environmental phase through processes like scripts (Ashforth & Freid 1988), routines (O'Reilly III & Tushman 2013) and routine led inertia (Kelly & Amburgey 1991) and its ability to explore in the event of major environmental uncertainty scenarios (O'Reilly III & Tushman 2011). Much of the behaviour and activities in the organisations are of non-thinking variety (Weiss & Ilgen 1985), which further affirms the existence of mindlessly performed routines.

The very features that give stability to an organisation may be the ones that cause resistance to change in the long run. One such concept 'organisational inertia' which provides a survival advantage to an organisation in a stable environment may be the cause of its extinction/exit during environmental disruptions (Dew, Goldfarb, & Sarasvathy 2006). Moreover, one of the reasons for failure to survive is operating routines of the past that successfully cushioned the organisations in a relatively stable environment. However, does this concept of environmental stability holds good in even today's ever-changing environmental pressures. If not, should organisations strive to wipe away all the routines as inertia created out of such routines may not work for the long run? Do organisational routines still hold the merits and demerits that past researchers attributed to it (Weiss & Ilgen 1985; Feldman 2000; Feldman & Pentland 2003)?

To find an answer to the questions raised, the psychology literature on minding as initiated by Langer (1989) and later by Levinthal and Rerup (2006) was borrowed. The paper also attempts to engage the literature on organisational routines with routines led inertia and organisational change. The paper acknowledges the existence of a debate on routine as stability providing mechanism and routine as a harbinger of change and accepts the duality alternative as presented by Farjoun (2010). Farjoun (2010) contended that both stability and change are interdependent and mutually enabling. In order to reconcile the said alternative, the paper argues that based on the levels of attention and active thinking involve in performing organisational routines; routines can further be classified as either mindless or mindful routines along with the concept of metaroutines (Adler, Goldoftas & Levine 1999). It is further argued that the mindlessness or mindfulness with which the individual performs the organisational routines affects the change processes in the organisation either positively or negatively. While mindless routine – mindlessness in performing routines, may affect the ongoing change processes in an organisation negatively due to positive mediation from organisational inertia, it is expected that mindful routines – mindfulness in performing routines, will affect the ongoing change processes in the opposite direction. It is the

mindfulness with which an organisation performs its routines that will not only help in adapting to the new and required change initiatives but also provide stability by rationalising the continuation of old but successful routine practices. Thus, enabling the duality alternative as presented by Moshe Farjoun in 2010. Thus, rather than asking the popular question in academics that whether routine causes change or hamper it, this paper derives from the theory of mindfulness and provides a mechanism of how a particular routine may be the cause for both change and inertial pressure at the same time.

Thus, this paper is an attempt to propose a more holistic yet specific model involving routines, inertia, organisational change and their interaction. Hence this paper attempts to reconcile the conflicting findings of the past and recent research findings. Thereby, present more specific implications of routines over inertia and changes by analysing the type of routines and its overall impact on continuous change. In the sections to come, the literature on organisational routines and change, organisational routines and inertia, and mindlessness and mindfulness about organisational routines are briefly revisited. Next, the paper presents the proposed model and the derived propositions. Finally, the discussion section will briefly cover the theoretical and practical contributions of the paper, and future research directions before concluding.

ORGANISATIONAL ROUTINES AND CHANGE

Organisational Routines: Traditionally organisational routines has been employed to understand organisational stability, continuity, and inflexibility (Nelson & Winter 1982; Hannan & Freeman 1983; Gersick & Hackman 1990). However, recently it has been now attributed as one of the sources of organisational change and flexibility (Feldman 2000; Feldman & Pentland 2003; Rerup & Feldman 2011). Nelson and Winter (1982, p.96) when first coined the term organisational routines, defined it as the "source of continuity in the behavioural patterns of organisations." According to them, routines are those patterns or blueprints of activity that can be brought into play repeatedly by members and subunits of an organisation. Sidney Winter (1964, p.263) defined a routine as "pattern of behaviour that is followed repeatedly, but subject to change if conditions change." In the extant literature, routines are extensively credited with being able to store tacit knowledge (e.g., Winter 1994; Teece & Pisano, 1994); this observation was also supported by various empirical studies (e.g., Costello 2000; Dowell & Swaminathan, 2000). In his review of the literature on organisational routines, Becker (2004) identified two different interpretations of the term 'routine' in the extant literature – one interpretation is routines as behavioural regularities, and the other interpretation is routines as cognitive regularities. Under behavioural regularities routines are described as 'recurrent interaction patterns,' and under cognitive regularities, routines are seen as rules, and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Organisational Change: It implies the creation of an imbalance in the existing pattern or situation. Change is the process by which organisations move from their present state to some desired future state to increase their effectiveness (Jones 2013). In a more general sense "change is a phenomenon of time. It is the way people talk about the event in which something appears to become, or turn into, something else, where the 'something else' is seen as a result or outcome" (Ford & Ford, 1994, p.759). The fundamental objective of change is to find superior ways of using resources and capabilities in order to enhance the organisation's ability to create value. Change reconfigures components of an organisation to increase efficiency and effectiveness; it enables alteration of an organisation's - environment, structure, culture, technology, or people (Decenzo & Robbins 2005). Change occurs more because of selection

and replacement than organisational transformation (Hannan & Freeman, 1977, 1984). As indicated by Weick and Quinn (1999), change may be episodic, discontinuous, and intermittent and change may be continuous, evolving, and incremental. From a macro level analysis, the events and activities of organisations look like repetitive action resulting in routines and inertia spotted with an occasional period of revolutionary change. However, from a micro level perspective, the events and activities of organisations hint adaptation and adjustment in progress. Though such alterations and adjustments are small, Orlikowski (1996) views them as the core of organisational change.

Routines are fundamental to understand organisational change (Becker et al. 2005). Cohen and Bacdayan (1994) claimed that organisational routines act as a procedural memory of the organisations stored initially in the mind of individual performing the same. As individual differs in their ability to store, retrieve, and infer from what they reflect from their past experiences of routines, routines are bound to change. Later, Feldman and Pentland (2003) classified organisational routines into ostensive routines - an ideal/schematic form of routine and performative routines – routines in practice. They were the first to acknowledge that organisational routines are the source for both stability and change. They further stated that it is the ostensive aspect in routines which leads to stability and performative aspects in routines leads to change and flexibility (Feldman & Pentland 2003). Hence, the current study focuses on the performative aspects of routines, i.e., how it is performed and classified as mindfully performed routines and mindlessly performed routines.

On the one hand, while organisational routines were found to cause *organisational change*, on the other, it was also causally attributed to an *organisational change* in the extant literature. However, there exists little evidence to prove that organisational routines may lead to continuous change. Though, extant literature has not discussed if it can have any effect on episodic changes. Therefore the current study is limited to only focusing on the mechanisms that may better explain how organisational routines are related to small, incremental and continuous change. The relation between organisational routines and episodic change is left to be explored by the future researchers as explained in the section on future research directions.

ORGANIZATIONAL ROUTINES AND INERTIA

Inertia is defined as “an overarching concept that encompasses personal commitments, financial investments, and institutional mechanisms supporting the current way of doing things” (Huff, Huff & Thomas 1992, p.55). Sull (1999) talked about active inertia - the pattern of behaviour wherein aggressive investment can be done in resources but fail to adopt underline routine. As pointed by Hannan and Freeman (1984, p.151) “structures of organizations have high inertia when the speed of reorganization (core feature change) is much lower than the rate at which environmental conditions change”. Inertia has also been looked as the ‘inability to enact internal change in the phase of significant external change’ (Miller & Friesen 1980; Tushman & Romanelli 1985). According to the structural Inertia theory of Hannan and Freeman (1984), inertia varies with organisational age and size.

Gilbert (2005) demonstrated that inertia could be divided into two categories:

- i. Resource rigidity: is associated with failure to change resource investment patterns (Christensen & Bower 1996). It usually occurs due to resource dependency and incumbent reinvestment incentives. Resource rigidity is concerned with movement along a line.

- ii. Routine rigidity: is associated with failure to change the organisational processes that use those resource investments (Nelson & Winter 1982; Leonard-Barton 1992). Routine rigidity deals with the trajectory of line. Routine rigidity stems from three intermediate behaviours that arise from threat induced response –
 “contraction of authority reduced experimentation, and focus on existing resources”
 (Gilbert 2005, p.743).

These are self-reinforcing behaviours which lead to extreme routine rigidity, due to which managers adhere to familiar routines and behavioural patterns.

Hannan and Freeman (1984) classified the factors that affect the inertial pressure on organisations into *internal factors* – Sunk cost in the plant, equipment and personnel, dynamics of political coalitions, and the tendency for precedents to become normative standards; and *external factors* – a threat to legitimacy, and loss of institutional support. They further concluded that due to a variety of inertial factors, organisations rarely make significant adaptive changes and that changes in organisational populations are disruptive (Hannan & Freeman 1977; 1984).

As Hannan and Freeman (1984) theorised, organisations might have multiple routines; they shift from one routine (or set of routines) to another in a mechanical fashion. They also pointed out ‘collective knowledge’ as the basis for organisational routines, on the same lines. Weick (1990) also posited that the disruption of routines occur when members start acting individually. Recurrence is the key characteristic of routines (e.g., Winter 1990; Cohen et al. 1996). Due to their recurring nature routines provide stability, which helps in predictability, predictability, in turn, aids coordination process in organisations (e.g., Cyert & March 1963; Nelson & Winter 1982). However, due to this stability providing the effect of routines, routines continue to exist despite negative performance feedback (e.g., Rumelt 1995; In Hirshleifer & Welch 1998 as cited in Becker 2004); they also lead to inertia (Becker 2004) due to overlooking performance feedback. Organisations have high inertia both in the sets of routines employed and in the set of rules used to switch between routines (Hannan & Freeman 1984).

MINDFULNESS VS MINDLESSNESS AND ORGANISATIONAL ROUTINES

“Mindfulness is linked with a set of cross-cultural principles and practices originating in Asia more than 2500 years ago that have parallel manifestations in numerous cultures in the world”
 (Garland 2013, p.439).

Mindfulness in current literature is more used as a psychological phenomenon. More often it is endorsed as “*state of mind*” (Langer 1989), “*heightened level of self-awareness*” (Brown & Ryan 2003), and “*unique quality of consciousness*” (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell 2007). Mindfulness and mindlessness were first introduced in the literature of psychology in an individualistic perspective by Ellen J. Langer in 1989. Since, then the extant literature has grown substantially not only in the field of psychology but also in the related area of literature like sociology, anthropology, and management. Langer (1989) approached mindfulness and mindlessness as two distinct but opposite state of minds using minimal information processing approach and conscious consideration. In fact, according to Langer (1989) mindlessness is not only about individual giving less attention to a piece of information but also about information even when processed not available to the individual for conscious consideration.

“In much of everyday life, people rely on distinctions drawn in the past; they overly depend on structures of situations representative of the underlying meaning without making new distinctions. This mindlessness holds the world still and prevents an awareness that things could be otherwise” (Langer 1989, p.137).

Thus, mindlessness is characterised by a reduced level of attention, effort, cognitive and affective awareness, and information processing (Langer 1989). For Langer (1989), mindfulness not only qualitatively but also quantitatively differs from mindlessness. Hence for him, “mindfulness is expressed in active information processing, characterised by cognitive differentiation: the creation of categories and distinctions” (Langer 1989, p.138). Garland (2013) summarised the operationalisation of mindfulness in extant literature into three major categories – mindfulness as a *state*, *practice*, and *trait*.

- *Mindfulness as a state*: “a naturalistic mindset characterised by an attentive and nonjudgmental metacognitive monitoring of moment-by-moment cognition, emotion, perception, and sensation without fixation on thoughts of past and future” (Garland 2013, p.440).
- *Mindfulness as practice*: “repeated placement of attention onto an object while alternately acknowledging and letting go of distracting thoughts and emotion” (Garland 2013, p.440).
- *Mindfulness as a trait*: “characterised as the propensity toward exhibiting nonjudgmental, nonreactive awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, experiences, and actions in everyday life” (Garland 2013, p.440).

At organisational level mindfulness was constituted as ‘*collective*’ mindfulness (Jordan, Messner & Becker 2009). Jordan, Messner, and Becker (2009) suggested that at dyadic and small group level mindfulness can be manifested in direct interactions, while at organisational level rules and routines that help in organisational mindfulness such as metaroutines – routines to change to routines (Adler, Goldoftas & Levine 2003). Adler et al. (2003) stated that metaroutines helps in systematising the creative process.

PROPOSED MODEL

Conceptualising the performative aspects of organisational routines: As stated earlier, Langer (1989) identified distinguishing characteristics of mindful and mindless activities. These include the level of attention, information processing, effort, and affective and cognitive awareness. While mindlessness is characterised by the reduced levels of all these activities, mindfulness operates at a higher level. Levinthal and Rerup (2006), however, were of the view to call mindlessness as ‘*less mindful behaviour*’ as they suggested that even mindless behaviour under certain circumstances require considerable intelligence and may also lead to higher performances. For them, there exist mindfulness and mindlessness in both the performative (actual performance) and ostensive aspects (abstractions) of routines as categorised by Feldman and Pentland (2003). Thus, Levinthal and Rerup’s classification of mindful and less mindful behaviour implies that they are both complimentary rather than antithesis as implied in Langer’s (1989) classification of mindfulness and mindlessness. However, Levinthal and Rerup’s classification further implies that mindful behaviour leads “*to effectively carrying out novel action in a flexible manner*” (Levinthal & Rerup 2006, p.503) and less mindful behaviour leads to effectively carrying out “*routine-driven behaviour*” (Levinthal & Rerup 2005).

In this study, we argue that mindfulness during the performance of even routine-driven task will not only lead to the superior performance of the routine but also negate the inertial pressure leading to continuous and incremental organisational change. Thus, our constitution of mindful and mindless routine stands to be significantly different from earlier formulations and focuses on the performative aspects of routines and not non-routine tasks. Therefore, rather than being complementary as in Levinthal and Rerup's conceptualisation, our constitution of mindful and mindless routines are the antithesis. Thus, the current study derives from Langer's study and defines two types of routines – mindless routines and mindful routines. It also acknowledges and includes metaroutines as the third type of routine as coined by Adler, Goldoftas and Levine (1999).

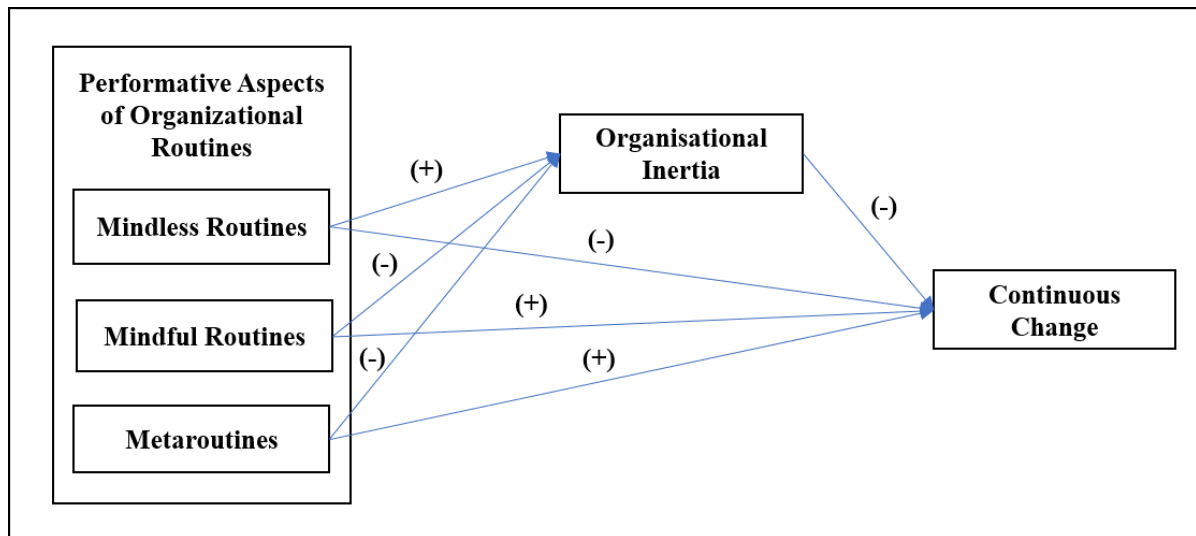


Figure 1: The Proposed Model: Relationship between performative aspects of organisational routines and continuous change mediated by organisational inertia.

Proposition 1: Organisational routines are of three types, viz.; *mindless routines*, *mindful routines*, and *metaroutines*.

- **Mindless Routines** – It involves individual/group performing routines with a reduced level of attention, information processing, effort, and cognitive and affective awareness. Mindless routines can be initiated at all levels – individual, group (habitual routine defined as routine operating at group level by Gersick and Hackman (1990)), and organisational levels. At an individual level, it involves non-thinking habits while performing behaviour after countless repetition. Routines operating at the group level was termed as habitual routine by Gersick and Hackman (1990). Organisational factors like strict supervisory control and a strong emphasis on adherence to the pre-written script can also lead to mindless routines at an individual and group level, eventually making it an organisation-wide phenomenon.
- **Mindful Routines** – It involves individual/group performing routines with a higher level of attention, information processing, effort, and cognitive and affective awareness. Feldman and Pentland (2003) argued that the performative aspect of routine – specific action by specific people at a specific time and places that bring routines to life, leads to different interpretation by different people performing the said routines. They further argue that the performative aspects

lead to creation, maintenance, and modifications of routines. We argue that this occurs when people perform routines in a mindful state.

- Metaroutines – Routines to change established routines and/or inventing new routines (Adler, Goldoftas & Levine 2003). For example, the routinised meetings of the members of the quality circles, various committees, and so forth to discuss and evaluate the established routines and propose changes therein.

It should be noted, however, that though the nomenclature suggests otherwise, the mindless and mindful routine is not about certain qualities in a routine that makes it mindful or mindless. Instead, it is about the state of the individual when performing routines. It is also interesting to note that the three categories can be scaled on a continuum from being mindless to mindful to being collectively mindful while performing routines.

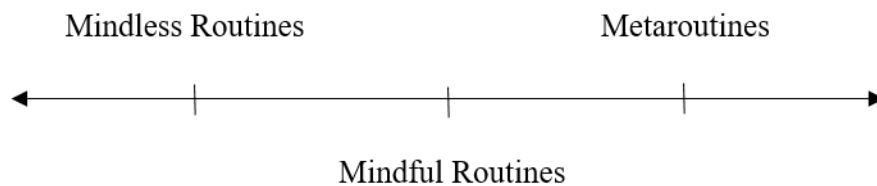


Figure 2: Continuum of performative aspects of organisational routines

Types of organisational routines and organisational inertia: “To understand organisational change one must first understand organisational inertia, its content, its tenacity, its interdependencies” (Weick & Quinn 1999, p.382). A general agreement among researchers is that routines lead to inertia (Kelly & Amburgey 1991). Kelly and Amburgey (1991) argued that standardised routines lead to reproducible structures initiating inertia which may inversely impact the core change attempt of the organisation causing failure in the change initiative. Secondly, Hannan and Freeman (1984) suggested that reliability and accountability pressure demands for standardised routines. As organisational routines stay while offering advantages of stability and reproducibility, they generate pressures against change. This will further substantiate that when standardised routines are followed diligently without any individual interference, it may create inertial pressure. Similarly, Gilbert (2005) while unbundling organisational inertia brought two distinct categories of rigidity – *resource* and *routine*, that may create threat perceptions of inertia on change. Routine rigidity – “failure to change organisational processes” (Gilbert 2005, p.741) leads even the managers of the organisation to fall prey to the established patterns of responses instead of employing new search efforts (Gilbert 2005). Thus, organisations with past experiences of stability, reproducibility, and success may exhibit inattention – reduced levels of information gathering and processing, and thereby generating inertia.

One explanation for this lies in the conceptualisation of organisational memory. Organisational memory is "a repository for collective insights contained within policies, procedures, routines, and rules that can be retrieved when needed" Day (1994, p. 44). Routines are the "source of continuity in the behavioural patterns of organisations" Nelson and Winter (1982, p.96). From the above discussion, memory can be encoded in the form of routines; it can be seen as a repository of routines or collection of routines (Day 1994; Moorman & Miner 1997). Procedural memory essentially involves routines (Anderson 1983). Hence “One way of conceiving of routines is as organisational memory-an organisation's repertoire of routines is the set of collective actions that it can do from memory” (Hannan & Freeman 1984, p.154). Thus, routines occupy “the crucial nexus between structure and actions, between organisation

as an object and organising as a process” (Pentland & Rueter 1994, p.484). These procedural memories of routines can be scripted, readily available, and sufficiently practised by the employees in the organisations. The choice is with the employee to follow the routines mindlessly or mindfully. If the employees choose to perform routines mindlessly, routines can still be conducted effectively. However, chances of sensing any need for change will minimise strengthening organisational inertia. The choice to perform routines mindlessly may also get strengthened with every success in the past (Miller 1994). Thus, while not all forms of routines may lead to inertia, but some of these routines apparently those performed mindlessly are expected to affect the routines in an organisation positively.

However, room for sensing opportunities and threats available in both the internal and external environment strengthens when routines are followed mindfully. Mindfulness engages the individual in active thinking in real time. Levinthal and Rerup (2006) stated that mindful behaviour helps in identifying new opportunities from the context and also in recognising any deviance from the conduction of action. The recognition of new opportunities will ensure that individual identify the need for changes within routines conducted and seek changes in them. Therefore, in contrast to the relationships that exist between mindless routines and inertia, it is expected that mindful routines will constrain organisational inertia in the long run.

Drawing from the conceptualization of mindlessness and mindfulness, organisational memory, literature on standardized organisational routines on inertia and resultant effect on organisational change (Kelly & Amburgey 1991; Hannan & Freeman 1984; Gilbert 2005; Feldman & Pentland 2003; Feldman 2000), we argue that while mindless routines may lead to inertia, mindful and meta- routines may lead to easing inertial pressure.

Proposition 2a: Mindless routines will lead to higher levels of organisational inertia at a longer run.

Proposition 2b: Mindful routines and metaroutines will lead to reduced levels of organisational inertia in the long run.

Types of organisational routines and organisational change: Studies conducted more recently have recognised the role of routines as a continuous source of change (Feldman & Pentland 2003). Additionally, Feldman (2006) observed that organisational routines could have a positive effect on continuous change in organisations. She found that when an individual who performs the routines, he or she not only performs the routine but also reflect upon the performed routines. These individual reflections then lead to the development of organisational learning model engaged through organisational routines. She stated that the model so developed involve systematised planning, internalised action, shared outcomes, and externalised ideals as its four components. Thus, routines provide a window to the drivers underlying change. Hence, they are enabled to map the organisational change – as an incremental change of the routines themselves (Becker 2004).

Reflections are considered to be critical in transformative learning, which requires an individual to challenge previous methods of thinking and doing things rather than just accepting and adapting to them (Jordan, Messner & Becker 2009). Jordan, Messner, and Becker (2009) also stated that mindfulness is an essential prerequisite to reflection. Thus, when routines are followed mindlessly without reflecting upon them, it may lead to higher organisational inertia and less likelihood to perceive the need for even small changes. In contrast, when routines are mindfully reflected before conduction, it is expected that it will

constrain organisational inertia and strengthen the likelihood of bringing required and positive changes in the organisation.

Inertia is a central feature of the analytic framework associated with episodic change (Weick & Quinn 1999). Weick and Quinn (1999) reckon that inertia is a force to contend with when planning an episodic change. They further contend that episodic changes are far from being complete. Hence, large scale planned episodic change should either be avoided or planned before execution. Additionally, there exists evidence in the extant literature that advocates the existence of a positive relationship between performative aspects of the routine and continuous change. Therefore, the current study defers from incorporating the episodic change in the current model. Hence, it is expected that:

Proposition 3a: Mindless routines caused organisational inertia restrains small continuous changes in the organisation.

Proposition 3b: Mindful routines and metaroutines will reduce the levels of organisational inertia and thereby will facilitate small continuous change in the organisation.

DISCUSSION

It is almost accepted in extant literature, that performative aspects of organisational routines are susceptible to change as much as that the performance may vary from individual to individual. It will vary because each differs in how they perceive and infer from the ostensive aspects of the routines presented to them. However, extant literature also provides evidence to support that organisational routines cause stability by enabling reproducibility of itself. This implies, that even though individual differs in their perception and inference of ostensive aspects of routines, they do it in the same manner. Thus, at the hindsight, while it seems that perceptual differences should ease inertial pressure, it continues to strengthen it — this inertial pressure than is expected to be manifested through restraining all forms of organisational change. Thus, evidence exists in the literature which supports the formalisation of routines as both enablers and disablers of organisational change mediated through organisational inertia.

The current paper aims to answer the debate by incorporating the concept of mindfulness and mindlessness within the performative aspects of organisational routines. It proposes that the involvement of individual in routines may vary from being mindless to being mindful to being collectively mindful (formalisation of metaroutines at the dyads, groups or organisational level). Thus, an individual may have a different opinion and way of performing a particular routine. However, if he/she continues to perform mindlessly, there will not be any disturbances to status quo building incremental inertial pressure with every successful attempt (Miller 1994). In contrast, if an individual remains mindful of even performing the routine-driven activities in an organisation, the differences in perception and action will come into play. This will make individual to continuously inquire each part of action prescribed in the scripts of the routine with the context in which the routines are applied. As mindfulness “helps organisations to notice more issues, process these issues with care, and detect and respond to early signs of trouble” (Rerup 2005).

Hence, the current paper unlike Levinthal and Rerup’s (2006) conceptualisation of mindful behaviour for novel activities and less mindful behaviour for routine-driven activities, conceptualises that routinised activities can itself reduce the pressure of inertia and bring about

necessary small incremental changes (if not large episodic changes) when performed mindfully or vice-versa. We also depart from the Levinthal and Rerup's conceptualisation of mindful and less mindful and fell back on Langer's conceptualisation of mindful and mindless behaviour when categorising only performative aspects of organisational routines. Firstly, Langer (1989) defined mindless behaviour as behaviour characterised by less/reduced levels of attention and information processing and not a complete absence of attention and information processing. Secondly, we, therefore, suppose mindless and mindful behaviour at least while performing organisational routines falls under the same continuum varying from being mindless to being mindful to being collectively mindful (metaroutines). Thus, the current categorisation of performative aspects of organisational routines to mindless, mindful, and meta- routines changes the direction of the debate of whether organisational routines causes inertia or change. From whether inertia or change, it focuses on how an organisational routine may lead to stability and inertia both in the long run. Thus, this conceptualisation helps in understanding how can the same routines be a reason to better meet environmental demands by continuously adapting to the situation by easing inertial pressure and changing incrementally.

Theoretical Implications: The paper as mentioned above helps to resolve the debate on whether routines restrains or facilitate change by actually departing away from this question. Instead, it attempted to answer what aspects of organisational routines leads to inertial pressure and what aspect will contribute to successful change attempts. In doing so, it suggests ensuring that each routine is performed mindfully and not mindlessly. A periodic check on routines through scheduled metaroutine related meetings may further help the cause. It also helps in understanding how mindlessly performed routines may further aggravate the inertial pressure in an organisation. At the same time, the mindful performance of routines will help in easing out the inertial pressure. As evident from the extant literature, the more the inertial pressure, the more will be the change initiatives restrained.

Similarly, the less the inertial pressure, the more will the change initiatives facilitated. However, as mindfulness cannot be achieved all the time entirely, we propose that it will have an incremental effect on change only. Thus, the model proposes a positive relationship between mindfulness and continuous change. We mindfully refrain ourselves in claiming any relation between mindfulness and large scale episodic change. Though, there exist some evidence as to how inertial pressure contends episodic changes (Weick & Quinn 1999). The paper also incorporates both the pros and cons of organisational routines within same model unlike many previous attempt by academicians to focus either on pros (Feldman & Pentland 2003; Adler, Goldoftas & Levine 1999; Feldman 2000) or cons (Hannan & Freeman 1983; Kelley & Amburgey 1991; Miller 1994; Miller & Chen 1994) except few studies (Gersick & Hackman 1990; Weiss & Ilgen 1985).

Practical Implications: The paper offers some learning to the practising managers at an individual level and the organisations at large. Instead of finding an answer to debate on whether the list of routines followed in the organisation will cause inertia and hamper future change initiatives, they can encourage themselves and others to perform routines assigned to them mindfully. At an organisational level constitution of metaroutines will further disable the inertial pressure and ease the implementation of change initiatives. However, to achieve the mindful performance of routines by each is easier said than done. One cannot have complete mindfulness on each aspect of the routine-driven task. In order to achieve maximum mindfulness, managers can switch individuals from the task that are routine-driven to tasks that are novel rather frequently (Adler, Goldoftas & Levine 1999). This will ensure that the

individual does not lose mindfulness. As being mindful is effortless (Langer 1989) but switching from mindfulness to mindlessness and vice-versa is not easier (Louis & Sutton 1991; Langer 1989). Thus, the job situations have to incorporate those tasks which cannot be performed without active thinking. Similarly, to generate mindfulness from large group learning from the clinician school of psychology may help. Sell (2008) recommended that the intention and motivation that one brings to a group may affect the effort to make individuals in the large group to be engaged in mindful behaviour. Sell (2008) suggest to form an agreement between group facilitator (managers in organisations) with all the individuals regarding “basic rules, expectations and intentions of the group” (p.269) and facilitating speech between participants performing routines. As communication barriers like a restriction to discuss, and access to enabling physical space between individuals performing routine tasks may affect the mindfulness intended from them (Sell 2008). When organising formal metaroutines, managers should take detail care of these facilitators.

Future Research Directions: This paper offers propositions based on some previously untested relationships propositions. It contributes uniquely to proposing mindful and mindless routines which need to be empirically tested. Similarly, future researchers in the area get a different direction from the propositions to test the effects of different types of performative aspects of routines on a specific type of change, i.e., continuous change. Though, researchers can also look to explore the workability of the model proposed in this paper by both substituting episodic change from continuous change or adding one more variable – episodic change, to the model. An empirical analysis of how often employees are engaged in mindfully or mindlessly performing the organisational routines can further substantiate the categorisation of a routine provided in the paper.

Conclusion: This article is an introductory exploration of performative aspects of organisational routines and its relation to inertial pressure and small but incremental and continuous change initiatives in an organisation. It provides a conceptual model after borrowing from mindfulness theory stating that routines performed mindfully can be a better source of continuous change. It further offers a continuum to performative aspects of organisational routines ranging from being mindless to being mindful to being collectively mindful. Thus, the performative aspects of routines are classified into mindless routines, mindful routines, and metaroutines.

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