

Core Values of Agile Mindset: A Literature Review

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Abstract

As organizations increasingly transition from traditional hierarchical management models toward agile methodologies, the "Agile Mindset" has emerged as a primary driver of successful transformation. While technical practices are often the focus of early implementation, literature suggests that the human factor—rooted in specific core values—is the ultimate determinant of organizational agility. This paper provides a comprehensive literature review of the five core values that underpin the agile mindset: courage, focus, commitment, respect, and openness. By synthesizing current research, this review illustrates how these values foster psychological safety, enhance team communication, and enable strategic adaptability. The findings indicate that while these values are often associated with the Scrum framework, their influence extends to the broader agile culture, impacting team performance and engagement across diverse functional domains.

Keywords : Agile, Agile Mindset

1. Introduction:

The contemporary business environment is characterized by unprecedented volatility and rapid technological change. To remain competitive, organizations have moved beyond the adoption of agile tools toward the cultivation of an "Agile Mindset" (Özkan et al., 2023). This mindset is defined as a set of attitudes, behaviors, and ways of thinking that enhance team effectiveness and facilitate the delivery of customer value (Miler & Gaida, 2019).

Recent scholarly investigations have shifted the focus from "doing agile" (adhering to processes and rituals) to "being agile" (internalizing core values) (Özkan et al., 2023). At the heart of this internalization are five core values: courage, focus, commitment, respect, and openness (Ekechi et al., 2024; MichaelaDrhová, 2026). These values are not merely abstract ideals; they are functional components that influence people's decision-making and affect every aspect of behavior and action within an agile environment (Özkan et al., 2023). This paper synthesizes the current literature to explore the theoretical and practical significance of these five values in fostering a robust agile mindset.

2. Methodology:

This literature review utilizes a qualitative synthesis of existing knowledge on agile project management and the adoption of core values (MichaelaDrhová, 2026). The methodology aligns with thematic analysis approaches (e.g., Braun and Clarke) to identify key challenges and success factors associated with value adoption (Stray et al., 2020). Sources were selected based on their relevance to agile culture, mindset development, and the specific core values identified in the Scrum framework and general agile philosophy

3. Core Value: Courage

Courage is identified as a critical psychological prerequisite for the agile mindset, particularly in the context of organizational change (Özkan et al., 2020). In agile environments, courage manifests as the willingness to change one's own self, admit mistakes, and make critical decisions for adaptation (Özkan et al., 2020; "Proceedings of the 2020 Federated Conference on Computer Science and Information Systems," 2020).

3.1 Courage in Decision-Making

Literature indicates that courage heartens team members to make difficult decisions even when faced with uncertainty (Özkan et al., 2020). This is particularly relevant in iterative development, where teams must have the courage to throw

away small, initial solutions to build improved ones (Rouissi, 2022). Courage allows teams to interact more authentically, as it is required to both provide and accept constructive feedback (Rouissi, 2022).

3.2 Psychological Safety as an Antecedent

For courage to flourish, individuals must feel safe and have a relatively high tolerance for mistakes (Özkan et al., 2020). This sense of "personal safety" is a foundational element of the agile mindset, allowing members to challenge established patterns without fear of retribution (Özkan et al., 2023; "Proceedings of the 2020 Federated Conference on Computer Science and Information Systems," 2020).

4. Core Value : Focus

Focus is the operational value that enables teams to deliver value consistently despite external pressures. It is defined by the ability of a team to remain dedicated to its goals while managing the degree of external interruptions (MichaelaDrhová, 2026).

4.1 Managing Interruptions

A major challenge identified in industrial research is the negative impact of interruptions on team velocity and mental flow (MichaelaDrhová, 2026). Effective agile teams utilize the value of focus to prioritize tasks and maintain a sustainable pace (Ekechi et al., 2024). This focus is further supported by the agile principle of "simplicity," which encourages teams to do the simplest thing that could possibly work, thereby reducing over-engineering (Rouissi, 2022).

4.2 Focus on Customer Satisfaction

At a strategic level, focus extends beyond daily tasks to the ultimate goal of customer satisfaction (Miler & Gaida, 2019). Literature suggests that successful agile adoption requires an ongoing focus on delivering meaningful increments of work that meet the actual needs of the end-user (Ekechi et al., 2024; Miler & Gaida, 2019).

5. Core Value: Commitment

Commitment in the agile mindset transcends mere compliance with instructions; it represents a deep alignment of personal and organizational values (Ekechi et al., 2024). Research on digital startups highlights that commitment is often a foundational strength that bolsters overall productivity (Ekechi et al., 2024).

5.1 Teamwork and Shared Goals

Commitment is closely tied to the concept of shared goals and collaboration (Özkan et al., 2020). It involves a collective dedication to the team's success rather than individual performance metrics (MichaelaDrhová, 2026). This collective commitment is fostered by a culture that prioritizes teamwork factors over processes and tools (Freire et al., 2022).

5.2 Engagement and Performance

Empirical studies have found a direct positive relationship between the agile way of working and team engagement (Peeters et al., 2022). This engagement is a manifestation of commitment, where team members feel a sense of ownership over their work and its outcomes (Peeters et al., 2022).

6. Core Value: Respect

Respect is arguably the most critical cultural component in the implementation of agile project management (Patrucco et al., 2022). It is a value that strengthens communication channels and supports the acceptance of feedback (Özkan et al., 2020).

6.1 Mutual Respect and Communication

In a survey of agile practitioners, respect was identified as a core factor in creating a positive work environment (Neumann et al., 2024). Mutual respect among team members fosters a "clan culture," which is often a dominant subculture in successful agile teams (Patrucco et al., 2022). This respect ensures that everyone's voice is heard, facilitating more effective "face-to-face" communication (Miler & Gaida, 2019).

6.2 Respect and Customer Relations

The literature also notes that respectful behavior should extend beyond the internal team to include the respectful treatment of customers (Neumann et al., 2024). This outward-facing respect is essential for building trust and ensuring long-term collaboration (Neumann et al., 2024).

7. Core Value: Openness

Openness facilitates transparency and is a key driver of the continuous learning required in agile environments (Özkan et al., 2020). It involves being open about progress, obstacles, and the "behavior" of the developed solution itself (Özkan et al., 2020).

7.1 Transparency as a Facilitator

Transparency acts as a facilitator for communication, enabling the rapid flow of information within and between teams (Özkan et al., 2020). This openness is what allows information to become "agile"—updated, corrected, and shared to gain experience and develop new ideas (Özkan et al., 2020).

7.2 Openness to Change

The agile mindset is fundamentally characterized by an openness to change rather than a rigid adherence to a plan (Miler & Gaida, 2019). This openness allows teams to sense and respond to new information, ensuring that the final product remains relevant in a shifting market (Patrucco et al., 2022).

8. Barriers to Value Adoption

Despite the clear benefits of these five values, their adoption is often hindered by organizational and individual factors:

- Performance Evaluation Systems: Traditional systems that reward individual over team achievement can stifle commitment and respect (MichaelaDrhová, 2026).
- Lack of Psychological Safety: Without a safe environment, team members lack the courage to be open about mistakes (MichaelaDrhová, 2026; Özkan et al., 2020).
- External Interruptions: A lack of focus is often caused by organizational structures that fail to shield agile teams from outside noise (MichaelaDrhová, 2026).
- Management Skepticism: Skepticism from top leadership regarding agile values can create a barrier to deep cultural change (Grass et al., 2020).

9. Discussion and Conclusion

The synthesis of existing literature confirms that the five core values—courage, focus, commitment, respect, and openness—are the "essential" components of the agile mindset (Özkan et al., 2023). These values work in synergy: respect and openness create a safe environment for courage, while focus and commitment drive the actual delivery of value.

For stakeholders such as HR Development and Project Managers, these findings highlight the need to move beyond technical training (MichaelaDrhová, 2026). Success in agile transformations requires fostering an organizational culture that rewards these human factors (Ekechi et al., 2024; Peeters et al., 2022). Future research should continue to explore specific interventions that Scrum Masters and leaders can use to support the long-term adoption of these values in diverse organizational settings (MichaelaDrhová, 2026). In conclusion, "being agile" is a profound cultural shift that is only possible when these five values are lived and breathed at all levels of the enterprise.

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