

Mindfulness, Happiness, and Creative Performance in the Public Sector: The Mediating Role of Creative Process Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Creativity has become increasingly important for public sector organizations as they face complex policy demands, digital transformation, and heightened expectations for accountability and performance. However, creative performance among public employees is often constrained by rigid procedures and highly regulated work environments. This study aims to examine the effects of mindfulness and happiness at work on creative performance, with creative process engagement as a mediating mechanism, within a public sector context. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 176 employees of the Directorate General of Treasury, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression, and mediation analysis. The findings indicate that mindfulness and happiness at work both have positive effects on creative performance. Happiness at work emerges as a stronger direct predictor of creativity, while mindfulness primarily influences creative performance through creative process engagement. Creative process engagement is confirmed as a key mechanism that translates psychological resources into creative outcomes. These results suggest that creativity in public sector organizations is best understood as a process-driven phenomenon, where positive psychological conditions must be accompanied by active engagement in creative work processes. The study offers practical insights for public organizations seeking to foster sustainable creativity under conditions of high regulation and formalization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity has increasingly become a critical capability for public sector organizations as they face rapid digital transformation, growing policy complexity, and rising expectations for transparency,

accountability, and performance. Public institutions are no longer expected merely to implement predefined regulations, but are also required to generate analytical insights, adaptive solutions, and innovative approaches to complex socio-economic

challenges. In this context, creative performance among public employees plays a strategic role in enhancing organizational effectiveness and sustaining institutional relevance [1], [12].

Creative performance refers to an individual's ability to generate novel and useful ideas, processes, or solutions that contribute to organizational objectives [4], [21]. In public sector organizations, creativity is generally expressed through improvements in policy formulation, analytical quality, service delivery, and problem-solving rather than through commercial innovation. However, despite its importance, creativity in public organizations often remains constrained by rigid bureaucratic structures, strict procedural compliance, hierarchical decision-making, and high workload pressures. Such conditions may limit employees' cognitive flexibility and willingness to engage in exploratory or innovative thinking, particularly in highly regulated environments [1], [25].

Recent studies have emphasized the role of psychological resources in fostering creative performance at work. Mindfulness, defined as a state of present-moment awareness characterized by attentiveness and non-judgment, has been associated with improved concentration, emotional regulation, and cognitive clarity [5], [6]. Similarly, happiness at work—encompassing positive emotions, engagement, and a sense of meaningfulness—has been shown to enhance motivation, well-being, and work performance [7], [12], [20]. Empirical evidence also suggests that happiness at work is closely related to creative behavior, as positive affect broadens cognitive resources and encourages flexible thinking [8], [15].

Nevertheless, empirical findings regarding the direct relationship between mindfulness and creative performance remain mixed. While some studies report positive effects of mindfulness on creativity, others suggest that mindfulness does not automatically translate into creative output, particularly in organizational contexts characterized by high levels of regulation and institutional pressure [5], [6], [18]. These

inconsistencies indicate that psychological resources alone may be insufficient to explain creative performance and that additional mechanisms are needed to clarify how mindfulness and happiness influence creativity in practice.

To address this issue, recent literature has highlighted creative process engagement (CPE) as a critical mechanism linking psychological conditions to creative outcomes. Creative process engagement refers to the extent to which individuals actively involve themselves in core cognitive activities such as problem identification, information searching, and idea generation [21]. This process-oriented perspective suggests that creativity does not emerge automatically from positive psychological states; rather, it requires sustained cognitive and behavioral engagement in creative tasks. Employees may experience high levels of mindfulness or happiness, yet fail to produce creative outcomes if these psychological resources are not translated into active engagement in creative processes [5], [16].

Despite growing scholarly interest, limited research has simultaneously examined mindfulness, happiness at work, and creative process engagement within public sector organizations, particularly in developing countries. Most existing studies focus on private-sector or creative industries, leaving a gap in understanding how psychological and process-based factors interact to influence creativity in highly regulated public institutions [1], [14], [20]. This gap is especially relevant for public financial organizations, where employees must balance strict compliance requirements with the need for analytical judgment, adaptability, and continuous improvement.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the effects of mindfulness and happiness at work on creative performance, with creative process engagement as a mediating variable, among employees of the Directorate General of Treasury, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia. By integrating psychological resources and creative processes into a unified analytical framework, this research provides a more

nuanced explanation of how creativity emerges in public sector settings. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature by clarifying the contextual role of mindfulness and happiness, reinforcing the central importance of creative process engagement, and offering practical insights for public organizations seeking to foster sustainable creativity under conditions of high regulation and accountability.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness is commonly defined as a state of present-moment awareness characterized by attention and non-judgment toward one's internal and external experiences (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In organizational settings, mindfulness enables employees to become more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and work-related behaviors, allowing them to respond to job demands in a more reflective rather than automatic manner (Good et al., 2016).

Previous studies suggest that mindfulness contributes to improved concentration, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being at work (Hülsheger et al., 2013). By enhancing attentional control, mindfulness helps individuals process information more carefully and remain open to different perspectives, which are cognitive conditions often associated with creativity. Mindful employees are less likely to be distracted by irrelevant stimuli and more capable of maintaining focus during complex tasks.

However, empirical findings regarding the relationship between mindfulness and creative performance remain inconsistent. While mindfulness may support cognitive clarity and awareness, it does not always directly translate into creative outcomes. In highly structured and regulated organizational environments, such as public sector institutions, mindfulness may primarily foster task focus and compliance rather than idea generation. This suggests that mindfulness alone may be insufficient to enhance creative performance unless it is

accompanied by active involvement in creative processes.

2.2 Happiness at Work

Happiness at work refers to a positive psychological condition encompassing positive emotions, work engagement, and a sense of meaningfulness derived from one's job (Fisher, 2010). Employees who experience happiness at work tend to demonstrate higher levels of motivation, persistence, and enthusiasm in performing their tasks (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011). Unlike temporary mood states, happiness at work represents a more enduring evaluation of one's work experience.

The relationship between happiness and creativity has been widely discussed in the literature. According to the broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions broaden individuals' cognitive and behavioral repertoires, enabling them to explore novel ideas and alternative solutions (Fredrickson, 2001). Empirical studies have shown that employees who experience positive affect are more likely to engage in creative behaviors and generate innovative ideas (Amabile et al., 2005).

In the public sector context, happiness at work plays a particularly important role due to limited extrinsic rewards and high job demands. When public employees experience happiness derived from meaningful work and a sense of contribution to society, they are more likely to invest cognitive and emotional resources in their tasks. As a result, happiness at work is expected to positively influence creative performance by encouraging employees to engage more actively in problem-solving and idea generation.

2.3 Creative Process Engagement

Creative process engagement (CPE) refers to the extent to which individuals actively involve themselves in the cognitive activities necessary for creativity, including problem identification, information searching, and idea generation (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Rather than viewing creativity solely as an outcome, this perspective

emphasizes creativity as a process that requires sustained cognitive effort and engagement.

Zhang and Bartol (2010) argue that creative performance emerges when individuals dedicate time and attention to understanding problems deeply, seeking relevant information, and generating alternative ideas. Psychological resources such as mindfulness and happiness may create favorable internal conditions; however, without creative process engagement, these resources may not be translated into observable creative outcomes.

In line with this perspective, creative process engagement is positioned as a key mediating mechanism that explains how mindfulness and happiness influence creative performance. Mindfulness may enhance awareness and attentional focus, while happiness may increase motivation and enthusiasm, but creative performance is achieved only when employees actively engage in creative processes. Therefore, creative process engagement plays a central role in linking psychological states to creative performance, particularly in structured organizational contexts such as public sector institutions.

3. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach. The quantitative approach was chosen to examine the relationships between mindfulness, happiness at work, creative process engagement, and creative performance, as well as to test the mediating role of creative process engagement. The research was conducted in a public sector organizational context, namely the Directorate General of Treasury, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, which operates under formal regulations and standardized work procedures.

3.1 Research Subject and Object

The subjects of this study were employees of the Directorate General of

Treasury, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia. The object of the study focused on individual-level variables, including mindfulness, happiness at work, creative process engagement, and creative performance. These variables were examined to understand how psychological conditions and creative processes influence creative performance within a public sector organization.

3.2 Time and Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Indonesia in 2024. Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed to employees across various units within the Directorate General of Treasury. The online data collection method was selected to facilitate efficient distribution and to ensure respondent anonymity.

3.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from established instruments that had been used in previous studies and adjusted to the context of this research. Mindfulness was measured using items that reflect employees' awareness and attentiveness in carrying out their work activities. Happiness at work was measured using indicators representing positive emotions, work engagement, and a sense of meaningfulness at work.

Creative process engagement was measured using items developed by Zhang and Bartol, covering problem identification, information searching, and idea generation. Creative performance was measured using self-reported items reflecting employees' perceptions of their creative contributions in the workplace.

All measurement items were assessed using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The use of a four-point scale was intended to eliminate neutral response options and encourage respondents to provide more definitive answers.

3.4 Sampling Method and Data Collection

The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling, with the criteria that respondents were active employees of the Directorate General of Treasury. Questionnaires were distributed online through internal communication channels. A total of 176 valid responses were collected and used for data analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical analysis was used to describe respondent characteristics and the distribution of research variables. Hypothesis testing was performed using multiple linear regression analysis to examine the direct effects of mindfulness and happiness at work on creative performance. In addition, mediation analysis was conducted to test the role of creative process engagement as a mediating variable in the relationships between mindfulness, happiness at work, and creative performance. The significance of the relationships was determined based on regression coefficients and significance levels.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Model and Hypotheses Overview

This study is grounded in the perspective that creativity in organizations is not solely the result of individual traits or momentary psychological states, but rather emerges through a dynamic interaction between psychological resources and active engagement in creative processes. In the context of public sector organizations, where work is characterized by high levels of formalization and regulatory constraints,

understanding this interaction becomes particularly important.

The proposed research model examines the relationships between mindfulness and happiness at work as key psychological antecedents, creative process engagement as a mediating mechanism, and creative performance as the ultimate outcome variable. Mindfulness reflects employees' present-moment awareness and attentional focus in their work activities, while happiness at work represents a positive psychological condition characterized by positive emotions, engagement, and meaningfulness. Creative process engagement captures the extent to which employees actively participate in cognitive activities related to creativity, including problem identification, information searching, and idea generation. Creative performance refers to employees' ability to generate novel and useful ideas that contribute to organizational objectives.

Based on prior literature, mindfulness is expected to enhance employees' awareness and cognitive clarity, which may support their involvement in creative processes. However, due to the structured nature of public sector organizations, mindfulness may not directly translate into creative performance without active engagement in creative tasks. In contrast, happiness at work is expected to have a more direct influence on creative performance, as positive emotional states are associated with greater motivation, cognitive flexibility, and willingness to explore new ideas. Creative process engagement is therefore positioned as a central mechanism that explains how psychological conditions are transformed into observable creative outcomes.

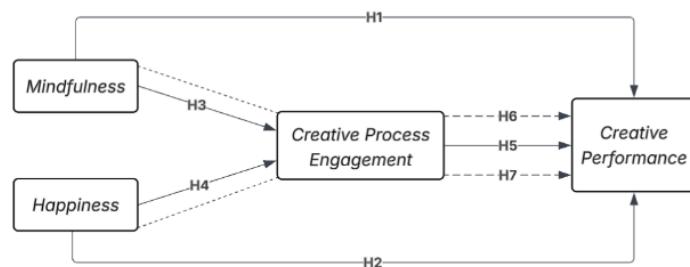


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on this theoretical framework, the research model proposes both direct effects of mindfulness and happiness at work on creative performance and indirect effects through creative process engagement. The conceptual model reflects a partial mediation structure, acknowledging that psychological resources may influence creative performance through multiple pathways.

4.2 Research Hypotheses

To empirically test the proposed research model, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1:** Mindfulness has a positive effect on creative performance.
- H2:** Happiness at work has a positive effect on creative performance.
- H3:** Mindfulness has a positive effect on creative process engagement.
- H4:** Happiness at work has a positive effect on creative process engagement.
- H5:** Creative process engagement has a positive effect on creative performance.
- H6:** Creative process engagement mediates the relationship between mindfulness and creative performance.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Mindfulness	176	3.64	0.56	2.00	4.00
Happiness at Work	176	3.72	0.51	2.00	4.00
Creative Process Engagement	176	3.60	0.58	2.00	4.00
Creative Performance	176	3.48	0.60	2.00	4.00

Source: Processed primary data (2024)

The results indicate that all variables have mean values above the midpoint of the scale, suggesting that respondents generally experience positive psychological conditions and demonstrate relatively high engagement in creative-related behaviors. Happiness at work shows the highest mean value, indicating that respondents perceive their work as meaningful and emotionally positive. Creative performance, while slightly lower, remains at a relatively high level, reflecting employees' perceptions of their ability to contribute ideas and improvements within their work context.

H7: Creative process engagement mediates the relationship between happiness at work and creative performance.

These hypotheses reflect the assumption that while psychological resources are important, creative performance in public sector organizations is most likely to emerge when employees actively engage in creative processes. The hypotheses were tested using multiple regression and mediation analysis, and the results are presented and discussed in the subsequent subsections.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions regarding mindfulness, happiness at work, creative process engagement, and creative performance. All variables were measured using a four-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree), with a total of 176 valid responses analyzed. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the research variables.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the research variables and to assess potential multicollinearity issues prior to regression analysis. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix Between Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
Mindfulness	1			
Happiness at Work	0.64**	1		
Creative Process Engagement	0.71**	0.75**	1	
Creative Performance	0.59**	0.68**	0.73**	1

*Note: *p < 0.01

Source: Processed primary data (2024)

The results show that all variables are positively and significantly correlated with one another. Mindfulness and happiness at work are strongly correlated with creative process engagement, indicating that employees who are more mindful and happier at work tend to be more actively involved in creative processes. This finding provides initial empirical support for the assumption that psychological resources are closely linked to creative engagement.

Creative process engagement exhibits the strongest correlation with creative performance. This pattern suggests that active involvement in creative processes plays a crucial role in translating psychological conditions into observable creative outcomes.

The positive correlations between mindfulness, happiness at work, and creative performance further indicate that both cognitive and affective resources are relevant for creativity in the workplace.

Importantly, none of the correlation coefficients exceed critical thresholds, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a concern. This confirms that the variables represent related but distinct constructs and can be included simultaneously in regression and mediation models.

4.5 Results of Hypothesis Testing

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the direct effects of mindfulness and happiness at work on creative performance. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	β	t-value	Sig.
Mindfulness	0.437	7.84	0.000
Happiness at Work	0.556	9.62	0.000
R ²			0.62

Source: Processed primary data (2024)

The findings indicate that both mindfulness and happiness at work have positive and statistically significant effects on creative performance. Happiness at work shows a stronger standardized coefficient, suggesting that positive emotional and

motivational states play a more dominant role in predicting creative performance. Employees who experience enjoyment, engagement, and meaning in their work are more likely to generate ideas, propose

improvements, and demonstrate creative behavior.

Mindfulness also has a significant positive effect on creative performance, indicating that attentional focus and present-moment awareness contribute to creativity. Mindful employees may be better able to recognize problems, process information deeply, and avoid cognitive distractions, which can enhance their creative output. However, the relatively smaller coefficient compared to happiness at work suggests that mindfulness alone may not be sufficient to maximize creative performance without additional supporting mechanisms.

The R^2 value indicates that a substantial proportion of variance in creative

performance is explained by mindfulness and happiness at work. Overall, these findings provide empirical support for H1 and H2, confirming the importance of psychological resources in fostering creative performance among public sector employees.

4.6 Mediation Analysis

To further examine the underlying mechanisms through which mindfulness and happiness at work influence creative performance, mediation analysis using the Sobel test was conducted. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Mediation Analysis of Creative Process Engagement

Path	β	t / z	Sig.	Result
Mindfulness → CPE	0.660	11.12	0.000	Significant
Happiness → CPE	0.756	13.84	0.000	Significant
CPE → Creative Performance	0.610	10.27	0.000	Significant
Indirect Effect (Mindfulness → CP via CPE)	—	7.98	0.000	Partial Mediation
Indirect Effect (Happiness → CP via CPE)	—	7.10	0.000	Partial Mediation

Source: Processed primary data (2024)

The analysis shows that both mindfulness and happiness at work have strong and statistically significant effects on creative process engagement. This indicates that employees who are mindful and happy at work are more likely to engage actively in creative-related activities, such as identifying problems, searching for information, and generating alternative ideas.

Creative process engagement, in turn, has a significant positive effect on creative performance. This finding highlights the importance of creative engagement as a direct predictor of creative outcomes. The Sobel test confirms that creative process engagement partially mediates the relationships between mindfulness and creative performance, as well as between happiness at work and creative performance.

Partial mediation suggests that psychological resources influence creative performance through two pathways: directly and indirectly through creative process engagement. While happiness at work can directly enhance creative performance, both

mindfulness and happiness exert additional indirect effects by increasing employees' involvement in creative processes. These results support H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7 and emphasize the central role of creative process engagement in the proposed model.

4.7 Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for a process-oriented understanding of creativity in public sector organizations. The significant effects of mindfulness and happiness at work on creative performance demonstrate that psychological resources play an important role in shaping creative behavior, even in highly regulated and bureaucratic environments.

Happiness at work emerges as a particularly influential factor, highlighting the importance of positive emotional and motivational states in driving creativity. In the context of the Directorate General of Treasury, happiness at work may stem from meaningful public service, professional competence, and

organizational support, which motivate employees to engage in creative problem-solving despite procedural constraints.

Mindfulness contributes to creativity both directly and indirectly. Its strong influence on creative process engagement suggests that mindfulness enhances the cognitive conditions necessary for creative work, such as focus, reflection, and openness to information. However, the mediation results indicate that mindfulness primarily exerts its creative impact through engagement in creative processes rather than acting as a standalone driver of creative performance.

Creative process engagement is confirmed as the central mechanism linking psychological resources to creative outcomes. By actively engaging in problem identification, information searching, and idea generation, employees transform favorable psychological conditions into tangible creative contributions. In public sector organizations, creativity is often expressed through incremental improvements, analytical refinement, and policy insights rather than radical innovation. The findings of this study underscore the importance of fostering both employee well-being and structured opportunities for creative engagement to sustain creativity within public sector governance frameworks.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the influence of mindfulness and happiness at work on creative performance, with creative process engagement as a mediating mechanism, within a public sector organizational context. The findings demonstrate that both mindfulness and happiness at work play important roles in shaping employees' creative performance. Happiness at work emerges as a strong driver of creativity, reflecting the importance of positive emotional experiences and meaningful work in motivating employees to generate ideas and improve work processes. Mindfulness contributes to creativity by enhancing employees' awareness and focus, which support their engagement in creative activities. Most importantly, creative process

engagement is confirmed as a central mechanism that translates psychological resources into creative outcomes. These results suggest that creativity in public sector organizations is best understood as a process-driven phenomenon, where favorable psychological conditions must be accompanied by active involvement in creative work processes to produce meaningful creative performance.

Research Implications and Suggestions

Based on the results of this study, several implications and suggestions can be proposed for both practice and future research. Public sector organizations are encouraged to foster happiness at work by creating supportive work environments, meaningful job design, and positive leadership practices that enhance employee engagement and motivation. In addition, organizations should support creative process engagement by providing opportunities for problem exploration, knowledge sharing, and idea development within formal work structures. Mindfulness initiatives may be beneficial when integrated into daily work practices rather than treated as standalone programs, as their impact on creativity is strengthened through active creative engagement. For future research, it is recommended to examine these relationships using longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to capture dynamic changes over time and to explore additional contextual factors that may influence creativity in different public sector settings.

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