

Master thesis

**Characteristics of mindful
organizational email communication**

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Abstract

Background. Mindful communication has proven to increase communication effectiveness in numerous fields of study, but has yet to be researched in the organizational context. This study takes the first step into this direction by exploring how mindful communication is characterized in organizational emails, and if attributes of the sender and email message influence the participant's decision to respond mindful- or mindlessly.

Methods. This exploratory study is of a descriptive nature and the data is collected by means of an open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire presented participants with ten fictional emails, which were based on eight variable templates (attributes of the sender and email message: professional relationship, gender, attitude, mindfulness, show of emotions, gossip, amount of questions, and formality). Office-workers ($n=9$) and mindfulness experts ($n=7$) were asked to reply to five fictional emails in a mindful fashion, and to five mindlessly. The resulting 160 responses were qualitatively analysed to explore differences between mindful and mindless responses. Quantitative analyses were performed to test if the average length of mindful responses differed from mindless responses, and if the sender and email message attributes influenced the participant's decision to respond in a mindful or mindless fashion.

Results. The qualitative analysis resulted in 18 phrase codes over three categories (communication skills, awareness of self, awareness of other) that differentiated mindful emails from mindless. No significant differences were found between office-workers' and mindfulness experts' mindful and mindless responses in terms of how they formulated these phrases. The quantitative analyses showed that office-workers' mindful responses were significantly longer than their mindless counterparts, the same was found for mindfulness experts. Analysis of the sender and email message attributes showed that a number of variables significantly influenced the participant's decision to respond mindful- or mindlessly: professional relationship, gender, attitude, and show of emotions.

Conclusion. Mindful email communication in an organizational context is characterized by its length and usage of certain phrase types, and sender and email message attributes influence if the receiver will respond in a mindful or mindless fashion. These findings can be used as a first step towards identifying mindful communication on an organizational scale, to prepare for studying the effects of mindful email communication on organizational communication effectiveness. A different field of research may further study how sender and email message attributes further impact the receiver's decision to respond in a mindful or mindless fashion.

1 – Introduction

An international study of hidden costs of communication barriers in SMB's (small and medium sized businesses) found that a SMB with 100 employees could be losing over half a million dollars per year as a result of these barriers (SIS, 2009). The communication barriers a single knowledge worker experiences could cost a SMB up to 50.000 dollars per year, and such a worker will spend around 17.5 hours per week addressing these barriers (SIS, 2009). Clearly, improving communication effectiveness would be most beneficial to businesses.

Mindful communication is a communication method that improves awareness of differences between communicators, and of their own thoughts. It aims to improve communication effectiveness and according to Goldstein (1993) mindful communication achieves that goal. He writes that, in the field of communication training, mindful communication makes it possible to “initiate effective communication”. Others make similar claims on behalf of mindful communication in different fields of study: The field of intercultural communication named mindful communication critical for achieving effective intercultural communication (Chang, 2013; Gudykunst 1993, 1995, 2005; Imahori & Cupach 2005; Spitzberg & Cupach 1984; Ting- Toomey 2005; Wiseman 2003). Research within healthcare showed how mindful communication improved delegation and patient safety, because it leads to higher information quality and better understanding between employees (Anthony & Vidal, 2010). Anthony & Vidal (2010) further state that: “in delegation, the right communication is mindful communication” (p. 4). Other researchers found that mindful communication leads to improvements in wellbeing that include less burnout, more perspective taking and empathy, and higher emotional stability (Krasner et al., 2009).

Other positive effects of mindful communication include reducing automatic allocation of attention, response tendencies, stereotyping (Burgoon et al., 2000; Frable et al., 1990; Huston, 2011; Wenk-Sormaz, 2005), improving capability of creating and maintaining satisfying relationships (Dekeyser et al., 2008; Chang, 2013; Follette, Palm, & Pearson, 2006; Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005; Weick & Putnam, 2006), allowing people to adapt to an ever-changing environment (Frable et al., 1990), improving in conflict resolution and intercultural misunderstanding (Burgoon et al., 2000), clearer thinking, and better decision making (Putnam, 2001; Weick & Putnam, 2006).

Literature has thus far focused on teaching mindful communication and studying its positive effects, but little has been done to study what characterizes mindful communication. The exception being Chang's (2013) study of intercultural email communication. No study has yet explored how mindful communication is characterized in an organizational context.

This study aims to close this research gap, by exploring what phrases used in organizational email communication characterize mindful communication in an organizational context.

2 – Theoretical framework

Mindful communication

Definitions of mindful communication usually include elements such as awareness, attention, being non-judgemental and communication skills.

Awareness (alternatively called mindful observation) aims at observing, noticing, or attending to a variety of stimuli and differences between communicators. These stimuli include internal phenomena, such as bodily sensations, cognitions, and emotions, and external phenomena, such as sounds and smells (Dekeyser et al., 2008; Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003b; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Krasner et al., 2009; Linehan, 1993; Segal et al., 2002). Differences include culture (norms, values, stereotypes, etc.), knowledge, different perspectives, communication skills (tactics, planning, monitoring, etc.), goals (own and partners'), context, expectations (and violations thereof), face needs, and so on (Burgoon et al., 2000; Chang, 2013).

Attention (alternatively called concentration) is about engaging fully in one's current activity with undivided attention, thus focusing with awareness on one thing at a time (Anthony & Vidal, 2010; Baer et al., 2004; Burgoon et al., 2000; Chang, 2013; Dekeyser et al., 2008; Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003; Hanh, 1976; Hall, 2003; Krasner et al., 2009; Linehan, 1993; Pearce, 2005).

Being non-judgmental (alternatively called being accepting and open to new experiences) entails refraining from applying evaluative labels such as good/bad, right/wrong, or worthwhile/worthless (Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999), refraining from reacting in a stereotypical manner (Chang, 2013; Devine, 1989; Garland et al., 2009; Garland et al., 2010; Huston et al., 2011), and to allow reality to be as it is without attempts to avoid, escape, or change it (Dekeyser et al., 2008; Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003a, 2003b; Langer, 1989; Linehan, 1993b; Segal et al., 2002).

Communication skills (alternatively called interaction management) refer to the various skills needed to communicate mindfully. Skills such as: recognize nonverbal messages, self-disclose appropriately, effectively manage interaction, being flexible, showing proper respect, and so on (Anderson, 1994; Burgoon et al., 2000; Chang, 2013; Cegala, 1984; Gudykunst, 1992; Li, 1999; Krasner et al., 2009; Ting-Toomey, 1994). Communication skills are not so much an element of mindful communication, but a necessity that facilitates it.

Mindful email communication

While most researchers have investigated how mindfulness may benefit communication, few have explored how mindful communication reveals itself within communication. One study by Chang (2013) did examine how mindful communication reveals itself, by studying intercultural email communication between American and Chinese students.

According to Chang (2013) mindful email communication expressed itself in three ways: awareness of the self, the other and the context. Being *aware of the self* is explained as being aware of one's knowledge (or limitations thereof), perspectives, identities, and biases. By doing so one comes across as "humble, courteous, understanding, and respectful", describes Chang (2013, p. 4). The example she presents shows how an American student is unwilling to judge Chinese or American mothers as better, because he/she lacks knowledge about the Chinese culture. Awareness of oneself also shows in apologizing beforehand for any insensitivities, because of limited knowledge about the others' ways.

Being *aware of the other* means being aware of their "needs, feelings, emotions, and responses" (Chang, 2013, p. 5). This is found in showing understanding, sensitivity, empathy, support, responding to face needs, perspective taking, and the likes. One of Chang's (2013) examples shows how an American student shows understanding for the Chinese student's failure to respond. Another example shows how a Chinese student satisfies an American student's face needs, by showing understanding and respect for her as a studying single mom.

Being *aware of the larger context* means being aware of what is happening in the outside world. These happenings can concern "social, cultural, political, international, and natural events" (Chang, 2013, p. 4), to name only a few. Awareness of the context showed itself in emails in the form of discussions and the sharing of viewpoints.

Chang (2013) found that these expressions of mindful communication showed themselves through five email characterizations. She found that mindful email communication was characterized by: "rich information, open self disclosure, detailed Q&As, well-coordinated interaction, and extensive use of emoticons & symbols" (Chang, 2013, p. 7). According to Chang (2013) these characterizations lead to longer conversations, with more personal and detailed content, that were well coordinated and lively. She concludes that this developed a better understanding and bond between the communicators and resulted in more effective intercultural communication.

Rich information turned out to be the most salient feature of mindful email communication, according to Chang (2013). Communicators had a lot to discuss and share,

because of the three expressions of mindful communication. This resulted in lengthy emails. Mindful students therefore learned a lot about the other and his/her environment. Comparing the number of emails between mindful and mindless couples: it showed that mindful communicators send as many as 22 email, totalling 22.000 words; while mindless communicators send as little as 4 emails, totalling 1.000 words.

The second mentioned characteristic is *open self-disclosure*. This is about how open and honest the communicators are. Mindful communicators were more open and honest, mindless communicators less so. The open self-disclosure involves likes and dislikes, opinions on controversial viewpoints and emotional sharing. As an example Chang (2013) describes how one American student talked about “the death of her mother, her relationship with her boyfriend, and her emotional struggles” (p. 9).

The next characteristic Chang (2013) describes is the *detailed Q&As* that she found in mindful intercultural email communication. Mindful communicators take the time to examine, think and come up with meaningful questions. They also took the time to provide accurate and complete answers to questions the other asked. They even conducted research when necessary. In an example, provided by Chang (2013), a Chinese student actually numbered the questions of the American student and answered them one by one. Chang (2013) states how these “detailed Q&As provided an excellent forum where mindful communicators explored and taught about cultures, corrected misunderstandings, and developed better understandings of each other” (p. 10).

The fourth characteristic described by Chang (2013) is how *well-coordinated* the interactions were. She describes how mindful communicators had no need for explicit discussion of interaction rules, because they were mindful of unspoken rules and each other’s needs. Leaving them able to discuss substantive matters. This fourth characteristic mainly focuses on the frequency of emails and speediness of responses.

The final characteristic is the *extensive use of emoticons*. Chang (2013) explains how the use of emoticons functioned as nonverbal cues and added liveliness to the emails. As nonverbal cues, the emoticons illustrated, supported, reinforced, clarified, or contradicted the verbal message, which resulted in more vivid and richer expressions.

Current research

Chang’s (2013) findings differ from the literature mentioned previously, which include awareness, attention, non-judgment, and communication skills. Chang (2013) found that only awareness (of the self, other, and context) revealed itself in the studied email communication.

Attention, non-judgment, and communication skills are not mentioned in her results or conclusions. Even though most of the mindful communication characteristics she found can be interpreted as communication skills (i.e. open self-disclosure, detailed Q&A, well-coordinated, and use of emoticons). As Chang (2013) explains, these differences may be due to differences between mediated and face-to-face communication.

Following Chang's (2013) line of research, this study will explore how mindful communication is characterized in organizational email communication. Literature further shows that awareness is an important part of mindful communication. This inspired two sub-questions in order to study if participants are aware of different aspects of the sender and email message. The first set of sub-questions examines whether the receiver's decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner is influenced by sender attributes like the professional relationship between sender and receiver, and the sender's gender. The second set examines whether the decision is influenced by message attributes like presenting emotions, gossip, amount of questions, and the friendliness, mindfulness and formality of the message. This results in the following research questions:

Research question:

- What characterizes mindful organizational email communication?

Sub-questions:

- Do sender attributes (e.g.: professional relationship and gender) influence the receiver's decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner?
- Do email message attributes (e.g.: attitude, mindfulness, show of emotions, gossip, amount of questions, and formality) influence the receiver's decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner?

3 – Methods & Analyses

The method section is divided into three parts. The first part explains how the participants were selected and provides descriptive statistics of the samples. The second part explains how the online questionnaire was developed and what was requested of the participants. The third part explains the data collection.

3.1 – Participants

In order to answer the research questions the participants needed to be working for an organization. Therefore office-workers were chosen as the main focus of the study. Since office-workers typically are not trained in mindful communication, mindfulness experts were selected as the second group. Comparing the results of the office-workers with the mindfulness experts will provide insight in possible differences between those trained, and untrained, in mindfulness and their interpretations of mindful/mindless communication.

A good friend recruited the office-workers at his workplace, by informing colleagues about the study and asking if they were willing to participate. He worked at a consultancy and deployment agency. Anyone working in an office qualified as an office-worker.

In order to qualify as a mindfulness expert, he/she has to train others in mindfulness or have professional insight into the workings of mindfulness (extensive training or academic research). Mindfulness experts were recruited via websites that contained databases of mindfulness trainers (i.e. vmbn.nl, instituutformindfulness.nl and mindfulness-training.nl) and others found via Google.

The recruitment stage resulted in 16 participants: 9 office-workers and 7 mindfulness experts. Descriptive statistics of the participants show that on average the mindfulness experts were 12 years older than the office-workers (see Table 1). Consequently the mindfulness experts also had more years of working experience (on average 10 more years). Mindfulness experts had, on average, 12 more years of mindfulness experience (only one office-worker had mindfulness experience, five years to be precise).

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Participants*

Participant characteristics	Office-workers	Mindfulness experts
<i>N</i>	9	7
Age	$M = 31.6, SD = 5.6$	$M = 43.6, SD = 9.2$
Gender	Male: 3 – Female: 6	Male: 4 – Female: 3
Education	HBO: 8 WO: 1	VWO: 1 Post HBO: 2 WO: 3 Doctor: 1
Tenure	$M = 8.3, SD = 4.8$	$M = 18.9, SD = 11.6$
Mindfulness experience	$M = 0.6, SD = 1.7$	$M = 12.6, SD = 10.6$

3.2 – Questionnaire

The following explanation of the development of the online questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part will explain how the fictional emails were developed and the second part will explain the contents of the questionnaire. Google Forms was used to design the questionnaire, collect the data, and present the data in Excel format. The questionnaire was written in Dutch since all the participants were Dutch. A copy of the online questionnaire can be found in appendix A.

3.2.1 – Development of the fictional emails

As a basis all ten fictional emails asked the participant to perform a task. These types of questions were chosen, because they do not force the participant to think up fictional information. Instead the information was presented to them and they only had to react. All emails start with the presentation of its subject (i.e. “Subject:…”).

The further makeups of the fictional emails were vital for answering the sub-questions, because they had to differ in combinations of the sender and email message attributes. Therefore the eight variables of the sub-questions were used to create templates to aid the construction of the ten fictional emails (see Table 2).

Table 2: *Templates Fictional Emails*

Email	Relation-ship	M/ F*	Attitude	Mindful	Emo- tions	Gossip	Ques- tions	Formality
1	Boss	F	Friendly	Mindful	No	No	1	Formal
2	Boss	M	Unfriendly	Mindless	Yes	No	3	Formal
3	Boss	M	Friendly	Mindless	Yes	Yes	2	Informal
4	Direct colleague	F	Friendly	Mindful	Yes	No	2	Informal
5	Direct colleague	M	Unfriendly	Mindless	Yes	No	2	Informal
6	Direct colleague	M	Friendly	Mindless	No	Yes	1	Formal
7	Office manager	F	Friendly	Mindless	No	Yes	2	Informal
8	Office manager	F	Unfriendly	Mindful	Yes	Yes	1	Formal
9	Distant colleague	F	Friendly	Mindful	Yes	No	1	Formal
10	Distant colleague	M	Unfriendly	Mindless	No	Yes	2	Informal

Note. *Male / Female

The variable ‘relationship’ refers to four different types of colleagues: boss, direct colleague, office manager, and distant manager. These four were chosen because they are the in office relationships that an office worker communicates with most regularly. Since office-workers most frequently communicate with direct colleagues and their boss, this variable is distributed over the ten fictional emails as follows: Boss 3, direct colleague 3, office manager 2, and distant colleague 2. Other than adding a different professional relationship title to the different fictional emails (i.e. “Office manager”), this variable did not impact how they were written.

The ‘gender’ variable refers to the sender’s gender. Five of the fictional emails were from male senders, and five from female. This variable did not impact how fictional emails were written.

The variable ‘attitude’ refers to how friendly a fictional email is written. Six of the fictional emails were written with a friendly attitude, because all the senders were supposed to

be working for the same organization and would therefore try to keep the peace. The remaining four fictional emails air an unfriendly attitude.

The next column of the table contains the ‘mindfulness’ variable. This variable refers to how mindful a fictional email is written. Mindful emails show awareness of the other’s situation. Examples are “I know you’re busy” and “I saw that your agenda is empty”. Mindless emails are rather selfish and quite blunt in their request. An example might be: “I have a problem and I want you to solve it. Here is what you need, bye!” Six of the fictional emails are mindless, since the point of the study is to see how mindful the participants respond and mindless emails are more challenging in that sense. The other four are mindfully written.

The variable ‘emotions’ refers to the fictional emails displaying emotions, or not. Six fictional emails do contain emotions, because it provides the participants with information they can include in their mindful responses. The remaining four emails are therefore without emotions.

The ‘gossip’ variable refers to the fictional emails containing gossip, or not. Gossip includes remarks about third parties and unofficial information (like a leaked reorganization document). This variable is distributed evenly over the ten fictional emails: five with gossip and five without.

The variable ‘questions’ refers to the number of questions that a fictional email contains. Four of the fictional emails contain one question; the other six contain more than one.

The final column of the table contains the ‘formality’ variable. This variable refers to the fictional emails being written in a formal, or informal, style. Informal emails include everyday speech, emoticons, casual openings and endings, and a lack of capitals and punctuation. This variable is evenly distributed over the fictional emails: five formally written emails and five informally.

3.2.2 – Contents of the questionnaire

The complete contents of the questionnaire (11 pages) is described below and has been separated in three pieces: The introduction letter on the first page of the questionnaire, the fictional emails on the following pages, and the additional questions on the last page.

The introduction letter

The introduction letter starts off with a word of gratitude, anonymity, informed consent, and the option to withdraw within 24 hours. The letter continues with an explanation of the studies goal in layman's terms. The final and longest part of the introduction letter explains what the study requires of the participant.

The participant was asked to respond to the ten fictional emails: five thoughtfully and five hurriedly. In an attempt to prevent priming, the words mindful and mindless were replaced with thoughtful and hurried respectively. The participant was told that he/she is free to decide on which emails they want to respond thoughtfully or hurriedly. This is followed by an explanation of the general makeup of the questionnaire. The participant was then asked to review all ten fictional emails and try to imagine that they are real emails. Perhaps even link them to real-life colleagues. The participant was further asked to pretend that he/she is at work on a busy day and finds these ten new emails. He/she wants to deal with these emails as soon as possible, because he/she has lots of other tasks to attend to. This time pressure was added, because it takes effort (and thus time) to act mindfully. The goal is that the time pressure results in a more prominent difference between mindful and mindless responses. The participant was then asked to firstly respond to all of the ten fictional emails in order to keep the fictional setting as vivid as possible. The introduction letter ends with another word of gratitude, and a warning that the questionnaire will be saved only when they press the send button at the bottom.

The emails

The following part of the questionnaire is a repetition of ten questions: email one to ten. Each email starts with the name and position (i.e. boss) of the sender, accompanied by the email's subject and fictional email, followed by three questions. The first question is "What is your response to [name]'s email?" accompanied by a large entry field. The second question is "Was your response to [name]'s email thoughtful or hurried?" accompanied by the option to select either 'thoughtful' or 'hurried' from a bullet list. The third and final question is "What aspect of the [name]'s email moved you to respond in that manner?" also accompanied by a large entry field. All emails end with the name and position of the sender.

Additional questions

After the participant has answered, or scrolled through, all the fictional emails and the accompanying questions, he/she finds seven additional questions. Four were about the

participant: age, education level, tenure, and mindfulness experience. The participant was then provided the option to submit his/her email address if he/she wished to receive a copy of the dissertation. He/she was then asked to submit his/her name if he/she did not want to receive any reminders to fill out the questionnaire. The final question asked if the participant had any feedback concerning the questionnaire, study, or anything else. Entry fields accompanied all the additional questions, except for the last question, which was accompanied by a large entry field.

3.3 – Data collection

The participants were sent an email containing a short version of the introduction letter of the questionnaire and a link to the online questionnaire. After completion the participants handed in the questionnaire via the send button. Google Forms presented the results in an Excel file.

3.4 – Analyses

The analyses are divided in two parts. The first part is about the quantitative analyses. The second part presents the qualitative analysis.

3.4.1 – Quantitative analyses

The quantitative analyses are separated in the analysis of the eight fictional email variables, the analysis of the lengths of the participant's responses, and analysis of the participant's characteristics. SPSS was utilised to execute these quantitative analyses.

Sender & message characteristics

To analyse if the eight fictional email variables influenced the participant's choice to respond either mindfully or mindlessly, the frequencies of mindful and mindless responses were calculated. A Chi Square analysis was performed on the frequencies of both groups together, and separately, for each of the eight variables.

Receiver's response characteristics: Response lengths

The data was copied from Excel to Word in order to easily count the amount of words used per response. These response lengths were inserted in SPSS and average response length columns for mindful and mindless responses were calculated. A paired sample t-test was executed to determine if there was a difference between the average word length of the office-worker's, and mindfulness expert's, mindful and mindless responses. An ANOVA analysis

was performed to see if there was a significant difference between the two groups and the average length of their mindful, and mindless responses.

Participant characteristics

Correlations between the average mindful and mindless response lengths and the participant's characteristics were calculated, to see if effects found with the other analyses were not because of participant's characteristics. Correlations were calculated for the following characteristics: age, gender, education level, tenure, and mindfulness experience.

3.4.2 – Qualitative analysis of receiver's response characteristics

All of the participant's responses were coded and analysed in Atlas.ti. All of the phrases in the participant's responses were coded by their function. This method resulted in codes like 'formal opening', 'describing feelings', and 'suggesting alternative'. A full list of the codes, and occurrences, is presented in appendix B.

All of the phrases were also coded with two additional labels. The first label contains the participant's group and the mindfulness of the response. An example of such a label is 'ME mindless', which is added to a phrase typed by a mindfulness expert and part of a mindless response. Another example is 'OW mindful', which is a phrase written by an office worker and part of a mindful response. The other additional label is either 'mindful' for a phrase that is part of a mindful response, or 'mindless' for phrases part of mindless responses.

Analysis of the codes was done in Atlas.ti by creating a code co-occurrence table. The codes 'mindful', 'mindless', 'OW mindful', 'OW mindless', 'ME mindful, and 'ME mindless' were displayed in the columns, the other codes in the rows. The codes co-occurrence coefficients were very low, because of the large amount of codes (65) and the low code occurrences (range 1 to 77, total of 942). Therefore all codes that occur at least twice as much within one group (mindful or mindless) are considered favoured by that group.

After coding the codes were categorized by grouping them under the different elements of mindful communication found in the literature review (i.e. awareness, attention, non-judgmental, and communication skills). After categorization the different categories were further examined to explore if they contained meaningful sub-categories. Sub-categories were deemed meaningful when they resulted in clear, distinct and non-overlapping sizable groups.

4 – Results

There are two parts to the results. The first part is a quantitative analysis of the influence of the sender and message characteristics on the participant’s choice to respond mindfully or mindlessly. The second part concerns the analyses of the receiver’s response characteristics. These consist of a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis studies the length of the receiver’s responses and looks at possible differences between the two groups (i.e. office-workers and mindfulness experts). The qualitative analysis of the receiver’s responses is about which phrase types characterize their mindful and mindless responses and if there is a difference between the two groups.

Overall 16 participants filled out the questionnaire, resulting in 160 responses to the fictional emails. Nine of the participants were office-workers and seven mindfulness experts. In total 43.1% of their responses were mindful (see Table 3). A number of participants did not comply with the request to fill in five responses mindfully and five mindlessly. Three of the office-workers and three of the mindfulness experts did not comply (OW: 1: 4 mindful - 6 mindless; 2: 3-7; and, 3: 3-7. ME: 1: 2-8; 2: 3-7; and, 3: 4-6). Instead of a 50-50 share, this resulted in 43.1% mindful responses and 56.9% mindless responses. These questionnaires were not excluded from the study, because they better reflect the participant’s natural reaction. Office-workers responded 40 times mindfully and 50 times mindlessly, and the mindfulness experts respectively 29 and 41 times.

Frequencies of mindful and mindless responses

Table 3: *Number of Mindful and Mindless Responses*

Groups	Office-Workers	Mindfulness Experts	Percentage of total
Mindful	40	29	43.1%
Mindless	50	41	56.9%

4.1 – Sender & message characteristics

Chi Squares for all of the eight fictional email variables were calculated (Table 4). In the following section the outcomes for all of the variables will be presented and discussed.

Table 4: *Chi Squares for Fictional Email Variables*

Variable	Chi Square	Significance
Relationship	$X^2(3, N = 16) = 11.14$	$p = .011$
OW	$X^2(3, n = 9) = 8.40$	$p = .038$
ME	$X^2(3, n = 7) = 3.38$	$p = .337$
Gender	$X^2(1, N = 16) = 9.20$	$p = .002$
OW	$X^2(1, n = 9) = 6.48$	$p = .011$
ME	$X^2(1, n = 7) = 2.89$	$p = .089$
Attitude	$X^2(1, N = 16) = 13.80$	$p < .001$
OW	$X^2(1, n = 9) = 9.19$	$p = .002$
ME	$X^2(1, n = 7) = 4.75$	$p = .029$
Mindfulness	$X^2(1, N = 16) = 1.38$	$p = .241$
OW	$X^2(1, n = 9) = .75$	$p = .386$
ME	$X^2(1, n = 7) = .63$	$p = .428$
Emotions	$X^2(1, N = 16) = 16.86$	$p < .001$
OW	$X^2(1, n = 9) = 12.00$	$p = .001$
ME	$X^2(1, n = 7) = 5.19$	$p = .023$
Gossip	$X^2(1, N = 16) = 1.25$	$p = .264$
OW	$X^2(1, n = 9) = .72$	$p = .396$
ME	$X^2(1, n = 7) = .53$	$p = .467$
Questions	$X^2(1, N = 16) = 3.33$	$p = .068$
OW	$X^2(1, n = 9) = 3.00$	$p = .083$
ME	$X^2(1, n = 7) = .63$	$p = .428$
Formality	$X^2(1, N = 16) = .64$	$p = .425$
OW	$X^2(1, n = 9) = .18$	$p = .671$
ME	$X^2(1, n = 7) = .53$	$p = .467$

Sender – Professional relationship

The sender’s professional relationship with the receiver (i.e. boss, direct colleague, office manager, or distant colleague) was studied to examine if it influences the participant’s choice to respond mindful or mindless. Crosstab analysis concluded that the mindful and mindless responses differed significantly across the different relationship types ($X^2(3, N = 16) = 11.14$,

$p = .011$). The same is found for the office-workers ($X^2(3, n = 9) = 8.40, p = .038$), but not for the mindfulness experts ($X^2(3, n = 7) = 3.38, p = .337$).

The professional relationship between the sender and receiver influence the receiver's decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner in such a way that the boss receives the most mindful responses (60.4%), followed by direct colleagues (43.8%), office managers (34.4%), and distant colleagues (25%; see Table 5). Both office-workers and mindfulness experts show this trend. Mindfulness experts did send less mindful responses to direct colleagues (38.1%), compared to office-workers (48.1%).

The results implicate that people respond more mindfully to others who are higher up the hierarchy or close to them. This makes sense because people higher up the hierarchy hold power over them, and people close by are often colleagues that they have to interact with on a daily basis. An alternative explanation of this trend is the order in which the questions were presented, because they were presented in that exact order (Dooley, 2001).

Table 5: *Mindful Responses and the Relationship Variable*

Relationship (#mails)	#Mindful - #Mindless (%mindful)		
	OW	ME	Total
Boss (3)	17-10 (63%)	12-9 (57.1%)	29-19 (60.4%)
Direct colleague (3)	13-14 (48.1%)	8-13 (38.1%)	21-27 (43.8%)
Office managers (2)	6-12 (33.3%)	5-9 (35.7%)	11-21 (34.4%)
Distant colleague (2)	4-14 (22.2%)	4-10 (28.6%)	8-24 (25%)

Sender – Gender

The sender's gender (i.e. male or female) was studied to examine if it influences the participant's choice to respond mindful or mindless. Crosstab analysis concluded that the mindful and mindless responses differed significantly across the different gender types ($X^2(1, N = 16) = 9.20, p = .002$). The same is found for the office-workers ($X^2(1, n = 9) = 6.48, p = .011$), but not for the mindfulness experts ($X^2(1, n = 7) = 2.89, p = .089$).

The gender of the sender does influence the receiver's decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner in such a way that male sender's received more mindful responses than female senders (55% versus 31.3%; see Table 6). Both groups share this trend. Office-workers were slightly more inclined to send mindful responses to males (57.8% versus 51.4%). This result implicates that being male leads to others communicating more mindfully with you, via email.

Table 6: *Mindful Responses and the Gender Variable*

Gender (#mails)	#Mindful - #Mindless (%mindful)		
	OW	ME	Total
Male (5)	26-19 (57.8%)	18-17 (51.4%)	44-36 (55%)
Female (5)	14-31 (31.1%)	11-24 (31.4%)	25-55 (31.3%)

Message – Attitude

The attitude displayed in the message (i.e. friendly or unfriendly) was studied to examine if it influences the participant’s choice to respond mindful or mindless. Crosstab analysis concluded that the mindful and mindless responses differed significantly across the different attitude types ($X^2(1, N = 16) = 13.80, p < .001$). The same is found for the office-workers ($X^2(1, n = 9) = 9.19, p = .002$) and the mindfulness experts ($X^2(1, n = 7) = 4.75, p = .029$).

The attitude displayed in the message does influence the receiver’s decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner, in such a way that unfriendly emails received more mindful responses than friendly (60.9% versus 31.3%; see Table 7). Both office-workers and mindfulness experts show this trend. Office-workers send slightly more mindful responses to unfriendly emails than mindfulness experts (63.9% versus 57.1%). This result implicates that being unfriendly in email communication leads to receiving more mindful responses.

Table 7: *Mindful Responses and the Attitude Variable*

Attitude (#mails)	#Mindful - #Mindless (%mindful)		
	OW	ME	Total
Friendly (6)	17-37 (31.5%)	13-29 (31%)	30-66 (31.3%)
Unfriendly (4)	23-13 (63.9%)	16-12 (57.1%)	39-25 (60.9%)

Message – Mindfulness

The mindfulness displayed in the message (mindful or mindless) was studied to examine if it influences the participant’s choice to respond mindful or mindless. Crosstab analysis concluded that the mindful and mindless responses did not differ significantly across the different mindfulness types ($X^2(1, N = 16) = 1.38, p = .241$). The same is found for the office-workers ($X^2(1, n = 9) = 0.75, p = .386$) and the mindfulness experts ($X^2(1, n = 7) = 0.63, p = .428$).

The mindfulness displayed in the message does not significantly influence the receiver’s decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner, but mindless messages receive more mindful responses than mindful messages (46.9% versus 37.5%; see Table 8). Both the office-worker and mindfulness expert groups share this trend. This result implicates that being mindless in email communication leads to receiving more mindful responses.

Table 8: *Mindful Responses and the Mindfulness Variable*

Mindfulness (#mails)	#Mindful - #Mindless (%mindful)		
	OW	ME	Total
Mindful (4)	14-22 (38.9%)	10-18 (35.7%)	24-40 (37.5%)
Mindless (6)	26-28 (48.1%)	19-23 (45.2%)	45-51 (46.9%)

Message – Emotions

The emotions shown in the message (did or did not show emotions) was studied to examine if it influences the participant’s choice to respond mindful or mindless. Crosstab analysis concluded that the mindful and mindless responses differed significantly across the different emotion types ($X^2(1, N = 16) = 16.86, p < .001$). The same is found for the office-workers ($X^2(1, n = 9) = 12.00, p = .001$) and the mindfulness experts ($X^2(1, n = 7) = 5.19, p = .023$).

The emotions shown in the message does influence the receiver’s decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner, in such a way that emails that show emotions receive more mindful responses than those that do not (56.3% versus 23.4%; see Table 9). The office-workers and mindfulness experts both show this trend. This result implicates that others respond in a mindful manner when you show emotions in an email conversation. A possible explanation may be that the email receiver is normally unable to discern emotions from email communication, due to the lack of non-verbal communication. Intentionally adding emotions to email communication may therefore demand attention to the communicated emotions.

Table 9: *Mindful Responses and the Emotions Variable*

Emotions (#mails)	#Mindful - #Mindless (%mindful)		
	OW	ME	Total
With emotions (6)	32-22 (59.3%)	22-20 (52.4%)	54-42 (56.3%)
Without emotions (4)	8-28 (22.2%)	7-21 (25%)	15-49 (23.4%)

Message – Gossip

Sharing gossip in the message was studied to examine if it influences the participant’s choice to respond mindful or mindless. Crosstab analysis concluded that the mindful and mindless responses did not differ significantly across the different gossip types ($X^2(1, N = 16) = 1.25, p = .264$). The same is found for the office-workers ($X^2(1, n = 9) = .72, p = .396$) and the mindfulness experts ($X^2(1, n = 7) = .53, p = .467$).

Sharing gossip does not influence the receiver’s decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner, but emails without gossip receive more mindful responses than those with (47.5% versus 38.8%; see Table 10). This trend holds for both the office-worker and mindfulness expert group. This result implicates that omitting gossip leads to more mindful responses.

Table 10: *Mindful Responses and the Gossip Variable*

Gossip (#mails)	#Mindful - #Mindless (%mindful)		
	OW	ME	Total
With gossip (5)	18-27 (40%)	13-22 (37.1%)	31-49 (38.8%)
Without gossip (5)	22-23 (48.9%)	16-19 (45.7%)	38-42 (47.5%)

Message – Questions

The amount of questions contained in the message was studied to examine if it influences the participant’s choice to respond mindful or mindless. Crosstab analysis concluded that the mindful and mindless responses did not differ significantly across the different number of questions ($X^2(1, N = 16) = 3.33, p = .068$). The same is found for the office-workers ($X^2(1, n = 9) = 3.00, p = .083$) and the mindfulness experts ($X^2(1, n = 7) = .63, p = .428$).

The amount of questions presented in an email does not influence the receiver’s decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner, but emails with more than one question receive more mindful responses than those with one (49% versus 34.4%; see Table 11). Both groups share this trend. Mindfulness experts send slightly less mindful responses to email with more than one question than office-workers (45.2% versus 51.9%). This result implicates that presenting the other with more questions, asks more time of the receiver because they have more to think about, which leads to a more mindful response.

Table 11: *Mindful Responses and the Number of Questions Variable*

#Questions (#mails)	#Mindful - #Mindless (%mindful)		
	OW	ME	Total
One question (4)	12-24 (33.3%)	10-18 (35.7%)	22-42 (34.4%)
More questions (6)	28-26 (51.9%)	19-23 (45.2%)	47-49 (49%)

Message – Formality

The formal style of the message (formal or informal) was studied to examine if it influences the participant’s choice to respond mindful or mindless. Crosstab analysis concluded that the mindful and mindless responses did not differ significantly across the different formality types ($X^2(1, N = 16) = .64, p = .425$). The same is found for the office-workers ($X^2(1, n = 9) = .18, p = .671$) and the mindfulness experts ($X^2(1, n = 7) = .53, p = .467$).

The formal style of the email does not influence the receiver’s decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner, but formally written emails receive slightly more mindful responses than those informally written (46.3% versus 40%; see Table 12)). This trend is found for both office-workers and mindfulness expert. Office-workers send slightly more mindful responses to informally written emails than mindfulness experts (42.2% versus 37.1%). This may be explained by formally written emails coming across more serious, and therefore demanding a more serious response.

Table 12: *Mindful Responses and the Formality Variable*

Formality (#mails)	#Mindful - #Mindless (%mindful)		
	OW	ME	Total
Formal (5)	21-24 (46.7%)	16-19 (45.7%)	37-43 (46.3%)
Informal (5)	19-26 (42.2%)	13-22 (37.1%)	32-48 (40%)

4.2 – Receiver’s response characteristics

4.2.1 – Quantitative analysis of receiver’s response length

Table 13: *Amount of Words in Mindful and Mindless Responses*

Participants	Amount of words (average per response)			Total
	Mindful	Mindless	Difference	
Total	4279 (62.37)	2513 (27.25)	1766 (35.12)	6792
OW Total	2594 (67.35)	1386 (26.97)	1208 (40.38)	3980
ME Total	1685 (55.96)	1127 (27.61)	558 (28.35)	2812
OW-ME Total	909.00 (11.38)	259.00 (-0.65)	650 (12.03)	

All the responses together totalled at 6792 words (Table 13). 4279 of these words were part of mindful responses, and 2513 part of mindless. Taking a closer look at the groups shows that office-workers spend 2594 words on mindful responses, with an average response length of 67.35 words. The mindfulness experts wrote 1685 words for the mindful responses, averaging at 55.96. Moving on to the mindless responses shows that the office-workers used 1386 words in total, with an average of 26.97. The mindfulness experts spent 1127 words on mindless responses, averaging at 27.61.

A paired sample t-test showed a significant difference between the average word length of the office-worker’s mindful ($M = 67.35$, $SD = 31.43$) and mindless ($M = 26.97$, $SD = 11.11$) responses; $t(8) = 5.41$; $p = .001$. Mindful responses were significantly longer. This was also found for the mindful ($M = 55.96$, $SD = 25.84$) and mindless ($M = 27.61$, $SD = 5.30$) responses of the mindfulness experts; $t(6) = 3.14$; $p = .020$.

An ANOVA analysis showed no significant difference between office-workers and mindfulness experts concerning the average word length of their mindful responses ($F(1,14) = 0.60$; $p = .452$), or mindless responses ($F(1,14) = 0.02$; $p = .890$).

There were no significant correlations between the average length of mindful or mindless responses concerning any of the participant characteristics: age, gender, education level, tenure, and mindfulness experience.

4.2.2 – Qualitative analysis of receiver’s responses

The following table (Table 14) summarizes the phrase types typify mindful responses. Examples from both mindful and mindless responses are included, since the phrase types can also occur in mindless responses.

The different phrase types are grouped in three categories: communication skills, awareness of self: open self-disclosure, and awareness of other: caring about other.

Communication skills

The category ‘communication skills’ contains six phrase types about structuring communication and communication rules, which are characteristic of mindful responses. The six phrase types are: formal endings, providing arguments, providing excuse, Q&A, Referring to other email, and summarizing.

Formal endings typify formal letter closings, such as “kind regards” and were favoured by mindfulness experts. *Formal endings* were also encountered in mindless responses. A typical example here is “hearty regards”, also favoured by mindfulness experts.

The phrase type *providing arguments* contains phrases in which the participant presents a reason why something should, or should not, happen. An example of a mindful response is “since this stalls my other activities”. This phrase type is used by both office-workers and mindfulness experts alike and also occurs in mindless responses. A mindless example is “because I already have appointments in my agenda”, and is favoured by office-workers.

The phrase type *providing excuse* includes phrases where participants present a poor argument for not wanting to do something. Typical for mindful responses of this kind is “I can only work on one project seriously”, and favoured by mindfulness experts. This phrase type also appears in mindless responses and “I will still be busy with something else for a while” is an example of this. Mindfulness experts favour this type of mindless response.

The *Q&A* phrase types refers to phrases that specifically refer to a topic presented by the other, possibly in the same order. *Q&A* phrase types are often seen in the first phrase of a paragraph. A typical mindful example is “firstly point one”, and found in both groups. This phrase type is also encountered in mindfulness expert’s mindless responses and is typified by phrases such as “concerning the second”.

Table 14: *Phrase Types More Frequently Used in Mindful Email Communication*

Phrase type	Definition	Example (#Total - #OW / #ME)
Category: Communication skills		
Formal endings	Using a formal letter closing.	Mindful (8 - 1/7): “Kind regards” Mindless (2 - 0/2): “Hearty regards”
Providing arguments	Presenting the other with a reason why something should, or should not, happen.	Mindful (46 - 26/20): “They can probably provide better help and they have more time” Mindless (15 - 10/5): “then I can see how much time I want to invest”
Providing excuse	Giving the other a poor excuse/argument for not wanting to do something.	Mindful (10 - 3/7): “I only have limited influence on the time sheet of others” Mindless (4 - 1/3): “I am out of office that day, all day”
Q&A	To specifically refer to a topic presented by the other, possibly in order. Often as paragraph opener.	Mindful (11 - 5/6): “Concerning the extra project” Mindless (2 - 0/2): “Firstly”
Referring to other email	Referring to content in another email. Possibly written by a third party.	Mindful (11 - 11/0): “I just got another project from Jan-Willem” Mindless (4 - 3/1): “I indeed see that Sander contacted me by email to request my aid”
Summarizing	To summarize what the other wrote in his/her email.	Mindful (3 - 1/2): “Since you mention several topics,” Mindless (0)
Category: Awareness of self - Open self-disclosure		
Agreeing with argument	To say one agrees with an argument the other provided.	Mindful (7 - 3/4): “indeed, I’m very busy, just like everybody else” Mindless (3 - 1/2): “I indeed have time this afternoon”
Describing feelings	Letting the other know how one feels.	Mindful (15 - 11/4): “indeed really f’d-up!!!” Mindless (4 - 2/2): “I won’t stand for this!”
Might request help	To say that one might request help.	Mindful (3 - 3/0): “if necessary I’ll ask you” Mindless (0)
Pointing out consequences	Telling the other how something affects him-/herself.	Mindful (10 - 7/3): “I assume that I can deduct the extra hours in the following weeks” Mindless (2 - 2/0): “I’ll schedule something tomorrow so we can talk things through”
Requesting consultation	Asking the other to talk things through.	Mindful (4 - 1/3): “Let’s discuss with Jan-Willem what the priorities are” Mindless (1 - 1/0): - “How about we discuss this together”
Requesting F2F time	Asking the other to meet in person.	Mindful (15 - 10/5): “I think it a good idea if we meet up and talk things through” Mindless (5 - 4/1): “maybe it’s a good idea to sit down for it tomorrow”
Unfriendly reaction to gossip	Not participating in / Rejecting gossip.	Mindful (5 - 2/3): “You’ll have to judge that for yourself” Mindless (1 - 0/1): “well, we’ll talk about it sometime..”

Characteristics of mindful organizational email communication

Category: Awareness of other - Caring about other		
Apologizing	To say one is sorry about something.	Mindful (5 - 1/4): "I'm sorry" Mindless (0):
Asking for opinion	Asking what the other thinks about something.	Mindful (6 - 1/5): "Can you let me know which project I should give precedence?" Mindless (0)
Politely reprimanding	Telling a person what he should not do, without being harsh/coming across angry. May include a suggestion for alternative action.	Mindful (11 - 9/2): "If you have problems with this, then I can appreciate it when you come to me in person" Mindless (4 - 2/2): "and let Frank know that I'm taking over, it's the nice thing to do"
Showing empathy	Recognizing the other person's emotions.	Mindful (19 - 9/10): "I can imagine that it bothers you" Mindless (8 - 3/5): "You come across quite stressed"
Showing understanding	Telling a person that you understand where they're coming from.	Mindful (5 - 5/0): "I understand that it is easier for me to find the documents" Mindless (1 - 1/0): "It is indeed a weird system!"

The phrase type *referring to other email* contains phrases in which the participant refers to the content of another email. “Richard just asked me for space as well” is an example of an office-worker’s mindful response of this type (it does not occur with mindfulness experts). This phrase type also occurs in mindless responses. An example of this is “I already heard it from Iris”, which is favoured by office-workers.

The *Summarizing* phrase type consists of phrases in which participants summarized what the sender wrote. A typical mindful response was “I read three different themes in you email”, and is found in both groups. This phrase type does not occur in mindless responses.

Awareness of self: open self-disclosure

The category ‘awareness of self: open self-disclosure’ contains seven phrase types in which the participant shares something of him-/herself. The seven phrase types are: agreeing with argument, describing feelings, might request help, pointing out consequences, requesting consultation, requesting F2F time, and unfriendly reaction to gossip.

The phrase type *agreeing with argument* refers to phrases in which participants say that they agree with the other’s argument. A typical mindful response is “it’s true that I know how that system works”, and is found in both groups. This phrase type is also encountered in both group’s mindless responses. A mindless example is “true, I am working on it”.

Describing feelings is a phrase type that contains phrases in which participants showed how they felt. “I feel like I can’t say ‘no’ now” is an example of a mindful response, which is favoured by office-workers. This phrase type also appears in both group’s mindless responses. A typical example of this is “I don’t really like it when you decide for me whether I can do something”.

The phrase type *might request help* codes all phrases in which participants write that they might request help when they need it. A typical mindful response is “might ask for help if I won’t be able to calm the customer”, and only occurs in office-worker’s responses. ‘Might request help’ does not occur in mindless responses.

The phrase type *pointing out consequences* refers to phrases in which participants tells how something affects him-/herself. “And because of that I have even less time to work with” exemplifies mindful responses, and is favoured by office workers. This phrase type is also encountered in office-worker’s mindless responses. A mindless example is “then I’ll move my other appointments of the day”.

Requesting consultation is a phrase type that refers to phrases in which participants asks the other to talk things through. Typical for mindful responses is a phrase such as “I

would like us to take a look at my tasks and available time”, which is favoured by mindfulness experts. *Requesting consultation* also occurs in office-worker’s mindless response, exemplified by “how about we discuss this together”.

The phrase type *requesting F2F time* entails phrases in which participants ask the other to meet in person. Which is distinct from the previous phrase type *requesting consultation*, because it does not request a meeting in person. A typical mindful response of *requesting F2F time* is “I would like to talk with you personally about the email above”, and is favoured by office-workers. This phrase type also appears in mindless responses, where it is favoured by office-workers as well. An example of this is “I would like to schedule a meeting to talk this through”.

The phrase type *unfriendly reaction to gossip* codes all phrases in which participants show their dislike with gossip or respond superficially. A phrase that typifies mindful responses is “I hope you’re joking about her having chlamydia”, and is found in both groups. This phrase type also occurs in mindfulness expert’s mindless responses, where it is exemplified by “well, we’ll talk about it sometime”.

Awareness of other: caring about other

The category ‘awareness of other: caring about other’ contains five phrase types in which participants show that they value or care about how they affect the other. The five phrase types are: apologizing, asking for opinion, politely reprimanding, showing empathy, and showing understanding.

The phrase type *apologizing* refers to phrases in which participants apologize to the other. A typical mindful response is “sorry that it bothered you”, and is favoured by mindfulness experts. This phrase type did not occur in mindless responses.

Asking for opinion is a phrase type that contains phrases in which participants ask what other’s think about something. A mindful example is “I’d love to hear you opinion on this”, and favoured by mindfulness experts. This phrase type is not encountered in mindless responses.

The phrase type *politely reprimanding* contains phrases in which participants tell the other that they should not have done something, without being harsh. In one of the fictional emails the boss shared that an employee is absent because of chlamydia. The participant’s reaction is a typical example of a mindful response: “it seems a rather personal topic and I would not appreciate it if you talk about this with colleagues”, and is favoured by office-workers. The phrase type *politely reprimanding* also appears in both mindless responses. A

mindless example is “I would appreciate it if you would talk to me in person about these things”.

Showing empathy is a phrase type that codes all phrases in which participants recognize emotions shown by the other. Mindful responses are exemplified by phrases such as “that all sounds very upset”, and occurs in both groups evenly. This phrase type also occurs in both group’s mindless responses, in which it is typified by phrases like “s*cks that you heard it like that”.

The phrase type *showing understanding* refers to phrases in which participants tell the other that they understand where they’re coming from. A typical mindful example of this phrase type is “I understand that this is a busy time”, and only occurs in the group office-workers. This phrase type is also encountered in office-worker’s mindless responses. A mindless example is “it is indeed a weird system”.

The next table (Table 15) is a summary of the phrase types that typify mindless responses. This table also includes mindful response examples where applicable.

Table 15: *Phrase Types More Frequently Used in Mindless Email Communication*

Phrase type	Definition	Example (Total – OW/ME)
Friendly reaction to gossip	Participating in gossip.	Mindless (13 – 10/3): “Yes, I knew about it. Let’s talk about it in a bit” Mindful (5 – 4/1): “I don’t know if she’ll be back soon, I have no knowledge of the consequences of chlamydia”
No opening	Starting an email without an opening like Hi./Dear [name],	Mindless (6 – 3/3) Mindful (1 – 0/1)
Pointing out one time deal	Telling the other that he/she will only do this once for him/her.	Mindless (5 – 1/4): “I’ll bring the books to you this time” Mindful (1 – 0/1): “come this way next time, ok”

The phrase type *friendly reaction to gossip* contains all phrases in which participants partake in gossip. A typical mindless response example is “Frans? I had no idea! But good for them, right?”, and is favoured by office-workers. This phrase type also occurs in mindful responses, where it is also favoured by office-workers. A mindful example of this phrase type is “come over here and see for yourself if the new colleague looks appealing enough”.

No opening is a phrase type that codes all occurrences in which participants did not use an opening to start their response. There are no examples since the lack of any form of

opening (like ‘Dear [name]’) results in empty quotes, but it is encountered in both groups. This phrase type also appears in mindfulness expert’s mindful responses.

The phrase type *pointing out one time deal* refers to phrases in which participants tell the other that they will do this only this once. Mindless responses are exemplified by phrases such as “next time, take it up with your boss”, and is favoured by mindfulness experts. This phrase type is also encountered in mindfulness expert’s mindful responses, of which an example is “come this way next time, ok”.

5 – Discussion & conclusions

The study’s goals were to explore what characterizes mindful organizational email communication, and if sender and email message attributes influence the receiver’s decision to respond mindful- or mindlessly. This study found that *receiver*’s mindful responses are characterized in a different way than mindless responses, that *sender* attributes do influence the receiver’s decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner, and that *email message* attributes influence the receiver’s decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner as well.

Receivers’ mindful responses are characterized by being wordier and their use of phrases that indicate awareness of themselves, awareness of the sender, and communication skills. While their mindless responses were characterized by being shorter, and by phrases that contain a friendly response to gossip, points out one-time deals, or lack an opening phrase.

Comparing these results with Chang’s (2013) similar study shows that the email length difference between mindful and mindless email communication is confirmed. Open self-disclosure is also confirmed, even though the disclosed information differs between the studies. Where Chang (2013) found that participants shared likes/dislikes, opinions on controversial viewpoints, and emotional information. This study found that participants share their vulnerabilities (i.e. might not make it on their own, and this way of communication is not sufficient for me). However, this study did confirm that mindful email messages contain more emotional information (i.e. describing feelings, and showing empathy). Chang’s (2013) Q&A mindful email characteristic was also confirmed. Q&A’s were less dominant in this study and are therefore grouped under communication skills. The mindful email characteristics ‘well coordinated’ and ‘extensive use of emoticons’ were not confirmed in this study. Differences between the findings of the two studies may be due to the difference in settings: Chang (2013) studied communication between students of different nationalities,

where this study explored organizational communication. The organizational context may have led to a more formal setting, which prevented the use of emoticons, likes/dislikes, opinions on controversial viewpoints, and predetermined how such emails should be coordinated. It is therefore recommended to further study characteristics of mindful organizational email communication to examine if the above-mentioned discrepancies are indeed due to setting differences.

Looking at differences in phrase type utterances, there does not appear to be a difference between the writing styles or words used by office-workers or mindfulness experts. Looking at the phrase type co-occurrences, office-workers show higher co-occurrences with phrase types in the category *awareness of self* than mindfulness experts (four of the seven phrase types are favoured by OW and one by ME). The other categories also show some difference, but are not favoured by one of the groups in particular. This result implicates that office-workers are more self-oriented. An alternative explanation is the difference in sample sizes: nine office-workers and seven mindfulness experts participated. When the total number of mindful phrase type co-occurrences of the office-workers (109) are divided by nine and multiplied by seven, the result (84.8) equals the mindfulness expert's amount (85).

The group mindfulness experts was added to this study, because it seemed logical that they would excel at mindful communication. Insight in differences between the mindfulness experts' and office-workers' mindful communication could have aided in developing a mindful communication course for office-workers (for example). Therefore the finding of no difference between the groups is very curious. It would be interesting to see if other researchers can ascertain how mindful mindfulness experts actually communicate, or if office-workers are perhaps surprisingly mindful communicators.

Both sender attributes (i.e. professional relationship and gender) influenced the receiver's decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner. Male bosses appear to have the highest chance of receiving mindful responses. Males receiving more mindful responses may be explained by a combination of power and gender roles. Females are considered more submissive and agreeable, which is expected from individuals with low power. While males are considered more dominant and aggressive, which is expected from individuals with high power (Walters et al., 1998). The finding that bosses receive more mindful responses can also be explained by power. Bosses have more power in two distinct ways. Firstly they have the power to lay off employees or to make their working life much more unpleasant. Secondly

they have more power in the sense that they can overrule resistance from employees (van den Brink & Steffen, 2012).

Message attributes (i.e. attitude, mindfulness, show of emotions, gossip, amount of questions, and formality) all influenced the receiver's decision to respond in a mindful or mindless manner, but only the influence of the message's attitude and show of emotions were found significant. Messages that contained emotions received more mindful responses, which can be explained by the receiver needing more time to think about how to react. Needing more time to think things over is part of a mindful response, and this slower response rate as a result of emotions has also been found in other studies (i.e. Hancock et al., 2008). It is further interesting that unfriendly (attitude) and mindless emails received more mindful responses. This appears to implicate that there is no upward spiral of mindful leading to mindful, which was expected (not based on literature, but as in "do good and good will come to you"). At least not in the email communication studied here. This would make implementing mindful communication in organizations that much harder. It would be interesting to see what other researchers discover about this in the future.

Practical implications

These first insights in what characterizes mindful organizational email communication can be a first step into assessing if an employee communicates in a mindful manner. Being able to pinpoint which employees do, and do not, communicate mindfully make it possible to offer a course in mindful communication only to those who need it. This efficient schooling of employees will save the organization precious money.

Believing in the efficacy of mindful communication: it will most definitely save organizations tens of thousands of dollars annually, because many communicational barriers will be avoided, or reduced, thanks to employees communicating in a mindful manner.

Limitations & Recommendations

Considering the size of this study, the total of sender and message attributes may have been too much. It did result in interesting findings, but it is impossible to tell if a single attribute is responsible for the participant's decision to respond mindfully or mindlessly. Therefore this study recommends that future research study a single or several of the eight email attributes at a time. To insure a well balanced experiment. Furthermore the amount of office-workers and mindfulness experts were inconsistent, nor did all the participants conform to the request to

answer five emails mindful- and mindlessly. It is recommended that future studies aim for equal sample sizes and limit the analyses to complete data.

Future research could further study mindful organizational communication in a broader context than the current study, because mindful communication can occur in all aspect of organizational communication (i.e. face-to-face, telephone, conference calls, news letter, etc.).

Finally future research could study if mindful communication does indeed lead to more effective communication in an organizational context, as was found in other contexts (i.e. intercultural communication, communication training, and healthcare).

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Appendices

Appendix A – Questionnaire

Dit formulier bewerken

Onderzoek emailcommunicatie

Introductie =====

Geachte participant,

Als eerste wil ik u graag bedanken voor het deelnemen aan dit onderzoek. U helpt mij hiermee bijzonder en draagt tevens bij aan nieuw inzicht in de onderzoeksvelden effectieve en mindful emailcommunicatie.

Ten tweede wil ik u graag nogmaals gerust stellen dat alle data anoniem behandeld wordt.

Tot slot, door het afronden van deze online enquête geeft u aan dat u begrijpt waar u aan deelneemt en geeft u mij toestemming om de door u aangeleverde gegevens te gebruiken voor het onderzoek. Tot 24 uur na afronden van de enquête kan u uw medewerking intrekken. Uw gegevens worden dan niet opgenomen in het onderzoek, maar verwijderd.

Doel van het onderzoek -----

Het doel van het onderzoek is te ontdekken wat de karakteristieken zijn van bedachtzaam en vluchtig geschreven e-mails. De focus ligt daarbij op hoe de emails geschreven zijn. Dit inzicht biedt toekomstig onderzoek de mogelijkheid om zulke e-mails snel te identificeren om zo vragen omtrent, bijvoorbeeld, de effectiviteit van zulke e-mails in een organisatorische context te kunnen bepalen. Beide vormen zouden namelijk hun eigen voordelen kunnen hebben.

Deze enquête -----

Voor dit onderzoek wil ik u vragen te reageren op de 10 emails hieronder. Het is de bedoeling dat u op 5 emails bedachtzaam reageert en op 5 vluchtig. U mag zelf weten op welke 5 u bedachtzaam danwel vluchtig reageert.

Iedere email hieronder is voorzien van een tekstvlak voor uw reactie. Daarnaast kunt u aangeven of die reactie bedachtzaam of vluchtig was. Ten behoeve van het onderzoek kunt u daaronder aangeven wat u bewogen heeft om te kiezen voor een bedachtzame of juist vluchtige reactie. Helemaal onderaan de enquête staan nog een aantal algemene vragen en heeft u de mogelijkheid om uw emailadres in te voeren indien u een kopie van het eindresultaat wilt ontvangen.

Graag wil ik u vragen eerst alle 10 de emails te bekijken, zodat u zich goed in kan leven tijdens het schrijven van de reacties. Wellicht dat u zelfs in uw hoofd emails kan matchen met echte collega's om uw reacties zo realistisch mogelijk te maken. (U kunt vrij door de emails scrollen zonder dat uw reacties verloren gaan.)

Om uw reacties nog realistischer te maken wil ik u graag vragen om u in te leven in de volgende situatie:

"U bent op uw werk en opent uw werkmail inbox. Aldaar ziet u dat u 10 nieuwe emails heeft ontvangen van collega's, bazen, secretaresses en indirecte collega's. U heeft vandaag een erg drukke agenda en wil daarom zo snel mogelijk verder met andere taken."

Om de sfeer erin te houden wil ik u vragen om eerst de emails te beantwoorden, voordat u verder gaat met de andere vragen ("was uw reactie bedachtzaam/vluchtig" en "wat heeft u bewogen..."). U mag zelf kiezen welke 5 emails u bedachtzaam beantwoord en welke 5 vluchtig.

Hartelijk bedankt zover en veel plezier met reageren :)

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Let wel: Uw reacties worden niet tussentijds opgeslagen. Pas wanneer u aan het eind van de enquête op verzenden drukt, worden uw reacties opgeslagen.

*Vereist

Email 1 - Iris (baas)

Onderwerp: Project Sander

Beste Jan/Linda,

Zojuist kwam Sander {collega andere afdeling} mijn kamer binnen en vroeg poeslief of er iemand op onze afdeling is die hem mogelijk zou kunnen helpen met zijn project.

Volgens mij raakt zijn project die van jou over de nieuwe huisstijl. Ik heb hem daarom aangegeven dat hij het aan jou voor mag leggen.

Wil je laten weten hoe het gegaan is?

Bedankt,

Iris {baas}

Wat is uw reactie op de mail van Iris? *

Was uw reactie op de mail van Iris bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

- Bedachtzaam
 Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Iris heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *

Email 2 - Jan-Willem (baas)

Onderwerp: Gevolg vergadering, kabaal en project.

Beste Jan/Linda,

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Tijdens de vergadering kwam weer naar boven dat het urenregistratiesysteem slecht gebruikt wordt. Hier word ik ondertussen erg moe van. Aangezien jij zo handig bent met het systeem mag jij gaan zorgen dat de andere gebruikers er net zo handig in worden. Heb je hier vragen over?

Verder hoorde ik laatst weer een cliënt/klant uit zijn dak gaan in jouw kamer. Dit stoort mij ontzettend, dus ik wil dat niet meer horen. Of heb je hulp nodig hoe om te gaan met cliënten/klanten?

En omdat ik je zo'n geschikte peer vindt, krijg je er een project bij. Ik heb genoeg gezeur aan mijn hoofd en iedereen is druk, dus klagen heeft geen zin. Geen probleem?

Kop op! We werken allemaal hard!

Jan-Willem {baas}

Wat is uw reactie op de email van Jan-Willem? *

Was uw reactie op de mail van Jan-Willem bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

- Bedachtzaam
 Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Jan-Willem heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *

Email 3 - Henk (baas)

Onderwerp: Zou je kunnen invallen?

Hoi Jan/Linda,

Lucia zou vandaag een aantal functioneringsgesprekken afnemen, maar ze heeft zich zojuist ziek gemeld. Ik vind het erg vervelend om te vragen, maar wil jij de gesprekken voor vandaag overnemen? Het gaat om vier gesprekken. Judith {secretaresse} heeft de agendaverzoeken al naar jou gestuurd als het goed is.

Ik hoop dat Lucia morgen weer beter is, want anders ben ik bang dat ik je nog een keer moet vragen. Dat zou ik echt heel vervelend vinden, dus ik duim dat ze snel beter wordt.

Ze heeft trouwens chlamydia. Heb jij enig idee hoe lang je daar niet door kan werken?

Je zou me ontzettend blij maken als je de gesprekken over wilt nemen!

Henk {baas}

Wat is uw reactie op de mail van Henk? *

Was uw reactie op de mail van Henk bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

- Bedachtzaam
 Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Henk heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *

Email 4 - Marit (directe collega)

Onderwerp: Help! :(

Hoi Jan/Linda,

Sorry dat ik je stoer, want ik weet dat je druk bent, maar ik heb echt je hulp hard nodig! Ik ben helemaal in paniek, want Jan-Willem {jullie baas} vertelde mij net dat mijn deadline drie weken naar voren is gehaald! :S

Ik weet dat wij nu al een maand samen met Richard {andere directe collega} heel druk zijn met dat andere project, maar denk je dat jullie even zonder mij kunnen? Ik weet dat het veel gevraagd is, want jij hebt ook veel op je bord, maar het zou mij echt super helpen!

Zou jij het met Richard willen overleggen? Ik durf het niet met hem op te nemen, want ik kan zo slecht met hem opschieten en hij is altijd onvriendelijk tegen mij :(Ik weet dat jij hem ook niet mag, maar jij staat altijd zo sterk in je schoenen! :)

Ik hoor graag van je!

Liefs, Marit {directe collega}

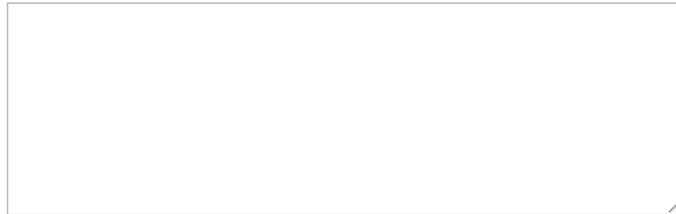
Wat is uw reactie op de mail van Marit? *



Was uw reactie op de mail van Marit bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

- Bedachtzaam
 Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Marit heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *



Email 5 - Richard (directe collega)

Onderwerp: -

Jan/Linda,

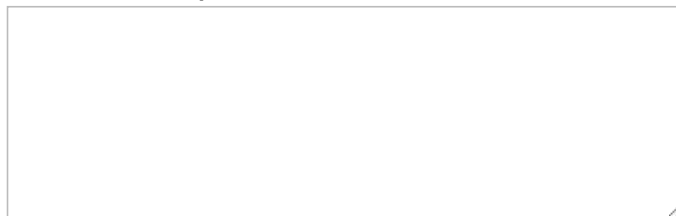
Ik ben dat gezeur op de afdeling helemaal zat! Nu moet ik nog weer meer papierwerk invullen! Zit daardoor wel mooi in de knoop, dus dat project waar wij nu een maand samen aan werken kom ik voorlopig niet aan toe. Zoek daar maar iemand anders voor, ok?

Voor dat papierwerk heb ik nog wat cliëntgegevens nodig, dus die kom ik zo bij je ophalen in de pauze. Ben nu druk met ander papiergekloot! Het houdt niet op! Je kan wel een keer in je kamer lunchen, toch?

Top, tot zo!

Richard {directe collega}

Wat is uw reactie op de mail van Richard? *



Was uw reactie op de mail van Richard bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

- Bedachtzaam

Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Richard heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *

Email 6 - Tom (directe collega)

Onderwerp: Presentatie overmorgen

Hoi Jan/Linda!

Overmorgen zou ik een presentatie geven aan de directie, maar er is iets tussengekomen waardoor ik niet meer kan. Neem jij de presentatie over? De sheets en aantekeningen vind je in de bijlage.

Je presenteert trouwens met Frank, maar die valt nogal eens stil, dus neem voor de zekerheid zijn teksten ook even door.

Je bent de beste!

Tom {directe collega}

Wat is uw reactie op de mail van Tom? *

Was uw reactie op de mail van Tom bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

Bedachtzaam

Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Tom heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *

Email 7 - Annabel (secretaresse)

Onderwerp: heb je die boeken over de wetgeving voor mij?

hoi jan/linda

wil je mij even die boeken over de wetgeving brengen? iris {jullie baas} wil dat ik wat voor d'r onderzoek, maar ik moet bij de telefoon blijven

ik hoorde trouwens dat frans met lucia van accounting gaat sinds het dauwtrappen. wist je dat al?

Reageer even snel, k?

knuf, Annabel {secretaresse}

Wat is uw reactie op de mail van Annabel? *

Was uw reactie op de mail van Annabel bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

- Bedachtzaam
 Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Annabel heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *

Email 8 - Judith (secretaresse)

Onderwerp: Documenten Henk

Hoi Jan/Linda,

Voor Henk {jullie baas} moet ik wat documenten bij elkaar zoeken (volgens mij denkt hij echt dat ik alle tijd heb!). Ik heb echter geen idee waar ik die kan vinden! Daarnaast heb ik de middag al vol. Aangezien een aantal van de stukken over jouw workload gaan, kan jij de documenten vast vinden. Daarnaast zie ik in jouw agenda dat er niks gepland staat vanmiddag.

Hieronder vind jij daarom de mail van Henk. Daarin staat welke stukken ik van jou nodig heb.

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Dank,

Judith {secretaresse}

Ps: Las net dat jouw functie op het spel staat met de aankomende reorganisatie. Dit nieuws moet echt rot voor je zijn.

Wat is uw reactie op de mail van Judith? *

Was uw reactie op de mail van Judith bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

- Bedachtzaam
 Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Judith heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *

Email 9 - Francine (collega andere afdeling)

Onderwerp: Urenregistratie nachtmerrie!

Hoi Jan/Linda!

Ik zit helemaal in de rats! :(Ik ben nu al bijna een uur bezig met het invoeren van de urenregistratie, maar het systeem geeft steeds foutmeldingen :S Nu weet ik wel dat jij niet van de ICT bent, maar een collega zei dat jij erg handig bent met het urenregistratiesysteem! :)

Ik begrijp dat het ongelegen komt, omdat je erg druk bent, maar heb je straks even tijd om langs te lopen? Dat zou ik echt super lief van je vinden! :D

Groetjes,

Francine {collega andere afdeling}

Wat is uw reactie op de mail van Francine? *

Was uw reactie op de mail van Francine bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

- Bedachtzaam
 Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Francine heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *

Email 10 - Sander (collega andere afdeling)

Onderwerp: Om aan te vullen

Hey,

In de bijlage zit een document over een project waar ik mee bezig ben. Ik hoorde dat dit zijdelings jouw project over de nieuwe huisstijl raakt. Vul het document even aan wil je?

Trouwens, ik hoorde dat die nieuwe meid bij jullie er top uitziet. Is het de moeite waard om een keer langs te lopen?

Top!

Sander {collega andere afdeling}

Wat is uw reactie op de mail van Sander? *

Was uw reactie op de mail van Sander bedachtzaam of vluchtig? *

- Bedachtzaam
 Vluchtig

Wat aan de mail van Sander heeft u bewogen om op die manier te reageren? *

Laatste vragen

Hieronder nog een paar algemene vragen. Mocht u het uiteindelijke artikel willen ontvangen, dan kunt u hieronder ook een emailadres naar keuze opgeven.

Wat is uw leeftijd? *

Wat is uw opleidingsniveau? *

Hoeveel jaar werkervaring heeft u? *

Hoeveel jaar mindfulness ervaring heeft u? *

Emailadres?

Indien u het uiteindelijke artikel wilt ontvangen. (Emailadressen worden niet meegenomen in het onderzoek.)

Wat is uw naam?

Als u uw naam hier invult, dan ontvangt u geen herinneringsmails meer na het verzenden van deze enquête. (Uw naam wordt niet meegenomen in het onderzoek.)

Heeft u feedback voor mij?

Over de enquête? Onderzoek algemeen? Anders? Overige vragen? Op-/Aanmerkingen?

Afsluiting

Hartelijk bedankt voor het invullen van deze enquête! U heeft mij hier ontzettend mee

Characteristics of mindful organizational email communication

geholpen!

Mocht ik iets voor u kunnen betekenen in de toekomst, dan hoor ik dat graag!

Rick Tuijl
06 22 78 50 73
r.tuijl@student.utwente.nl

Master student Corporate and Organizational Communication
Faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences
Universiteit Twente

Verzenden

Verzend nooit wachtwoorden via Google Formulieren.

Mogelijk gemaakt door

Deze inhoud is niet gemaakt of goedgekeurd door Google.

[Misbruik rapporteren](#) - [Servicevoorwaarden](#) - [Aanvullende voorwaarden](#)

Appendix B – List of codes

Code	#	Code	#
Agreeing to argument	10	Providing extra info	16
Agreeing to request	75	Providing options	3
Apologizing	5	Q&A	13
Asking agreement	12	Reassuring	1
Asking clarification	14	Referring to other mail	15
Asking opinion	6	Referring to other part of mail	2
Asking understanding	2	Rejecting help	1
Being thoughtful	8	Reprimanding	6
Call for action	1	Request consultation	5
Complementing	3	Request F2F time	20
Denying request	15	Request other to act	20
Describing feelings	20	Semi formal ending	54
Describing mood	1	Semi formal opening	37
Disagreeing with argument	1	Semi informal ending	7
Formal ending	10	Setting conditions	3
Formal opening	39	Showing effort to comply	21
Friendly reaction to gossip	18	Showing empathy	27
Informal ending	49	Showing good intentions	13
Informal opening	77	Showing gratitude	2
Informal pre-ending	1	Showing interest	2
Might request help	3	Showing understanding	6
No ending	40	Stating curiosity	1
No opening	7	Stating receptiveness to help	1
Offering help	6	Suggesting alternative	72
Pointing out consequences	12	Summarizing	3
Pointing out one time deal	6	Taking action	7
Pointing out time constraints	39	Thanking the other	11
Pointing out typo	1	Trying to change responsibility	9
Politely denying request	32	Trying to share the load	5
Politely reprimanding	15	Unfriendly reaction to gossip	6
Providing argument	62	Wishful thinking	1
Providing excuse	14	Wishing good luck	10
Providing explanation	2		

Appendix C – Approval ethics committee

[BCE] Approval Ethics Committee Inbox x Print Share

 **Universiteit Twente - Beoordeling Commissie Ethiek** <no-reply@utwente.nl> May 12 Star Reply Dropdown
to me, h.a.vanvuuren, a.j.kragt, j.n.vanderweerd, j.f.gosselt Dropdown

Dear researcher,

This is a notification from the web application form for intended research proposals Ethics Committee Behavioural Science.

Requestnr. : 15248
Title : Mindful email communication in organizations
Date of application : 08-05-2015
Researcher : R. Tuijl
Supervisor : H.A. van Vuuren
Commission : J.F. Gosselt
Usage of SONA : No

Your research has been approved by the Ethics Committee.