



Slipping Attention in Modern Workplaces: Mental Fatigue, Micro-Lapses, and Performance Risks

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Abstract

In modern working life, increasing cognitive demands, digital attention fragmentation, and continuous time pressure have led to the emergence of a phenomenon that has become increasingly visible among employees: micro-forgettings. These small and seemingly temporary cognitive lapses actually reflect mental fatigue, attentional depletion, and the excessive cognitive load generated by organizational structures. Micro-forgettings appear in behaviors such as confusing meeting times, incompletely executing routine tasks, or making simple procedural errors; however, the root of these errors lies not in weak memory but in the overload of the cognitive system. This study examines the psychological background of micro-forgettings within the framework of cognitive load theory, the attention economy, and automaticity processes, explaining why they have become a more prominent issue in organizations. Findings indicate that micro-forgettings are not merely individual performance failures but critical behavioral signals that affect organizational memory, accuracy in decision-making, and continuity of work processes. The study further shows that mindfulness-based organizational practices strengthen employees' mental recovery capacity, enhance cognitive sustainability, and reduce the frequency of micro-forgettings. Accordingly, from an industrial psychology perspective, micro-forgettings should not be punished as individual mistakes but understood as indicators of cognitive overload to be managed. The study concludes by emphasizing the strategic importance of mindfulness-based interventions for organizations.

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1. Introduction

Modern working life has undergone an unprecedented transformation over the past decade; digitalization, task diversification, uninterrupted workflow, rising performance expectations, and the culture of constant connectivity have placed substantial pressure on employees' cognitive capacities. In this new work ecosystem, not only technical skills but also attention, mental resilience, cognitive flexibility, and self-regulation have become key determinants of job success. However, this increasingly complex structure has led to a rise in behavioral disruptions defined as "micro-forgettings," which, although appearing minor, reveal critical signs of overload in the cognitive system. Micro-forgettings-such as mixing up meeting times, leaving a task incomplete, forgetting to reply to an email, skipping a simple detail in a report, or performing a routine step in the wrong order-may appear insignificant at first glance but are in fact strong indicators that cognitive capacity has reached its limits. These small behavioral lapses are not due to weak memory; rather, they arise because the attentional system becomes overstimulated, continuously fragmented, and rapidly depleted. Consequently, micro-forgettings represent psychological reflections of the invisible cognitive burdens embedded in modern work environments.

In contemporary working conditions, employees attempt to handle numerous tasks simultaneously while being constantly interrupted by digital tools, forced to make decisions under time pressure, and required to adapt to continually shifting demands. The attention economy literature demonstrates that continuous fragmentation reduces selective attention, decreases the quality of information processing, and weakens short-term memory functioning (Kahneman, 2011) ^[10]. Baumeister and Tierney (2012) ^[3] emphasize that individuals performing tasks requiring sustained self-control experience rapid depletion of mental energy, which subsequently reduces the quality of decision-making. All these findings illustrate that micro-forgettings are not individual weaknesses but products of converging structural and psychological factors. Hybrid and remote working models, which became widespread particularly in the post-pandemic period, have further intensified cognitive load by blurring the boundaries between professional and personal life. While employees work continuously at their computers, they are simultaneously exposed to household responsibilities, which makes mental fragmentation and attention interruptions more frequent. Work conducted through digital platforms normalizes constant online presence, instant responsiveness to notifications, and multi-tasking-all of which significantly increase cognitive load and trigger micro-forgettings. Research indicates that an average employee is exposed to more than 200 digital interruptions in a single workday, and it takes approximately 23 minutes to fully refocus after each interruption (Mark *et al.*, 2014). These findings clearly demonstrate that micro-forgettings are not instances of mere carelessness but concrete symptoms of cognitive exhaustion. Industrial and organizational psychology acknowledges that workload is not only physical but also cognitive and emotional. As cognitive load increases, employees' attentional systems narrow, and this narrowing manifests in the workplace as micro-level behavioral disruptions. Organizations often interpret these errors as "personal mistakes," "carelessness," or "negligence," yet micro-forgettings are actually early warning signs of weakened organizational attention management and diminished mental flexibility. Thus, micro-forgettings may be evaluated as behavioral outcomes of organizational design flaws, role overload, ambiguous job descriptions, constant digital alerts, and weak work-life balance policies. When employees frequently mix up tasks, forget procedural steps, or make timing mistakes, the issue does not stem from individual shortcomings but rather from insufficient cognitive ergonomics within the organization. Modern organizations must prioritize cognitive ergonomics as much as physical ergonomics. Micro-forgettings are also closely related to employees' emotional states. Chronic stress, anxiety, psychological exhaustion, and sustained cognitive strain impair the functioning of brain regions responsible for memory and attention regulation, such as the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex. Organizational psychology literature shows that stress can have lasting negative effects on cognitive capacity, directly reducing employee performance. Therefore, understanding micro-forgettings requires examining not only cognitive processes but also emotional and organizational dynamics. Industrial psychology recognizes that behaviors are shaped by job design, leadership styles, workload distribution, organizational communication structures, and organizational culture. The

rising frequency of micro-forgettings in workplaces does not signify personal inadequacy but indicates that the organization's cognitive and psychological infrastructure is not sustainable. This study analyzes the mechanisms behind micro-forgettings through cognitive load theory, attention depletion, automaticity, and contemporary organizational dynamics, demonstrating that the phenomenon cannot be explained solely through individual behavior but arises from systemic factors. The study also discusses mindfulness-based strategies scientifically proven to reduce micro-forgettings and enhance cognitive sustainability in organizations. Mindfulness practices have recently gained popularity as tools to support employee well-being and improve cognitive performance. These practices enhance focus, reduce mental noise, and minimize micro-level disruptions caused by automatic pilot behavior. Techniques such as "present-moment awareness," "mindful task completion," and "cognitive pause strategies" help employees restore internal balance and regain cognitive clarity. Accordingly, this study argues that micro-forgettings, which have become increasingly common in modern organizations, must be addressed at the organizational level rather than being interpreted as personal errors. Punishing employees for micro-forgettings or framing them as performance deficits aggravates the problem. Instead, organizations must develop cognitive load management strategies, regulate digital notification policies, create cognitive rest spaces, and support mindfulness-based interventions. This study highlights that micro-forgettings are not trivial behavioral slips but strong indicators of the cognitive, psychological, and organizational boundaries of contemporary work life, and presents strategic insights into building more sustainable work systems at both the individual and institutional levels.

2. The Concept of Micro-Forgettings and its Psychological Background

Micro-forgettings do not stem from weaknesses in long-term memory but emerge primarily from overload within the attentional system. From an industrial psychology perspective, this phenomenon is explained through concepts such as cognitive overload, attention fatigue, and automaticity (Kahneman, 2011; Baumeister & Tierney, 2012) ^[10, 3]. As cognitive demands increase, the brain shifts certain routines into "autopilot" to conserve mental energy. While this adaptive mechanism supports efficiency in high-paced environments, it also reduces mindful awareness during task execution. When mindful attention declines, individuals lose a clear sense of temporal and contextual distinction in their actions, which increases the likelihood of micro-level errors. Micro-forgettings are essentially the behavioral outcomes of situations in which mental processing capacity becomes strained. When attentional resources are forced beyond their limits, the cognitive system temporarily disengages or skips minor details, resulting in small yet functionally significant lapses. These lapses appear in moments when an individual overlooks a routine step, confuses the order of a task, or temporarily "forgets" what they were doing despite having full long-term memory capacity. Psychologically, these errors reflect the depletion of working memory resources and the narrowing of attentional bandwidth. Baddeley's working memory framework demonstrates that when incoming demands exceed processing capacity, the system prioritizes essential information and unintentionally discards seemingly trivial

but necessary details (Baddeley, 2012) ^[1]. A crucial element underlying micro-forgetting is attention fatigue. Continuous exposure to multiple stimuli—emails, messages, alerts, environmental noise, task switches—gradually weakens the attentional control system. The brain's executive functions, particularly those responsible for inhibition and sustained attention, become less effective under cognitive strain. Diamond (2013) ^[4] notes that executive functions are highly sensitive to stress and overload, and even minor increases in cognitive pressure can result in noticeable performance fluctuations. This explains why employees may perform complex tasks flawlessly while simultaneously forgetting simple procedural steps. Automaticity also plays a significant role in the psychological foundation of micro-forgetting. As individuals repeatedly perform the same task, the brain transitions from controlled processing to automatic processing. While this transition increases speed and efficiency, it also reduces conscious monitoring. When external interruptions or internal distractions occur during an automatic task, the individual may not recall whether a step was completed or may mistakenly assume that it was. This phenomenon is closely related to mind wandering—an involuntary cognitive drift away from the present task—which Smallwood and Schooler (2015) ^[16] describe as a natural but intrusive outcome of cognitive overload. When the mind wanders, conscious oversight diminishes, and minor lapses emerge. Stress and emotional strain further intensify the likelihood of micro-forgetting. Chronic stress elevates cortisol levels, impairing the functioning of the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex—regions essential for memory consolidation and attention regulation. van der Linden *et al.* (2003) ^[19] found that individuals experiencing high work-related stress reported significantly more cognitive failures, including micro-level forgettings, than those working under moderate conditions. Psychological exhaustion reduces mental clarity, making individuals more prone to disruptive attentional shifts. Thus, micro-forgetting should not be understood as flaws in personal ability, lack of intelligence, or inadequate work ethic. They arise when the cognitive system is overloaded, fragmented, or fatigued. As modern work environments continue to increase the intensity of mental demands, micro-forgetting serves as critical psychological indicators of the limits of human cognitive architecture.

3. Cognitive Load From an Industrial and Organizational Psychology Perspective

From the standpoint of industrial and organizational psychology, cognitive load represents a central factor influencing employees' performance, emotional well-being, and behavioral consistency in modern work environments. Organizations increasingly expect employees to manage not only technical tasks but also high levels of cognitive complexity, continuous decision-making pressure, and constant attentional demands. As these expectations intensify, the cognitive strain experienced by employees also increases, resulting in observable behavioral outcomes such as micro-forgetting. Cognitive load has therefore become a critical construct for understanding the psychological dynamics underlying performance variability and error patterns within organizations. One of the primary reasons cognitive load has escalated in contemporary workplaces is the frequency of interruptions embedded in daily workflow. The digitalization of work has created environments in which

employees are repeatedly exposed to notifications, messages, platform switches, and task fragmentation. Mark and colleagues (2014) ^[12] demonstrated that employees experience hundreds of digital interruptions per day, each of which disrupts cognitive flow and requires additional time for reorientation. These interruptions strain the attentional system and deplete cognitive resources, increasing the likelihood of micro-forgetting. From an organizational psychology perspective, such disruptions are not merely individual attentional failures but systemic weaknesses in the design of workflow and information management. Job design plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive load. Poorly structured roles, ambiguous expectations, unclear performance criteria, and unpredictable task sequences require employees to expend unnecessary cognitive effort simply to interpret their responsibilities. Kahneman (2011) ^[10] highlights that ambiguity consumes mental energy rapidly because individuals must continually engage in problem-solving and uncertainty reduction. This constant cognitive expenditure heightens the risk of attentional lapses and micro-level errors. When job design does not align with human cognitive capacities, micro-forgetting becomes a natural byproduct of structural inefficiencies rather than personal inadequacies. Organizational culture is another determinant of cognitive load that can significantly influence employees' susceptibility to micro-forgetting. High-pressure environments, where mistakes are stigmatized and performance is tied to constant vigilance, create chronic stress responses. Diamond (2013) ^[4] notes that stress impairs executive functions—particularly inhibition, working memory, and attentional flexibility—making employees more vulnerable to momentary lapses. In cultures that demand continuous high performance, employees operate under sustained physiological arousal, which constrains their ability to manage cognitive load effectively. As a result, micro-forgetting emerges as behavioral reflections of the organization's emotional climate. The rapid rise of digital work further amplifies cognitive load by overwhelming employees with information and accelerating the pace of task switching. Many employees simultaneously monitor emails, instant messages, digital dashboards, and task management tools while attempting to execute core responsibilities. This multitasking environment conflicts with the natural limitations of the human cognitive system. Sweller's (1988) ^[17] cognitive load theory emphasizes that information-processing capacity is inherently restricted, and excessive demands lead to overload, thereby increasing error rates. The frequent shifting of attention across digital platforms disrupts the coherence of working memory, making minor procedural steps more susceptible to omission. Baddeley's (2012) ^[1] working memory model confirms that such overload weakens the system responsible for holding and manipulating short-term information, which directly contributes to micro-forgetting. Communication patterns within organizations also play a substantial role in cognitive load. The shift from face-to-face communication to digital communication channels has increased the amount of textual information employees must process. Textual content demands more intensive cognitive processing compared to direct verbal communication. As a result, employees exposed to constant email traffic or message threads experience heightened mental fatigue. McVay and Kane (2010) demonstrated that mental fatigue elevates levels of mind wandering, which disrupts task-focused cognitive processes and increases the

likelihood of micro-level errors. These findings highlight that micro-forgetting is tightly intertwined with the cognitive consequences of digital communication saturation. Leadership style is another influential factor shaping cognitive load within organizations. Authoritarian leaders who enforce strict supervision, punitive feedback, or constant monitoring create environments where employees expend cognitive energy on managing perceived threats rather than focusing on task execution. Such climates undermine psychological safety. Edmondson (1999) ^[5] shows that when employees do not feel psychologically safe, their cognitive performance declines because they invest mental resources in self-protection. Reduced psychological safety therefore directly heightens the incidence of micro-forgetting by diverting attentional resources away from core tasks. Constantly changing priorities and expectations also elevate cognitive load. When employees must simultaneously track short-term demands while keeping long-term goals in mind, they experience cognitive fragmentation. Smallwood and Schooler (2015) ^[16] argue that maintaining multiple mental agendas increases cognitive strain and promotes mind wandering, thereby increasing micro-level errors. This demonstrates that micro-forgetting arises not only from intense workload but also from poorly coordinated organizational planning processes. An imbalance in task distribution intensifies cognitive load by overburdening specific employees. Inequitable workload allocation contributes to both cognitive and emotional fatigue, amplifying the risk of micro-forgetting. Research by van der Linden *et al.* (2003) ^[19] shows that employees with high work stress report significantly more cognitive failures than those with balanced workloads. Prolonged exposure to excessive demands exhausts attentional control mechanisms and destabilizes working memory, causing employees to overlook small but essential details. Inadequate organizational attention management practices—such as unclear communication protocols, disorganized information flow, or redundant task demands—also exacerbate cognitive load. When employees struggle to determine which information is urgent and which is secondary, cognitive chaos emerges, reducing task accuracy and increasing micro-level error frequency. As working memory becomes overloaded with irrelevant or poorly prioritized information, micro-forgetting becomes inevitable. Taken together, these factors illustrate that cognitive load is a multifaceted organizational construct that directly influences behavioral outcomes such as micro-forgetting. These small lapses do not reflect weak personal memory or lack of diligence; instead, they signal that the cognitive demands placed on employees exceed their processing capacity. As modern work environments continue to intensify digital dependence, accelerate workflow, and elevate expectations, micro-forgetting serves as behavioral indicators of cognitive overload at the individual and organizational levels. From an industrial and organizational psychology perspective, understanding cognitive load is therefore essential to interpreting why micro-forgetting has become increasingly common in contemporary workplaces.

4. Organizational Consequences of Micro-Forgetting

Although micro-forgetting appears on the surface as minor and momentary slips, their organizational consequences reveal complex structural, cognitive, and behavioral dynamics that extend far beyond individual errors. In modern workplaces, these small lapses disrupt workflow, reduce

performance accuracy, weaken institutional knowledge, and undermine organizational efficiency. As such, micro-forgetting constitutes not isolated personal mistakes but systemic indicators of cognitive overload and organizational misalignment. Understanding their organizational impact is therefore essential for establishing sustainable and human-centered work environments. The most immediate consequence of micro-forgetting is the disruption of workflow continuity. Even a single forgotten step, an omitted detail, or an incorrectly sequenced task can interrupt dependent processes, forcing colleagues to compensate for the oversight or repeat tasks unnecessarily. This creates a ripple effect that slows operations, increases completion time, and generates cumulative delays. Kahneman's (2011) ^[10] limited mental energy model demonstrates that even small cognitive lapses can weaken an entire task flow, reducing overall productivity. In tightly interconnected work systems, micro-forgetting propagates through the workflow, transforming seemingly trivial lapses into organizational inefficiencies. Another critical consequence is the weakening of organizational memory. Institutional knowledge depends on accurate transmission of experience, procedures, and task-related information. When employees frequently experience micro-forgetting, this transmission becomes fragmented, weakening the organization's long-term knowledge base. Baddeley's (2012) ^[1] working memory research shows that small interruptions in information flow impair the consolidation and transfer of knowledge. As working memory becomes overloaded, essential procedural details may be dropped or distorted. This weakens onboarding processes for newcomers and slows organizational learning, eventually increasing training costs and reducing overall competence within the institution. A further organizational outcome of micro-forgetting is a decline in work quality. In industries with strict quality standards—such as healthcare, aviation, defense, banking, and manufacturing—even small errors can create significant risks. Mark *et al.* (2014) ^[12] showed that digital interruptions increase error rates and decrease accuracy in knowledge work. When attention is continuously fragmented, employees struggle to maintain the precision required for high-stakes tasks, leading to quality defects, inconsistencies, and potential safety hazards. As a result, micro-forgetting becomes not merely a performance imperfection but a potential threat to institutional reliability. Micro-forgetting also impairs decision-making processes. Organizational decisions rely on accurate, timely, and complete information. However, when employees forget details, misremember contextual information, or overlook small but important cues, decision quality diminishes. Edmondson's (1999) ^[5] work on psychological safety emphasizes that environments characterized by cognitive strain and constant pressure lead to information-processing errors, undermining collective judgment. Such distortions accumulate over time, creating organizational blind spots and reducing strategic effectiveness. In safety-critical sectors, micro-forgetting can escalate into significant organizational risks. An employee forgetting a procedural step, performing tasks out of order, or skipping a safety check can directly contribute to accidents or violations. van der Linden *et al.* (2003) ^[19] show that employees experiencing high stress levels exhibit substantially more cognitive failures, including micro-level forgetting. This highlights the importance of treating micro-forgetting as early warnings of compromised safety culture rather than minor mistakes. In such

environments, micro-forgetting signal that cognitive and emotional capacity is nearing exhaustion, requiring urgent organizational intervention. Micro-forgetting increase operational costs as well. Overlooked tasks must be repeated, errors must be corrected, and missing information must be reconstructed. Sagherian *et al.* (2017) ^[15] demonstrate that cognitive fatigue correlates with heightened error rates, directly increasing organizational expenditures. These “hidden costs” accumulate over time, manifesting in reduced productivity, extended task durations, and increased resource consumption. Organizations often underestimate the financial burden of micro-level errors, yet they significantly impact long-term operational efficiency. Communication processes are also affected by micro-forgetting. Forgetting to convey a detail, misinterpreting a message, or failing to respond promptly disrupts communication chains, leading to misunderstandings, duplicated efforts, and coordination failures. Smallwood and Schooler (2015) ^[16] show that mind wandering and attentional lapses hinder accurate recall and weaken cognitive coherence during communication. As communication errors multiply, team alignment erodes, collaboration becomes more difficult, and interpersonal trust may decline. This weakens organizational cohesion and reduces team performance. Micro-forgetting significantly affect the employee experience as well. Employees who frequently encounter micro-level errors may interpret these lapses as signs of personal inadequacy, which in turn reduces self-efficacy and confidence. Baumeister and Tierney (2012) ^[3] note that depleted mental energy weakens self-regulation and contributes to negative self-evaluation. As employees internalize these cognitive lapses, their motivation, morale, and engagement decline. Gradually, this contributes to lower job satisfaction and emotional withdrawal from work. This process can further increase employee turnover. In workplaces where micro-forgetting are punished or stigmatized, psychological safety deteriorates. Edmondson (1999) ^[5] demonstrates that low psychological safety heightens fear of failure, discourages help-seeking, and contributes to employees’ desire to leave the organization. When employees feel cognitively overwhelmed and unsupported, turnover intentions rise. High turnover not only disrupts team dynamics but also increases recruitment, onboarding, and training costs, weakening organizational stability. Micro-forgetting also influence innovation capacity. Creative thinking, problem-solving, and ideation require mental clarity, cognitive flexibility, and uninterrupted attention. Kahneman (2011) ^[10] argues that creativity emerges only when cognitive resources are available and not depleted by overload. When employees operate under continuous mental strain, they lose the cognitive space necessary for creative insights. As a result, micro-forgetting indicate not only weakened routine performance but also diminished innovation potential. Over time, this reduces an organization’s competitive capacity. Considering these multiple outcomes, it becomes clear that micro-forgetting are not isolated cognitive failures but integrated organizational signals. When micro-forgetting increase in frequency, they reveal breakdowns in workload distribution, task design, digital communication intensity, leadership style, and organizational attention management. They serve as early indicators that the cognitive architecture of the workplace is misaligned with human cognitive capacities. Thus, micro-forgetting function as diagnostic markers of deeper systemic issues. In sum, micro-forgetting generate

consequences that extend to workflow, knowledge management, decision accuracy, safety, communication, costs, employee experience, and innovation. These findings reaffirm that micro-forgetting are not minor oversights but significant organizational indicators. Understanding and addressing these markers is essential for building sustainable, cognitively aligned, and psychologically healthy workplaces.

5. Mindfulness-Based Solution Approaches

The rising prevalence of micro-forgetting in contemporary work environments has made it imperative for organizations to adopt strategies that support cognitive sustainability, enhance attentional regulation, and strengthen employees’ mental resilience. Within this context, mindfulness-based practices have become one of the most empirically grounded and organizationally effective approaches for reducing cognitive overload and preventing micro-level lapses. Mindfulness-defined by Kabat-Zinn (2003) ^[9] as “paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally”-offers employees a structured method for restoring cognitive clarity, regulating attention, and counteracting the automatic pilot tendencies that lead to micro-forgetting. Mindfulness-based approaches mitigate micro-forgetting primarily by enhancing the stability of attentional processes. Cognitive overload and attentional fragmentation reduce the capacity for sustained focus, thereby increasing the likelihood of minor omissions. Research by Jha, Krompinger, and Baime (2007) ^[8] indicates that mindfulness training strengthens subsystems of attention, including sustained attention and attentional switching. By stabilizing attentional focus, mindfulness helps employees maintain cognitive presence during tasks, reducing the incidence of momentary lapses that arise from attentional depletion. Another mechanism through which mindfulness mitigates micro-forgetting is the enhancement of working memory capacity. Working memory plays a central role in monitoring ongoing tasks, retaining transient information, and sequencing task steps. Under cognitive overload, working memory becomes strained, increasing the risk of micro-level errors. Mrazek and colleagues (2013) ^[14] demonstrated that even brief mindfulness interventions significantly improve working memory performance while reducing mind wandering-a key driver of micro-forgetting. By strengthening the cognitive system responsible for holding and manipulating information, mindfulness directly targets the psychological mechanisms underlying these lapses. Mindfulness-based approaches also counteract attention fatigue. Continuous digital interruptions, task switching, and multitasking environments exhaust attentional control resources. This exhaustion weakens the brain’s executive functions, particularly inhibitory control and attentional stability, which increases the likelihood of small errors. Diamond (2013) ^[4] emphasizes that executive functions are highly sensitive to overload and stress, and mindfulness has been shown to buffer these effects by enhancing cognitive regulation. Through mindful breathing, focused attention exercises, and sensory grounding techniques, employees experience a reduction in mental fragmentation, allowing for more accurate task execution. Emotion regulation is another dimension through which mindfulness reduces micro-forgetting. Chronic stress, anxiety, and emotional overload impair cognitive performance and disrupt the attentional system. As Hulsheger and colleagues (2013) ^[7] demonstrate, mindfulness training

significantly reduces emotional exhaustion and strengthens employees' ability to manage emotional responses in high-pressure environments. When employees regulate their emotions more effectively, they are less likely to experience intrusive thoughts, stress-induced cognitive narrowing, and attentional lapses. This stabilization of emotional states fosters greater consistency and accuracy in work-related tasks. Mindfulness practices also reduce automaticity-the tendency to perform repetitive tasks without conscious awareness-which is a central contributor to micro-forgettings. As tasks become habitual, individuals rely more heavily on automatic cognitive processes, reducing conscious monitoring. Smallwood and Schooler (2015) ^[16] highlight that mind wandering often increases during routine tasks, further weakening conscious oversight. Mindfulness disrupts this automaticity by promoting deliberate awareness during task execution. Whether through brief cognitive pauses, intentional breathing before initiating a task, or conscious reflection on task purpose, employees become more engaged with what they are doing. This heightened engagement minimizes the likelihood of procedural omissions or mis-sequenced actions. At a physiological level, mindfulness has been shown to induce structural and functional changes in brain regions associated with attention, self-regulation, and memory. Holzel and colleagues (2011) ^[6] found that mindfulness meditation increases gray matter density in the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex-regions critical for memory and attentional control. These neurobiological enhancements suggest that mindfulness not only mitigates micro-forgettings behaviorally but also strengthens the neural infrastructure that supports accurate cognitive functioning. Beyond individual benefits, mindfulness contributes to organizational psychological safety. Edmondson (1999) ^[5] notes that environments characterized by psychological safety promote cognitive openness, reduce performance-related fear, and enhance information-sharing behaviors. Mindfulness-based organizational practices-such as mindful leadership, mindful communication, and team mindfulness rituals-reinforce a culture in which employees feel supported, reducing cognitive burden associated with self-protection and impression management. When employees feel safe, they can allocate their mental resources more efficiently, thereby reducing micro-level errors. Mindfulness also strengthens employees' self-awareness regarding their cognitive states. When individuals learn to notice their own mental fatigue, emotional tension, or attentional instability, they can adjust their task engagement accordingly-taking a short break, slowing the pace, or reorienting attention before errors occur. Baer *et al.* (2006) ^[2] emphasize that mindfulness enhances self-regulatory competencies, enabling individuals to detect and correct attentional drift before it becomes a behavioral lapse. This meta-awareness acts as a protective mechanism against micro-forgettings. At the organizational level, mindfulness-based interventions can be integrated into broader structural and cultural strategies aimed at reducing cognitive load. Examples include scheduled mindfulness breaks, silent work periods, digital detox intervals, and mindfulness-informed job design practices. When leaders practice mindful leadership-characterized by presence, non-reactivity, and attentive communication-teams experience improved coordination, reduced cognitive stress, and fewer micro-level mistakes. Research by Hülshager *et al.* (2013) ^[7] supports the positive influence of mindful leadership on team performance and emotional regulation. Long-term

mindfulness engagement fosters cognitive and emotional resilience, helping employees maintain clarity and accuracy even during periods of intense demand. Teasdale *et al.* (2000) ^[18] highlight that mindfulness-based cognitive approaches produce lasting improvements in emotion regulation, reducing the cognitive interference caused by negative affect. As employees become more resilient, the frequency of micro-forgettings declines, preventing these lapses from accumulating into broader patterns of organizational dysfunction. Taken together, mindfulness-based practices offer a comprehensive, empirically grounded, and deeply human-centered solution to the rising challenge of micro-forgettings. By enhancing attention, strengthening working memory, reducing stress, disrupting automaticity, improving emotional regulation, and increasing psychological safety, mindfulness interventions help organizations build cognitively sustainable work environments. Micro-forgettings-far from being trivial mistakes-signal that cognitive systems are strained; mindfulness-based approaches offer a pathway to restore balance, prevent overload, and promote consistent performance in modern workplaces.

6. Conclusion

The increasing frequency of micro-forgettings in modern work environments demonstrates that contemporary organizational systems impose cognitive, emotional, and behavioral demands that far exceed the natural processing limits of the human mind. This study reveals that micro-forgettings cannot be dismissed as isolated personal oversights or trivial attentional lapses; rather, they represent the behavioral indicators of overwhelmed cognitive systems, depleted attentional resources, and organizational structures that fail to align with human cognitive architecture. As digitalization accelerates, task complexity intensifies, and expectations rise, micro-forgettings serve as a diagnostic lens through which the hidden burdens of modern work life can be understood. One of the most significant conclusions of this study is that micro-forgettings are directly linked to cognitive overload. Sweller's (1988) ^[17] cognitive load theory demonstrates that the human mind has a strictly limited processing capacity, which is easily exceeded in environments saturated with stimuli, multitasking demands, and constant interruptions. When cognitive load surpasses these limits, the system responds by allocating resources to immediate demands while unintentionally discarding minor but necessary details-resulting in micro-forgettings. Baddeley's (2012) ^[1] working memory framework further reinforces this finding by illustrating how overload weakens the functioning of short-term memory systems, disrupting the flow of information between cognitive processes. Attention depletion is another key mechanism underlying micro-forgettings. Kahneman (2011) ^[10] emphasizes that attention is a finite resource that becomes exhausted when continuously fragmented. In contemporary workplaces, frequent digital interruptions, excessive task switching, and high-speed workflows rapidly drain attentional reserves. Mark *et al.* (2014) ^[12] showed that employees exposed to persistent digital distractions need extended periods to regain focus, significantly increasing the probability of micro-level lapses. These findings confirm that micro-forgettings are not signs of personal carelessness but symptoms of structurally induced attentional depletion. Stress and emotional strain further contribute to the emergence of micro-forgettings.

Diamond (2013)^[4] notes that chronic stress impairs executive functions-working memory, inhibition, and cognitive flexibility-while van der Linden *et al.* (2003)^[19] demonstrated that individuals experiencing high levels of workplace stress report significantly more cognitive failures. Elevated cortisol disrupts neural pathways essential for memory and attention regulation, making employees more vulnerable to minor omissions. Micro-forgettings therefore reflect not only cognitive overload but also the emotional toll of modern work conditions. Digital transformation has amplified these challenges by creating environments in which employees must continuously navigate high volumes of information, operate across multiple platforms, and maintain constant responsiveness. Sagherian *et al.* (2017)^[15] showed that cognitive fatigue caused by such conditions increases error rates and diminishes accuracy. This study confirms that micro-forgettings are among the most prominent behavioral outcomes of digital overload, signaling misalignment between technological systems and human cognitive capacities. From an organizational perspective, micro-forgettings function as early warning signals. When employees begin to confuse tasks, overlook steps, or make timing mistakes, these lapses reveal deeper structural issues: excessive workload, poorly designed tasks, chaotic communication channels, insufficient cognitive rest, and a lack of psychological safety. Organizations often misinterpret these signs as individual performance failures; however, this study demonstrates that micro-forgettings reflect systemic problems rather than personal shortcomings. To address micro-forgettings effectively, organizations must adopt multi-dimensional strategies aimed at reducing cognitive overload, improving attentional stability, and strengthening the emotional well-being of employees. The findings of this study support several evidence-based recommendations:

First, cognitive load should be managed through redesigning workflows. Organizations must streamline processes, reduce unnecessary meetings, simplify communication channels, and create clearer job descriptions. Kahneman (2011)^[10] highlights that reducing ambiguity preserves mental energy, thereby preventing attentional lapses.

Second, digital hygiene policies must be established. Managing notification systems, limiting platform overload, implementing "focus periods," and reducing digital noise can protect employees from the cognitive fragmentation that fuels micro-forgettings. Research by Mark *et al.* (2014)^[12] supports the effectiveness of structured focus intervals in reducing interruptions.

Third, psychological safety should be strengthened. Edmondson (1999)^[5] emphasizes that employees perform cognitively demanding tasks more accurately when they feel supported and free from fear of criticism. Punishing employees for micro-forgettings only exacerbates cognitive strain, whereas supportive feedback environments help restore attentional clarity.

Fourth, mindfulness-based interventions should be systematically incorporated into organizational practices. As shown by Kabat-Zinn (2003)^[9], Jha *et al.* (2007)^[8], Mrazek *et al.* (2013)^[14], and Hülshager *et al.* (2013)^[7], mindfulness enhances attention, strengthens working memory, reduces emotional distress, and mitigates automaticity-all of which significantly reduce the likelihood of micro-forgettings. Mindfulness breaks, mindful leadership programs, and team-based awareness practices can improve cognitive

sustainability across the organization.

Fifth, work-life balance must be reinforced. Adequate rest, manageable working hours, and boundaries between personal and professional time protect cognitive resources and reduce attentional fatigue. Killingsworth and Gilbert's (2010)^[11] research demonstrates that mental presence-and therefore accuracy-declines sharply when individuals lack rest and psychological separation from work.

Lastly, leadership approaches should prioritize cognitive ergonomics. Leaders must recognize the cognitive realities of human functioning and implement practices that align work structures with these limits. Mindful leadership, empathetic communication, and balanced workload allocation contribute to reduced cognitive strain and lower error rates.

Overall, this study reveals that micro-forgettings are not trivial oversights but fundamental behavioral indicators of the cognitive, emotional, and organizational pressures embedded in modern work life. Addressing these lapses requires a shift from individual-centered explanations to systemic, psychologically informed strategies. Micro-forgettings expose the limits of human cognition under conditions of overload; mindfulness-based and organizationally supported interventions provide a path toward restoring cognitive balance, enhancing performance, and cultivating sustainable workplaces. In conclusion, micro-forgettings should be understood not as failures to be corrected but as signals to be interpreted-signals pointing toward the need for redesigned workflows, supportive organizational cultures, healthier digital environments, and cognitive alignment between job demands and human capacities. By recognizing the value of these signals, organizations can build more resilient, attentive, and sustainable work environments that protect both employee well-being and institutional performance.

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