

## Original Research Article

# Conceptualizing the Effects of Non-Secular Mindfulness Interventions in Overcoming the Challenges Related To Work-Life Imbalance

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Today's working world poses many challenges to employees while compressed with personal struggles in daily life. Worker burnout and continuously recruiting and training highly qualified workers is a significant challenge that affects organizational performance. Therefore, both organizations and employees are struggling to find the harmony of personal life and professional life. There are limited studies that investigate how 'mindfulness' can be used as a tool to balance working and family life. This conceptual study aims at identifying the challenges to work-life balance and how those challenges can be mitigated or overcome through the right mindfulness in a Buddhist concept which is mainly based on the noble eightfold path. According to the Buddhist Pali canonical reading non-secular, there are clear explanations related to balancing personal life and work-life through developing ethical conduct (*Sila*), mental stability (*Samadhi*), and wisdom (*Pañña*). This paper introduces a conceptual framework that outlines how practicing mindfulness could effectively mitigate the challenges of work-life balance by understanding the true nature of five aggregates. Furthermore, it suggests strategies that could be adopted by organizations to support the work-life balance of their employees.

**Keywords:** Challengers of work-life balance, Five aggregates, Mindfulness, Noble eightfold path, Work-life balance.

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## INTRODUCTION

Work-Life Balance (WLB) has become a more challenging mission in modern society due to various conflicting responsibilities and commitments. A study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) found depression a common illness globally, with more than 264 million people being adversely affected by it (WHO, 2020). It can cause a person to function poorly at work and in the family. It also leads to anxiety disorders and suicidal tendencies (Nepon et al., 2010). Divorce rates have doubled over the past two decades among persons over age 35 (Kennedy and Ruggles, 2014). The working environments are becoming flexible, but workers tend to work longer hours. Research conducted by an international organization of more than 10,000 employees found that white-collar workers who work overtime hours have a 60 percent higher risk of heart-related problems than other workers (Wedgwood, 2019). The employees get agitated quickly, and non-secular are increasingly displaying negative job behaviors (Vangel, 2011). This evidence depicts a bleak picture of our society's future, where stress and burnout are becoming standard elements of life, lack of emotional intelligence leading to toxic work and family environments. In terms of

theoretical finding of work-life balance, there are also several concepts which have been discussed with different arguments such as overall appraisal approach, components approach, compensation model, and segmentation model. Each theory has interpreted satisfaction and good functioning, managing time and responsibilities, relationship management, boundary management, respectively (Rantanen et al., 2011). A study has revealed since people attempt to manage all the duties, responsibilities and relationships through their daily lives, they easily get stress and pressure in different manner such physical stress, psychological stress, psychosocial stress, and psychospiritual stress (Rantanen et al., 2011; Folkman, 2013).

In the wake of increasing work-life challenges, people resort to spiritual and non-spiritual self-help methods to find short term solutions to their life's challenges. A recent conceptualization of mindfulness by Western scholars has contributed to popularizing an ancient Eastern world technic developed 2600 years ago to deal with the world's mind-made assumptions effectively. However, the current conceptualization is narrowly focused, non-secular, and disguised as possible antidotes to the pressures of contemporary life without addressing the underlying tendencies that lead to life's challenges in the first place (Purser, 2015). The foundational values of mindfulness strategies have been distorted to pursue corporate objectives and commercial profit. It further states that contemporary Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBI) need to be informed by the moral virtues at the heart of Buddhist mindfulness (Hyland et al., 2015).

The new innovations of Western mindfulness scholars and practitioners deinstitutionalize the original Buddhist teaching and blur the boundaries between the religious and secular, in the name of modernization (Gleig, 2019). It has been argued that insights of work-family balance are more inclined by psychological components like job satisfaction which is relevant to employees in the working environment (Clark, 2001). The researchers explained that the work-life balance and spirituality are aligned very well and WLB can be wrapped as a combination of relationships, namely; transpersonal (relationship with God), personal (association with friends and family, etc.), and intrapersonal things (association with individual's inner self) (Hungelmann et al., 1985). In this context, WLB can be achieved via spiritual, emotional, and behavioral demands (Jena and Pradhan, 2014). As such, a meditative practice that leads to transcendence of the concept of self, can capture the nuances of these three levels from an experiential level. However, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs and interventions have been loosely implemented without considering this experiential aspect of learning. There are limited studies in the current literature that focus on how non-secular Buddhist mindfulness technique could be used as a

solution to overcome the challenges of achieving WLB (Chiesa and Serretti, 2009).

This paper attempts to explain that by developing one's ethical conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom, it is possible to achieve success in the mundane life. It proposes a theoretical framework that is based on the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of Noble Eight Fold Path and Five Aggregates (matter, feeling, perception, thoughts, and consciousness). As per the Buddha's explanation, the manifestations of five aggregates act as the central elements of human experience. If a person can understand the true nature of one's experience, i.e. it is impermanent, conditioned, and cannot be identified as self, then it is possible to achieve sustained happiness in this very life without getting attached or detached to mental and material manifestations. However, an uninstructed individual perceives or identifies one's experience as the self, as me and mine. For example, an individual perceives material elements as the self, me or mine, similarly feeling as the self, me or mine, perception as the self, me or mine, thoughts as the self and consciousness as the self, me or mine. This creates an illusory concept of self and others that ultimately binds consciousness into such objects developed by one's own mind. This paper's intention is not to dive deep into the meta-physical aspects of the Buddhist doctrine, but to highlight the fundamental drivers of our actions and thoughts.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance (WLB) is a process and not a static performance indicator. The key to success in the world is making decisions that will have positive consequences or minimize negative consequences with regard to choices related to work and family. This will give us the opportunity to the equilibrium of family and work. The real task of balancing work and life happens all the time (Sirajunisa and Panchanatham, 2010). WLB can be defined as the skill of adapting to multiple roles of a person. Researchers explained that WLB focuses on equality of time or pleasure across an individual's diverse life roles. In this case, it is expected to satisfy individual work and family life via three main components, namely; time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Researchers have associated conflict and facilitation to explain the WLB (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007).

It can be, considering theoretical observations and methods, referred to in respect of work-life balance. With regards to an overall appraisal which says that lower-level disagreements lead to higher-level happiness and success of the work-life harmony. Maintaining overall sense of harmony

in life and global assessment are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains. This is typically assessed with general questions (Clarke et al., 2004; Rantanen, 2011). With regards to components approach, it emphasizes the work-life balance as a direct latent pivotal structure, which suggests that work-family balance includes of several dimensions that precede and offer sense to balance such as time balance, satisfaction balance and time management. These aspects shape the general assessment of how well a person meets role-related responsibilities (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007; Rantanen, 2011). In the late 1970s, the compensation theory began the second era of work-family theories. A study examining the relationship between work and family identified employees as "looking at their homes as havens and looking at their families as sources of job-related satisfaction. The theory further describes the reaction of employees to incidents in both their job and their family lives. The findings of this study led to the theory of compensation that says, "Individuals can try to compensate for a lack of job or home happiness by trying to find more pleasure in the other person". The theory of compensation sees employees as individuals who as a result of being unhappy with the other, seek greater sense of satisfaction of work or family life. It is worth noting, however, that the original interpretation of the theory of compensation centered mostly on the negative influence of family life and work life, and it was only the more nuanced view of the theory of compensation that specifically considered the positive impact of work and family along with its negative impact on work-family relationships. Moving on to Segmentation theory, which is rooted, as one of the oldest perspectives of work-family relations, it also has been around since the 20th century industrial revolution. Job and family are based on this principle, since they are separated from each other. Further, this describes that employees would distinguish work and home naturally in unsatisfactory or un-involving jobs. In addition, according to the theory of segmentation, any work-related and family-related pressure does not affect the role pressure in the other field (Lavassani and Movahedi, 2014).

Overall it can be clearly seen that the aforementioned work-life balance theory has focused on fixing and developing soft skills of human being rather than addressing non-secular development approach.

### **Work-Life Balance Challengers**

Employees tend to encounter work-family tension when job and family expectations are both strong and hard to fulfill (Valcour and Batt, 2003). In such situations, employees face many challenges, such as too much workload, unattainable targets, and clients that are pressurizing and violent. Continuous night shifts create biological imbalances, and

eventually make them stressful and lead to burn out (Sirajunisa and Panchanatham, 2010). In general, employees fail to maintain effective equilibrium between their working life and their social life. This mismatch leads to psychosomatic disorders which result in work incompetency, low efficiency, insatiability, and adaptability. Moreover, WLB conflict has also been involved with a high level of cognitive difficulties such as staying awake, lack of concentration, and low alertness, and reduced levels of general health and energy too.

Lack of concentration, leads to lack of focus, poor productivity and lack of planning. Even in personal life, it is necessary to identify the importance level of each task (Shyam and Safeena, 2016). Another important aspect is work motivation which can be explained as certain energetic forces that produce both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate goal-related behavior and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration. The research evidence supports that work motivation, having a strong correlation with job performance and goal setting makes the employee more committed to the organization (Millar et al., 2014).

### **Stress and WLB**

The definition of stress that suits many human conditions is a state in which a person is aroused and made nervous by an unmanageable aversive challenge—for example, trapped in heavy traffic on a motorway, a hostile boss, unpaid bills, or a predator. Stress can lead to anxiety and fear. The fear answer may be a battle or a flight depending on the circumstances. The intensity of stress and physiological results are determined by the person's belief that he or she can cope (Fink, 2016). It also impact on biological changes that could place a person at risk for illness such as disasters, life crises, life changes, and daily hassles (Sirajunisa and Panchanatham, 2010). One aspect of stress is time pressure which can be generated as a cognitive evaluation resulting from the reflection on the amount of work to be done in relation to perceived capacity or time available (Syrek et al., 2013). Also, a study among 733 police officers in US cities has revealed that occupational stress exposure appears to be a prominent risk factor for psychological distress too (Lieberman et al., 2002). The researchers have observed the negative impact of burn out and stress on home demands, personal decision making, and shared decision making. For example, a study that involved 133 mothers who are in managerial jobs found that high stress and burn out were strongly correlated with weaken success and happiness of their personal life (Hanse et al., 2008). Another study among workers in the rapidly growing Chinese offshore oil industry found that occupational stress had an enormous negative influence in maintaining their family happiness since

getting angry, feeling frustrated after coming from office were experienced (Chen et al., 2003). Overall, stress leads to Work-Life-Imbalance (WLI) and stress is developed as a result of low adaptive capacity to environmental changes. If one is able to increase their adaptive capacity to external stimuli, then one is able to deal with stress generating factors more effectively without succumbing to them.

Stress also easily leads to **anger** of people. Anger is one of the basic human emotions. The result of anger can be attack, aggression and frustration. Anger comes from various ways such as inadequacy in family life, exposure to violence at home, expectations or attitudes at home (Dey et al., 2014). Previous research has shown that stress can be a precedent for anger. For example, stressful job positions raise both blood pressure and irritation. Some suggest that rage can be a precedent for stress. Expressing anger is highly stress-inducing. Another study also has shown that depressed people may have intense feelings of anger (fighting) and desire to run away (flight) (Kweon et al., 2008).

### Emotional Intelligence and WLB

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) was first highlighted by Thorndike (1920). He identified it as the ability to understand and manage people and act wisely in human relations (Mayer and Salovey, 1993). As time passed, this idea has developed and defined EI as a component of social intelligence that involves regulating, distinguishing, and using our emotions and feelings to guide our thinking, behavior, or acts (Mayer et al., 1999). Employees with higher emotional intelligence are generally known to have a better work-life balance. Employees who have a higher EI level can deal with stressful situations more effectively than those with low emotional intelligence levels.

Furthermore, workers with higher EI in a group environment would be able to manipulate other people's emotions in such a way that they can maintain a balanced personal and professional outlook to life (Shylaja and Prasad, 2017). A study also identified that EI also helps a person deal with a balanced view and in a mature way retains an optimistic viewpoint. It is able to recognize what is useful and where to direct their attention. A study revealed the relationship between EI and two aspects of work outcomes: task performance and organizational employee behaviors such as selfishness and compliance. They found a strong positive relationship between EI and task performance.

On the other hand, the employees who had a higher EI level showed a minimum level of compliance in the working place (Carmeli and Josman, 2006). It has been clearly explained how EI can understand emotions via emotional intelligence. The basic skill at this level of understanding emotions happens via labeling emotions with words and

identifying the link among exemplars of the affective lexicon. The emotionally intelligent individual can determine that the terms utilized to describe feelings are organized into common themes, and that set of emotional terms form unclear groups. More crucially, a person can reduce the links to these terms- For example, a bodily irritation will trigger anger if the offensive stimulus is not removed. This is the emotional intelligence element. The method requires several steps. Individuals must assume that; they can regulate emotions accurately and track their moods and emotional condition, recognize and classify certain moods and emotions that require control, use strategies to relieve negative feelings or retain positive feelings, and finally determine the efficacy of those strategies (Salovey, 2004; Carmeli and Josman, 2006). Overall, if an individual develops a deeper awareness of one's own emotions and others' emotions, they become capable of adapting to situations more effectively and using their emotions to their advantage instead of spiraling down on an emotional meltdown.

Emotional intelligence tends to provide individuals with a doubled capacity to prevent drug relapse and helps manage the **craving** to reuse, which is a form of tendency-avoidance conflict (Chooan et al., 2016). Numerous studies have also looked at the role and effect of emotional intelligence in the regulation of **anger**. In two experiments, the effects on experience and anger expression of different emotional management techniques were examined (Massah et al., 2016).

### Concentration and WLB

Concentration is the capability to focus the attention on one object or single thought or one subject, except everything else from the field of awareness (Schmid, 1995). Also, concentration is defined as the ability to mobilize and coordinate a person's resources. In other words, it involves mobilizing and coordinating of bodies and minds to obtain and maintain an optimal state of performance (Gaillard, 2008). This idea is relatively equal to the personality trait mental focus, and it is explained as when a person always bears a well-focused mind-set, which displays a cheerful and positive attitude and helps to achieve higher performance (Lee et al., 2003; Szalma and Hancock, 2012). Concentration is always linked to a specific goal or a particular task because it is difficult to focus on "nothing." Concentration helps to plan and balance our activities, and the lack of it creates unexpected issues in daily life (Szalma and Hancock, 2012; Steinhurst, 2017). For example, a clear focus on tasks at hand, whether related to personal or work, enables correct coordination of motor activities and clears the mind from distractions. A study examined from 1,742 divorced women about the causes of divorce on their family in the United Arab Emirates found that parents had a minimum concentration on



their duties responsibilities such as children's schooling, health issues, and money management (Al Gharaibeh, 2015). Based on that, it is strongly suggested that the human concentration level provides a healthy relationship to keep working and personal life more effectively and successfully (Koubova and Buchko, 2013). Overall, when a person develops the ability to concentrate properly on the task at hand, they can plan and perform the duties more effectively than a person who is trying to multi-task.

Also, there is a positive relationship between the lack of concentration and anger. A recent empirical study on vehicle drivers has revealed that drivers who get angry quickly lack concentration, causing many struggles such as unnecessary accidents (Deffenbacher et al., 2003). It is also clearly said that anger can be easily converted to delusion or foolishness (Novaco, 2011).

### Work Prioritization and WLB

Proper prioritizing of work is one of the critical talents required to balance the essential factors such as one's career, health, pleasure, leisure, family, and spiritual development (Shyam and Safeena, 2016). Work prioritizing is about selecting and focusing on the most critical activities according to the given situation. For example, listening to a child who had a bad day or discussing the day's events with a spouse may be more important than getting the dishes done in time. So directing ourselves to the most important tasks should be a priority (Bozworth, 2001). When it concerns WLB, it is crucial to identify the essential functions in the home environment and the working environment. For example, when we are at work, getting personal calls may distract our attention from attending to urgent official tasks, and on the other hand, spending too much time on official needs while at home will lead to issues with family time (Collins, 2007). Lack of task prioritization always creates problems, frustration, and increased stress (Covey and Covey, 2020). It is vital to remind us that we are still dealing with society's responsibilities and duties, and recognizing the most inflecting matter to the life to time is powerfully assisting us in maintaining happiness and success (Haddock et al., 2001).

Moreover, work-prioritizing leads to manage the time effectively for the well-being of working and family life. Hence, it is clear that any individual can prioritize works once he/she has a clear and peaceful mind set up. Because when the mind has too much-wandering thoughts and thinking, it is harmful to think about the daily tasks consciously. People can enhance the ability to prioritize works smoothly and effectively when they can reduce the wandering mind set up (Rahinel and Ahluwalia, 2015). Several findings have said that employees' work-prioritizing ability depends on their employee relationship among other peers. Because helping

others and teamwork play a key role in employee success (Evans et al., 2007). Hence, **Selfish** employees always narrow down to limited working opportunities, and they still lack the skill of work –prioritizing (Evans et al., 2007; Denicolo and Reeves, 2013). Moreover, another study among working women in United States revealed that women have succeeded in balancing family responsibilities and work responsibilities by delegating their work to control their aggression mode effectively even they get pressure from time to time (Rosener, 1997).

### Motivation to Follow the Desired Goal and WLB

"Motivation" can be defined as a combination of goals to which human behavior is led, in other words, the process through which those goals are pursued and achieved and the social factors involved (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2019). Luthans (1977), states that motivation is a mixture of desires, movements, and benefits. Motivation is characterized as the process that begins with a physiological deficiency or needs that stimulates action or a force that aims at a target or incentive" (Luthans, 1977). However, motivation comes with 'interests,' and even though we have time or resources in personal life, if we lack the motivation to spend the time with the family, office mates, then life becomes meaningless. Therefore, it is worth understanding that motivation to treat the family should be consistent always if not, it is hard to care for them closely (Daskalovska et al., 2012). In an organization, some employees do not like to get involved with higher responsibilities, and they do not perform well in their job tasks due to lack of motivation even though they have the required skills and strength. Motivation in the organization can be derived from different aspects. Maslow said that employees perform well and move to success in their careers because of the primary five needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization (Kaur, 2013). Also, McClelland's Need Theory speaks about three needs: achievement, power, and affiliation. The need for achievement was defined as the drive to succeed. The need for power was shown as the need to make others behave so that they would not have behaved otherwise. The need for affiliation was explained as having a friendly desire and making close interpersonal relationships with officemates (Osemeke and Adegboyega, 2017). Hence, it is clear that people expect the status, happiness of relationship, and good working environment apart from money in their job, and once they have it, they strive for their maximum performance (Dugguh and Dennis, 2014). Consequently, mindfulness plays a key role behind several essential factors in our personal and working life, such as managing stress, improving emotional intelligence, concentrating our tasks well, following, prioritizing work, and achieving life goals with a motivated mindset.

Nowadays, obesity is one of the biggest challenges for people. In that situation controlling a mindset without **craving** becomes a key component to achieve their health goals. A 6-week longitudinal study with N = 126 overweight women participating in a weight-loss program examined the assumption that was concentrating on the mechanism (dietary behavior) rather than on dietary outcomes (weight-loss) is correlated with more active goal-setting and achievement. This achievement's core reason was controlling their feeling, desire for other tasty foods, and continuing mindful eating habits (Freund and Hennecke, 2012).

### CONTEMPORARY MINDFULNESS

The idea of mindfulness emerged in the Buddhist and Eastern contemplative traditions. Contemporary mindfulness has different conceptualizations but can be described as sensitive to momentary events and unbiased awareness of momentary experience (Michel et al., 2014). It can be seen that contemporary mindfulness has become rapidly popular among various people, such as organizational leaders, employees, consultants, coaches, psychologists, and counselors. It has been proven from some evidence, such as PsycINFO which includes over 2,000 articles, books, and researches discussing mindfulness, and also Amazon.com which has entitled over 2,000 books on mindfulness. The core reason for this popularity is that contemporary mindfulness serves various physical and psychological benefits (Glomb et al., 2011). Nowadays, mindfulness training sessions use to get temporary solutions in medical and psychological settings in human life, such as preventing undue stress, improve efficiency, and to improve self-regulation to some degree (Zelazo and Lyons, 2012). But, there are doubts whether contemporary mindfulness has solved or not the real challengers of work-life, and if so, how can people use the core concept of mindfulness for their development (Purser, 2015). That is why it is crucial to investigate the mindfulness that Buddha has explained to develop peoples' lives while facing daily challenges in the personal and professional world.

### RIGHT MINDFULNESS

In early Buddhist scriptures, mindfulness has been derived as the right mindfulness. In other words, sati has been come as 'Samma Sati' in Buddhist practices and carried a profound ethical connotation. Also, right mindfulness was developed and exercised through the meditative practice of the four establishments of mindfulness. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta explains that mindfulness practice's central role can be found in the "noble eightfold path" (Sun, 2014). It refers to the practice of the basic principles of mindfulness for insight

growth. One of the Buddha's discourses (suttas) called the Satipatthan Sutta explains the approach in-depth, and a summary of this sutta follows. The four fundamental concepts of mindfulness, namely, Body (kaya), Feelings (vedana), Consciousness or heart-mind (citta), Phenomena (dhammas—Sanskrit). Each of these foundations includes sub-domains, which are different facets of the foundation under which they exist. The various foundations' names include the word Pali anupassana, derived from anu, translated as along and passana, seen. Anupassana is commonly called contemplation, and Pali scholars often interpret this word as to look at" or to "look closely" repeatedly, "to watch" or "to look at one's eye," "to look at" or "track" (Huxter, 2015).

### Right Mindfulness and Noble Eight Fold Path

The root of mindfulness in the Buddhist aspect can be found in the noble eightfold path (Taylor, 1998; Bodhi, 2011). In the noble eightfold path, mindfulness has been interpreted as "*right mindfulness*." The noble eightfold path is addressed in the fourth truth of the four noble truths in Buddhism, and Buddha initially stated the *Four Noble Truths* by concluding his message that life is inseparably tied to dukkha, which is the first noble truth. The Pali word is usually translated as suffering, but it explains deeply that pain and misery are opened as sorrow, grief, and disappointment. The second noble truth explains the why/reason for the suffering, namely, Greed (thana). After that, eradication of desire is referred to as the third noble truth, and finally, Buddha found that the noble eightfold path becomes the fourth noble truth, which is the solution for the suffering (Bodhi, 1984). The noble eightfold path is mainly divided into three categories, and all of this helps to develop three main elements of the human being: *ethical conduct*, *mental discipline*, and *wisdom*. Ethical conduct is represented by right speech, right action, and right livelihood, while mental discipline refers to right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. In the wisdom aspect, it is included the right understanding and right thought. Next, it is useful to elaborate on all the steps briefly for understanding the value of the usage of the right mindfulness. *The right view* involves a correct grasp of Kamma's law by understanding the wholesome (*Kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*). *Right intention* as threefold: the intention of renunciation, the intention of goodwill, and the intention of harmlessness. There are four main components: refrain from misleading speech, abstain from untruthful speech, abstain from aggressive speech, and abstain from idle chatter. *Right action* is about refraining from unwholesome deeds that happen with the body, such as abstaining from taking life, refraining from taking what is not given, and abstaining from sexual misconduct. *Right livelihood* is about ensuring that one earns one's livelihood in a just manner. It is

advised to refrain from dealing in weapons, prostitution, meat production and butchery, poisons, and in intoxicants, treachery, soothsaying, and trickery. In the *right effort*, it explains four types of effort that human beings have to keep in their lives. Those four great endeavors are preventing the arising of unrisen unwholesome states, abandoning unwholesome states that have already arisen, increasing wholesome states that have not yet arisen, and maintaining and perfect wholesome states already arisen. *Right concentration* is referred to as applying the meditation process for understanding the nature of reality; in other words, attaining enlightenment (Bodhi, 1984, 2010).

Regarding the right mindfulness in Pali, it is called *Samma Sati*, and it represents the presence of mind, attentiveness, or awareness. It can be explained as the quality of clear knowing and cultivated the four establishments, namely; body, feeling tones, mental states, and dhammas, according to Buddhism (Anālayo, 2020). Mindful awareness differs from all other consciousness, which involves awareness is experiencing or getting knowing of an object. Mindfulness awareness always is applied at a particular pitch. The mind is intentionally held at the level of bare attention, a distant awareness of what is going on inside us and around us at this moment. The mind is trained in the right awareness to remain in the moment, quiet, free, and alert, contemplating the moment event. Both judgments and interpretations must be revoked and withdrawn if they occur. The job is simply to remember what happens when it happens; riding the event changes how a surfer rides the sea waves. The entire process is a way to return to the moment, to stand here and now without moving away, without being carried out by the waves of distracting thoughts (Wallace, 2006; Bodhi, 2010). Another important fact of right mindfulness is including key supporting mental factor, which is "*sampajanna*". It is about the ability to be aware of whether the mind is focused on the intended object or whether it has lost the object and it fully grasp the experience in mind it is depended on understanding and it also able to discern wholesome from unwholesome thoughts and behaviors. The right mindfulness always plays a vital role in the foundation for ethical conduct and develops the wisdom of the people. Thus, it can be applied to any situation as a moderating approach with cultivating goodness in mind and understanding the reality of the situation without attaching greedily (Anālayo, 2019, 2020).

### Right Mindfulness and Five Aggregates

Regarding practice insight of right mindfulness, which encourages us to see and experience the world via a model of five aggregates explained in Buddhism called "five skandhas or khandhas," which means heaps, collections, groupings and it leads to overcome self-grasping. These five

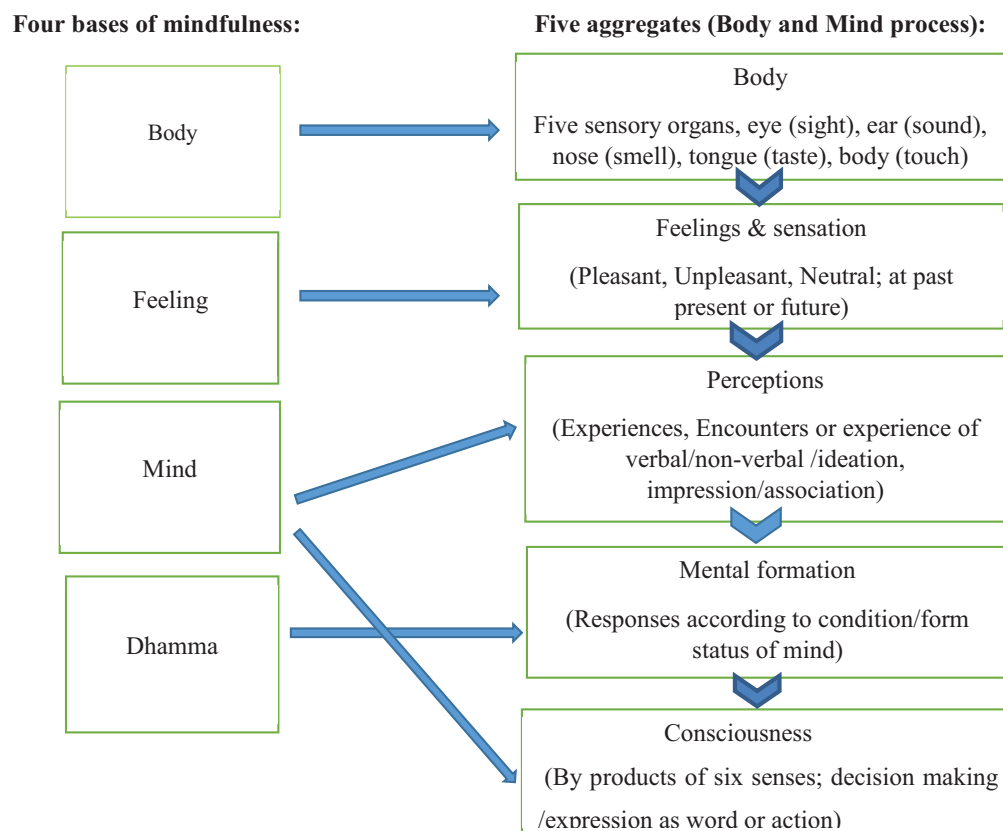
aggregates' essential components are defined as being that makeup "oneself," including materiality, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. A first aggregate is a material form that provides for both the physical body and external matter, while the other four aggregates are presented mental elements. When we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, think, or experience any event, an intricate interaction of mind and body occurs enabling us to cognize the experience and perceive as that's a bird tone "or" that's a hot feeling. So that, it is worth identifying how those mental qualities can deal with work-life challenges such as losing concentration and relaxation via getting stress and burning, the wrong perception on the society, incidents, and persons, lack of prioritization ability due to keeping wondering mind set up and laziness or inactivity mode in our mind (Karunamuni, 2015; Davis and Thompson, 2017).

Understanding the five aggregations is mostly used with mindfulness meditation, and thus, our mind should be kept at the present moment until we recognize that each mental phenomenon arises as a result of sensory consciousness. This awareness especially is essential when dealing with unpleasant thoughts in our daily struggles. For instant, sensory consciousness, such as triggers that cause uncomfortable mental states, may be vigilance and even being prepared to meet such reactions with mindful awareness. At this point, mindfulness awareness refers to mind-consciousness and eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, and body-consciousness. It is also beneficial to understand how the volition aggregate in the five aggregates model can have a conditioning effect in the other aggregates' manifestation. When it concerns a person who has an aggressive propensity and believes that this person has received an auditory sensory input (aggregate of perception) that he or she has perceived as an insult, then, an unpleasant sensation (aggregate of feeling) will immediately emerge in his or her mind stream, which may contribute to the arising of anger and violent behavior (aggregate of volition). Aggressive actions may lead to many unfavorable consequences to the person, including having to face allegations, remorse, and even depression (these are potential examples of manifested aggregates in the midstream of this entity).

Now, suppose this person is trained in mindfulness meditation (volition aggregate). He or she will then be able to retain sensitivity when an auditory sensory stimulation occurs, combating the urge to either respond or suppress, thereby deactivating the emotional and attentional pull of frustration or anger. This example is supported by research evidence showing that practicing mindfulness meditation reduces mind wandering, frustration, and aggression (Shonin et al., 2014; Karunamuni, 2015). As more is studied,

responding to anger vs. being mindful and letting go of the anger results in different results in the person's mind stream compared to unintentionally coping with challengers. As mentioned in Buddhist teachings, volition itself can influence other volitional activities. For example, the cultivation of patience, self-control (engaging in ethical behavior, etc.), and cultivating positive emotions such as compassion and forgiveness are defined as supporting meditation practice progress (Bodhi, 2010; Davis and Thompson, 2017; Anālayo, 2020). After a time of systematic meditation practice, individuals may observe the impermanence of all thoughts, which lead to wisdom in other words, that understands the nature of the existence. An accumulating body of evidence suggests meditation training brings about beneficial improvements in essential neural structures. Therefore, neuroscientific investigations of mindfulness meditation

practice will continue to play a role in both primary and secondary prevention of mental disorders (Karunamuni, 2015). Hence, it is clear that our outer incidents, physical elements, or incidents cannot be positive or negative in reality since our sensation, taste, attitudes and knowledge decides their negativity or positivity. If we can change our perception via understanding all five senses with analyzing cause and effect, it helps to make good judgments and reactions towards our daily challenges in working and personal life. That is why developing the right mindfulness in the noble eightfold path can be a possible solution to mitigate our day to day difficulties based on understanding the five aggregates model. It can be clearly seen that, five aggregates are clearly related with four foundations of mindfulness as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The relationship between right mindfulness and five aggregates.

**Source:** <https://library.dhammasukha.org/5-aggregates-chart.html>

### Five Aggregates and Work-Life Balance

The Buddhist path attempts at effecting a more significant transformation of mind and behavior toward greater psycho-

logical well-being, ethical behavior, and social responsibility by avoiding the suffering in human beings via a noble eightfold path with the base of right mindfulness (Shonin et

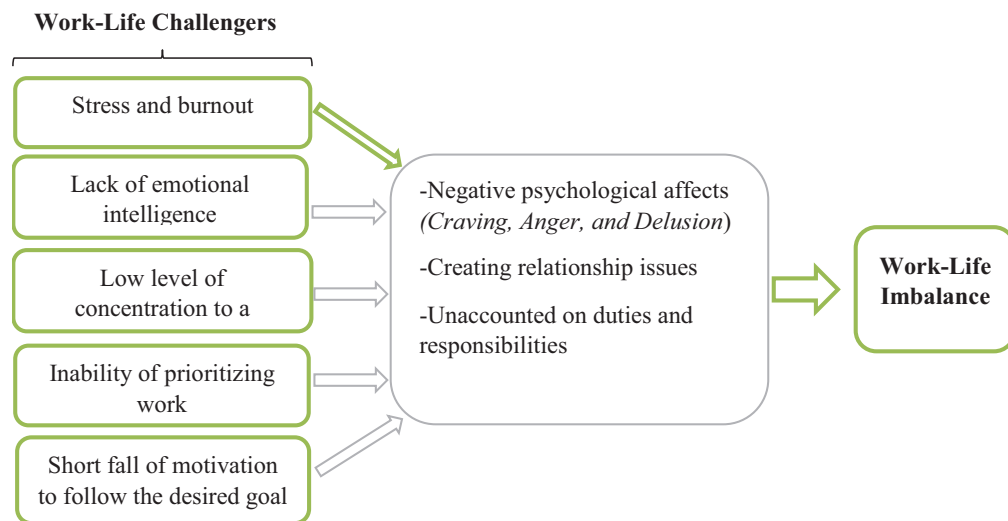


al., 2014). As it was discussed, a person's suffering in work or family life is based on five clinging-aggregates rooted in greed, aversion, and ignorance. Hence, the noble eightfold path becomes a pragmatic approach and right mindfulness plays a crucial role in achieving this path. In that process, while mind consciousness is an entire meaningful idea for a living being by recognizing and discriminating in three ways of physical cognition, comparative cognition, and non-cognition, the other five consciousness generate help to identify all kinds of unwholesome, wholesome, or neutral activities our daily lives (Karunamuni, 2015; Davis and Thompson, 2017).

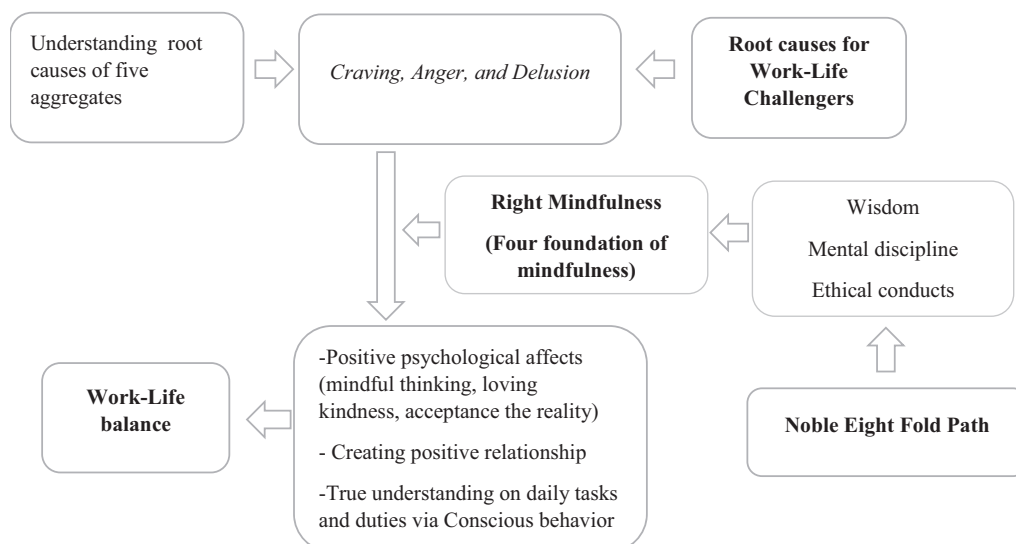
It can be clearly seen that people who bear unbalance of work-life who are always bonded with five clinging-aggregates and their lives are certainly experienced from lack of emotional intelligence, stress, low level of concentration, failure of work-prioritization and lack of motivation to goal setting. The results above happen due to craving, anger, and delusion, which are the same as the root causes of clinging five aggregates.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

The conceptual frame work is clearly expressed in Figures 2 and 3.



**Figure 2.** Work-life imbalance via work-Life challengers.



**Figure 3.** Work-life balance via intervention of right mindfulness.

## DISCUSSION

This paper has found some of the most influencing factors for balancing our working and professional life and how right mindfulness is applied for facing those challenges in a positive manner. It should be noted that the five aggregates' understanding has become a key element to developing our right mindfulness, and it is a practice, not just an instant tool. It also has other external factors which cannot be sorted out via the right mindfulness such as organizational politics, policies, and rules. It is being suggested that if any organization can develop a training module to enhance employees' mindfulness, it will add value to their personal life and organization development. It is well-known that many organizations such as Google, Face book and intuitions like Harvard University and the British parliament have already implemented a mindfulness-based stress reduction program for achieving different purposes such as innovation and work productivity. The important thing in our work-life balance is not dependent on just one factor but also on social, family, economy, and spirituality. So we are encouraged to develop our life through a trusted process rather than applying a temporary tool. Suppose this study implement through a qualitative study. Researchers have to interview the few persons by asking entailing work-life balance knowledge and experience, which continually do the mindfulness meditations while interviewing those who do not practice mindfulness meditation in their life. It can then be realized how right mindfulness can impact work-life balance by understanding five aggregates and eight noble path in Buddhism.

## CONCLUSION

This study argued that stress, burnout, work prioritizing, concentration, emotional intelligence, and motivation profoundly impact finding the harmony between working and personal life via using the right mindfulness. The noble eightfold path can effectively face those challenges by developing ethical conduct, mental discipline and wisdom. Right mindfulness acts mediate the role behind all the key elements discussed. So, developing the right mindfulness is based on realistically understanding the five aggregates. Hence, it is suggested that human beings practice the right mindfulness as a vital process to succeed in family and career life. Happiness and success can come but not magically, both can come to our life as a result of mindful thinking in the right way since it causes us to improve our ethical conduct, wisdom via understanding the five aggregates. When it concerns the roots of five aggregates such as craving, anger and delusion, they also become the root of the aforementioned five work-life challengers. Hence, right mindfulness becomes the core solution to overcoming the work-life challengers rather than contemporary mindfulness.

## Conflict of Interests

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

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