Application of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) approach to construction professionals

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Purpose: Stress influences not only individual health and performance, but also project profitability and organizational development. In order to well manage the stress in the industry, the study introduces a mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) approach to construction professionals. MBSR focuses on the progressive obtainment of mindful and non-evaluative awareness in various aspects of individual lives, including physical sensations, perceptions, thoughts, imagery, and so on. Through MBSR practices, construction professionals are expected to alleviate individual physical and psychological disorders. This presentation, thus, investigates the impact of MBSR characteristics on the stress of construction professionals.

Design: Based on extensive literature, a questionnaire survey was designed to investigate the relationship between the characteristics of MBSR and the stress of construction professionals. In the end, 84 respondents returned. Reliability analysis and Pearson correlation were adopted by using the software SPSS version 19.0.

Findings: This paper has identified 12 main characteristics of MBSR (i.e., attention, present focus, acceptance, patience, beginner's mind, trust, self-compassion, non-reaction, non-judging, non-striving, letting go and description) and two types of stress (i.e., work stress and emotional stress). The results of correlation indicated that (1) work stress was significantly negatively associated with non-striving; (2) emotional stress is negatively related to description, non-judging, trust and letting go, but positively related to attention; and (3) work stress and emotional stress is positively related. Therefore, MBSR characteristics such as non-striving, description, non-judging, trust and letting go can help reduce the stress level of construction professionals, while attention might aggravate emotional problems of construction professionals.

Originality/Value: Based on the findings, several practical recommendations are proposed. To manage stress and improve job performance, a systematic 8-week MBSR therapy including multiple mindfulness skills (such as body scan, mindfulness sitting and breathing) is, thus, strongly recommended to the construction professionals. The results are expected to cultivate construction professionals with stress management skills for handling their complicated work tasks and emotional problems.

Biography

Leung has more than twenty years of practical/teaching experience in the construction industry/education and has participated in a number of prestigious construction projects in Hong Kong. She is a Chartered Quantity Surveyor in RICS, UK and HKIS, HK and a Charted Builder in CIOB, UK and AIB, Australia. She successfully completed all three levels of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction training in HK, Australia and US. Currently, she is a chairman of the Hong Kong Institute of Value Management (HKIVM). She is a Certified Value Specialist of the SAVE International ‘The Value Society’ in USA and a HKIVM (List A) facilitator for VM workshops internationally. Her current researches cover stress management, construction project management, value management, facility management, and construction education. She has attracted over HK$ 15.6 million as investigator in 44 professional and research projects over 10 years. There are over 150 international publications in construction engineering and management at present. Recently, she has obtained the Fulbright-RGC Senior Research Scholar Award issued by the Hong Kong-America Center and the UGC, which will further support her research at the University of Southern California and the University of Pennsylvania in the USA for over six months this year.

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