Mindful Self-Regulated Attention, Political Skill, and Leader Authenticity

A self-regulation model of leader authenticity based on mindful self-regulated attention and political skill

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Abstract

Despite much research on leader authenticity, its antecedents remain poorly understood. We develop a self-regulatory model of leader authenticity. The model explains how both mindful self-regulated attention and political skill, as well as their interaction, are important for leaders to be authentic, and ultimately effective. Mindful self-regulated attention – a core dimension of mindfulness defined as sustained attention centered on the present moment – helps leaders stay connected to their core self amid the busyness of their (work) lives, allowing leaders to feel authentic. And, particularly in combination with political skill – a social effectiveness construct – , it helps leaders interact with their employees in a way that is experienced as authentic and effective. In an experimental study with leaders (Study 1) we found that leaders who mindfully self-regulate their attention feel more authentic. In a two-wave multi-source field study (Study 2) we found that leader self-regulated attention was positively associated with employee perceptions of leader authenticity and effectiveness. Further, this relation was stronger when leader political skill was high. We discuss theoretical and practical implications of this research.

Keywords: authentic leadership; leader authenticity; leader effectiveness; mindfulness; political skill; self-regulated attention

Amid a series of corporate scandals and ethically questionable leader behaviors, interest in leader authenticity has increased over recent years, yet there is little indication that leaders have become more authentic (if anything, leader authenticity appears to be in decline, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2014). Leader authenticity can be conceptualized as leader's feelings of authenticity and authentic leadership behaviors (Cha et al., 2019; Gardner et al., 2009). Kernis (2003: 1) defined authenticity as "the unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise". Building on and extending Kernis' work, Gardner and colleagues characterized authentic leaders as guided by deeply held, core values and moral convictions, rather than opportunistic, self-interested motives (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2011). Research suggests that authentic leaders are also effective leaders who bring benefits to the organization in the form of better relations with employees, increased employee satisfaction, work engagement, and job performance (Giallonardo et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2014).

Despite its apparent benefits, surprisingly little is known about the antecedents of leader authenticity, since most studies have focused on the positive consequences of leader authenticity (Cha et al., 2019; Gardner et al., 2011). Filling this gap in the leader authenticity's nomological net is important to arrive at a more comprehensive theoretical understanding extending from causes to effects. From a practical perspective, finding out how leaders can be(come) more authentic would be important given the benefits of leader authenticity, yet its apparent decline in practice (Avolio and Walumbwa, 2014).

Against this backdrop and taking inspiration from research examining self-regulation in areas such as transformational leadership, abusive supervision, and leadership development (Collins and Jackson, 2015; Sosik et al., 2002; Yeow and Martin, 2013), we develop a self-regulatory model of leader authenticity. This model seeks to shed light on individual-level

antecedents of leader authenticity, in terms of both leaders' phenomenologically experienced, or felt, authenticity as well as their authentic leadership, defined as a pattern of leader behaviors consisting of greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency (Avolio et al., 2018; Gardner et al., 2005). This model posits that mindful self-regulated attention and political skill, as well as their interaction, are important for leaders to be authentic, and ultimately effective. We decided to focus on these variables for this research as several scholars have theorized the importance of self-regulatory processes for leader authenticity (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005) and proposed that specifically mindfulness and political skill are relevant for leader authenticity (Gardner et al., 2009; Reb et al., 2015).

We argue that mindful self-regulated attention, a core dimension of mindfulness defined as sustained attention centered on the present moment (Tran et al., 2013; 2014), helps leaders *internally regulate* their attention to stay connected to their core self amid the busyness of their (work) lives and the myriad of distractions encountered every day. Sustaining this moment-to-moment connection allows leaders to feel and act authentically, consistent with their true values, beliefs, and emotional experiences. We further argue for a moderating role of political skill, defined as "the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use this understanding to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al., 2005: 127). Specifically, we posit that a combination of high mindful self-regulated attention and high political skill allows leaders to better *externally regulate* their interactions and communication with employees so as to be seen as more authentic. Conversely, politically skilled leaders lacking mindful self-regulated attention may be seen as inauthentic. Put differently, political skill helps leaders translate internal mindful self-regulation into context-

appropriate interpersonally authentic and effective behaviors.

We test this self-regulatory model across two studies. Study 1 focuses on the fundamental importance of internal self-regulation: It is by mindfully regulating their attention that leaders stay connected with their core self. Thus, Study 1 uses an experimental design to examine whether a brief manipulation intended to induce a state of mindful self-regulated attention increases leader felt authenticity. Extending Study 1, Study 2 uses a two-wave field study of leaders and their employees to assess authentic leadership. Although a leader's felt authenticity is fundamental to leader authenticity, it is important that this internal phenomenological experience is reflected in leadership behaviors that are perceived by others as authentic and effective (DeRue et al., 2011). Thus, Study 2 examines the relation between leader mindful self-regulated attention, employee perceptions of authentic leadership, and leadership effectiveness. Moreover, Study 2 also assesses political skill as a first-stage moderator and tests the hypothesis that political skill strengthens the relation between mindful self-regulated attention and authentic leadership and increases the indirect effect of self-regulated attention on leader effectiveness via authentic leadership.

In conducting these two studies, our research makes several valuable contributions. First, our research sheds light on a paradox of leader authenticity: If authenticity means being one's natural, true self, why does it seem so difficult to be authentic? Why is it that leaders often feel and are perceived as inauthentic (Arnold et al., 2015; Avolio and Walumbwa, 2014; Cha et al., 2019)? Our model provides an answer by suggesting that authenticity, rather than being a "default" experience, requires self-awareness and self-regulatory skills. Thus, our research not only responds to calls for more research on the antecedents of leader authenticity (Banks et al., 2016; Gardner et al., 2011) but also contributes to a small, but growing literature on the

importance of self-regulation for leadership (Collins and Jackson, 2015; Sosik et al., 2002; Yeow and Martin, 2013). Our empirical examination on self-regulation is particularly valuable as leader authenticity theory heavily draws on leader self-awareness, self-regulation, and concordant self-expression, arguably more so than many other areas of leadership research (Cha et al., 2019; Gardner et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005; Lemoine et al., 2019). Moreover, examining both felt authenticity and perceived authenticity provides a more comprehensive and complementary view of authenticity, as has recently been pointed out by Cha et al. (2019).

We focus on mindful self-regulated attention as it seems particularly important in this age of distraction, busyness, and attention overload, where it is so easy for leaders to lose touch of their core self (Reb et al., 2015). We further argue that this more internally-oriented skill of self-regulating attention is usefully complemented by the more externally-oriented political skill, which helps leaders to self-regulate their behavior in ways that is perceived as genuine and sincere (Ferris et al., 2005; Munyon et al., 2015). In so doing, our research theoretically extends existing work which has either examined the main effects of leader mindfulness (in the absence of any moderators; Reb et al., 2014; Schuh et al., 2017) or has treated leader mindfulness as a moderator (Liang et al., 2016).

By examining mindful self-regulated attention at the intersection between leaders and followers, our research also addresses calls for more studies on the interpersonal effects of mindfulness (Good et al., 2016) and criticism of purely intrapersonal research on employee mindfulness as decontextualized (Purser and Milillo, 2015). Moreover, by focusing on the dimension of mindful self-regulated attention, our research responds to concerns (Chiesa, 2013; Van Dam et al., 2018) that most of the existing mindfulness literature operationalizes mindfulness as a unidimensional construct and uses the single-factor MAAS, despite strong

conceptual and empirical arguments that mindfulness is not unidimensional. We follow the seminal work of Bishop et al. (2004) and Shapiro et al. (2006) that conceptualize mindfulness as consisting of two higher level dimensions: a sustained attention centered in the present moment, reflecting the self-regulatory attentional dimension of mindfulness (i.e., mindful self-regulated attention); and an open, curious, and accepting attitude, reflecting the attitudinal dimension of mindfulness (i.e., orientation to experience). This model has received considerable empirical support in recent years (Tran et al., 2013; 2014).[1] While our main focus is on mindful self-regulated attention given our interest in the role of self-regulation (rather than attitudes) for leader authenticity, we also measured orientation to experience, the second main dimension of mindfulness, in order to show discriminant validity (i.e., that the model holds for mindful self-regulated attention but not for orientation to experience). Doing so helps to unfold the "umbrella term" of mindfulness (Van Dam et al., 2018: 37) in order to achieve greater theoretical and empirical clarity (Chiesa, 2013).

Finally, we contribute to the ongoing and important debate on whether politically skilled leaders are manipulative and self-serving or can also be (perceived as) authentic and other-serving (Ellen et al., 2013; Gardner et al., 2009). An interactive effect between mindful self-regulated attention and political skill would suggest that politically skilled leaders can indeed be seen as authentic, inasmuch as they are also mindfully regulating their attention to stay connected to their core selves. Thus, rather than arguing simplistically that politically skilled leaders are either being seen as authentic or not, we instead highlight the important role of political skill as a moderator and show how the interplay between mindful self-regulated attention and political skill coproduces increased leader authenticity. And to the extent that authentic and effective leaders also benefit their employees, political skill would exert a positive

effect on employees, complementing its function as a self-benefitting resource (cf. Munyon et al., 2015).

From a practical perspective, studying self-regulatory antecedents provides potential intervention points for leader selection and development. Mindfulness and political skill training that develops leaders and increases their authenticity could be a valuable approach for organizations (Fyke and Buzzanell, 2013; Reb et al., 2015).

Study 1

Mindfulness at the Workplace

The concept, and particularly the practice, of mindfulness has long been essential in Asian contemplative traditions such as Buddhism. Inspired by these traditions, research in psychology has shown profound benefits of mindfulness for health and well-being, such as reduced anxiety, stress, and negative affect (Sedlmeier et al., 2012). According to this modern research, mindfulness can be viewed as "a state-level construct that can also be assessed at the trait level" (Dane, 2011: 999). Importantly, mindfulness at the state and trait level is interrelated: That is, research has shown that the recurring experience of state mindfulness over time resulted in increased levels of trait mindfulness (Kiken et al., 2015).

Recently, organizational practitioners and scholars have begun to apply and study mindfulness within the context of work (Good et al., 2016; Reb and Atkins, 2015). Among others, mindfulness has been found to increase negotiation performance (Reb and Narayanan, 2014), employee well-being (Hülsheger et al., 2013), job performance (Dane and Brummel, 2014; Reb et al., 2015), and decrease turnover intentions (Reb et al., 2017). A limited amount of research has examined the role of mindfulness in leadership. The few existing studies have shown some interpersonal benefits of leader mindfulness for their employees. For example,

leader mindfulness positively predicted employee satisfaction, performance, well-being, and servant leadership (Pinck and Sonnentag, 2018; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Reb et al., 2014). Research also uncovered underlying processes such as greater procedural and interactional justice, better leader-member exchange relations, and transformational leadership behaviors, which mediated the relations between mindful leadership and these positive outcomes (Pinck and Sonnentag, 2018; Reb et al., 2018; Schuh et al., 2017). Moreover, past theorizing has argued that mindful leaders are more authentic (Reb et al., 2015), but empirical research is sorely lacking.

Past research on leader mindfulness has not explicated which specific mindfulness dimension is accountable for the observed benefits, by assessing mindfulness only with the unidimensional Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown and Ryan, 2003). Because of our interest in leader self-regulation, we decided to focus on the core mindfulness dimension of self-regulated attention (Bishop et al., 2004; Shapiro et al., 2006; Tran et al., 2013; 2014). Mindful self-regulated attention is characterized by a self-regulatory capacity to avoid reacting impulsively to inner experiences, such as negative thoughts and emotions; an observing stance towards internal (bodily) sensations; and an ability to describe internal (emotional) states. In contrast, orientation to experience, the second main dimension of mindfulness, is characterized by not acting absentmindedly, for example, because of worries about the future or ruminations about the past (Mrazek et al., 2013); and by a tendency to not judge one's thoughts and emotions as bad or inappropriate. Consistent with the important role of worrying, ruminating, and negatively evaluating one's thoughts and emotions in mental health problems such as depression and anxiety disorders, orientation to experience has been found to be particularly relevant for clinical contexts and variables (Tran et al., 2013).

Mindful Self-Regulated Attention and Felt Authenticity

According to Kernis (2003: 1), authenticity is "the unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise". Core dimensions of authenticity include the absence of self-alienation and biased processing as well as authentic living (Gardner et al., 2005; Kernis, 2003; Lenton et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2008). While achieving authenticity has been seen as a challenge since the ancient Greeks (Avolio and Gardner, 2005), the demands on organizational leaders' attention are increasing, and these demands are likely to affect felt authenticity. Amidst 24/7 connectivity, information overload, and social media distractions, many leaders struggle to regulate their attention towards their selves, their goals, values, important priorities, and emotional experiences. Thus, the operation of a leaders' core self can easily be obstructed. A possible consequence of these developments is a reduction in felt authenticity, as attention is externalized, diffused, overloaded, and drained (Lenton et al., 2016).

This suggests that the ability to mindfully self-regulate attention may be crucial for leaders to (re-)connect to their core selves and feel authentic, moment-to-moment, as their workday unfolds. Mindful self-regulated attention allows leaders to focus their mind on one task at a time and at the same time retain self-awareness of their experiences (Tran et al., 2014; Vago and Silbersweig, 2012). By observing one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, feelings of self-alienation are prevented and self-awareness is enhanced. Moreover, mindful self-regulated attention allows leaders to step back and observe, rather than automatically and habitually react to the myriad of distracting stimuli encountered and the internal experiences they induce. By distancing themselves from automatic and reactive thought patterns and emotions, leaders' biased processing is decreased. In line with this, mindfulness practice has been found to reduce cognitive biases (Hafenbrack et al., 2014; Kiken and Shook, 2011). Finally, mindful self-regulated attention may foster authentic living by facilitating emotion and behavior regulation

that is based on abiding values (Brown et al., 2007; Tran et al., 2013). In support, Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010) found that mindful individuals acted more ethically.

Consistent with this theorizing, albeit not in the context of leadership, Leroy et al. (2013) found that mindfulness was positively related to authentic functioning of employees. In addition, research found meditation to be a situational correlate of state authenticity (Lenton et al., 2016). Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Mindful self-regulated attention is positively related to felt authenticity.

Method

Sample and procedure. We recruited participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk for a study concerning feelings of organizational members. We invited interested participants living in the United States to complete an online pre-screen questionnaire. To minimize strategic, fake responding, we did not disclose the specific purpose of the pre-screening questionnaire (i.e., to identify full-time employees with leadership responsibilities) and we hid the relevant screening questions among a number of filler questions, consistent with other studies that recruited leaders via Mturk (Liang et al., 2016). A total of 189 participants completed the pre-screen questionnaire, and 129 participants were full-time employees with managerial or supervisory responsibilities, and thus met our study requirements. We subsequently invited them to participate in our study in exchange for $1.50 USD. As recommended by Meade and Craig (2012), we excluded three participants who responded carelessly, because they failed one of the two direct response measures (e.g. "please select 'agree' here"). Moreover, we excluded one respondent who indicated that we should not trust his/her data, six respondents who had problems with the audio-guided exercise, nine respondents who failed to correctly recall the last sentence of the audio-guided exercise, and four respondents who participated twice in our pre-

screening and who provided inconsistent or fake demographic information. The final sample resulted in 106 full-time leaders (55.7 % male). The sample was 34.8 years of age on average, and worked 42.2 hours per week.

Design and manipulation. The experiment manipulated one factor across two levels. Specifically, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: mindful self-regulated attention (n = 50) or a mind wandering control condition (n = 56). In both conditions, participants listened to a 10-min recorded induction created for this research by a professional mindfulness meditation instructor and then indicated their felt sense of authenticity. We adapted our manipulations from previous studies (Arch and Craske, 2006; Hafenbrack et al., 2014), because this type of manipulation has been shown to successfully induce mindful states in beginners. In the mindful self-regulated attention condition, participants were guided through a focused-breathing exercise that instructed and continually reminded them to focus on the physical sensations of breath entering and leaving their body. Consistent with previous studies we used mind wandering as the control condition, because it has been characterized as a baseline mental state and commonly employed as control condition in mindfulness research (e.g., Hafenbrack et al., 2014; Hafenbrack and Vohs, 2018; Liang et al., 2018; Mason et al., 2007). Participants in the control condition thus listened to a mind-wandering induction, which repeatedly instructed them to think of whatever came to their mind. To ensure that the manipulations of the two conditions were comparable, the structure of the recording in the control condition paralleled that of the mindful self-regulated attention induction.

Measures

Felt authenticity. We assessed felt authenticity with an adapted state version of the Wood et al. (2008) 12-item authenticity scale using a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly*

disagree – 7 = *strongly agree*; α = .87). This scale has been recommended for assessing state authenticity (Sedikides et al., 2017), and it measures three facets of felt authenticity, which are aligned with Kernis' conceptualization of authenticity (Kernis, 2003; Lenton et al., 2016). Sample items are: Right now, … 1) I feel ready to stand by what I believe in (authentic living), 2) I feel out of touch with the 'real me' (self-alienation, reverse coded), and 3) I feel I need to do what others expect me to do (accepting external influence, reverse coded).[2]

Manipulation check measures. After completing the felt authenticity measure, participants rated their experience in the audio-guided exercise on two items related to mindful self-regulated attention ("I focused on the present moment", "I was mindful of the present moment", [1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*], α = .80). As a measure of mindful self-regulated attention more specific to the experimental manipulation we added three items measuring participants' focus on their breathing and bodily sensations ("To which extent, … were you focused on your breathing", "… were you in touch which your body", and "… were you focused on the physical sensations of your breathing" (1 = *very slightly or not at all*, 5 = *extremely*; α = .90). Finally, aligned with the control condition, we used two items to assess mind wandering: "I thought about anything I wanted", "I let my mind wander freely" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*; α = .83).

Results and Discussion

We first examined whether the manipulation had the desired effect using independent t-tests. Results indicated that the manipulation increased both the general (*M* = 4.26, *SD* = 0.56) and the specific (*M* = 4.07, *SD* = 0.86) measure of mindful self-regulated attention relative to the control condition (*M* = 3.95, *SD* = 0.73, t[104] = 2.45, p = .02, and *M* = 3.60, *SD* = 0.92, t[104] = 2.72, p < .01, respectively). The reverse was the case for mind wandering, which was higher in

the mind wandering condition (M = 4.06, SD = 0.76) than in experimental condition (M = 3.40,

SD = 1.10, t[85.92] = 3.56, p < .001). These findings suggest that the manipulation of

participants' mindful self-regulated attention was successful.

We next tested Hypothesis 1, that mindful self-regulated attention leads to greater felt

authenticity, using an independent samples t-test. Corroborating Hypothesis 1, participants felt

more authentic in the self-regulated attention condition (M = 5.68, SD = 0.76) than in the control

condition (M = 5.22, SD = 0.98, t[102.2] = 2.72, p < .01, d = 0.52). A correlation analysis

revealed that the experimental manipulation was positively related to felt authenticity (r = .25, p

< .01), indicating a moderate effect size (Bosco et al., 2015).

While the primary purpose of the measures of mindful self-regulated attention and mind

wandering was to serve as manipulation check, on an exploratory basis, we examined whether

they predicted felt authenticity. Doing so provides suggestive evidence as to the mechanism

driving the effect of the manipulation. We found that the measure of general self-regulated

attention was positively related to felt authenticity, r = .49, p < .001. The specific measure of

self-regulated attention to the physical sensations of breathing was also associated with felt

authenticity, albeit less so, r = .22, p = .03. In contrast, the measure of mind wandering was not

related to felt authenticity, r = .05, p = .62.

These exploratory results suggest that the effect of the experimental manipulation on felt

authenticity was driven by greater mindful self-regulated attention, rather than lower mind

wandering, which appear not to be two opposite ends of a continuum. These findings add nuance

to research which tended to describe mind-wandering and mindfulness as opposing constructs

(Mrazek et al., 2012). Moreover, these findings are consistent with our focus on mindful self-

regulated attention rather than orientation to experience: As discussed previously, the latter is

characterized by an absence of mind wandering and appears more relevant in a clinical context where mind wandering is often the result of (excessive) worrying, rumination, suppression, or experiential avoidance (Stawarczyk et al., 2013). Among a sample of generally mentally healthy leaders, mind wandering, within normal limits, may neither support nor diminish leader felt authenticity. Interestingly, the level of felt authenticity in the mind wandering condition was above the mid-point of the scale (M = 5.22). These findings suggest that mind wandering does not necessarily preclude a sense of authenticity. This is in line with reviews suggesting that mind wandering has nuanced effects, rather than generally being detrimental (Smallwood and Schooler, 2015).

Overall, Study 1 provides experimental support for the hypothesis that mindful self-regulated attention increases felt authenticity among leaders. Moreover, exploratory analyses suggest that the effect is indeed due to the proposed mechanism of mindful self-regulated attention as compared to less mind wandering. These findings can be interpreted as establishing internally valid, experimental support that mindful self-regulated attention increases a fundamental aspect of leader authenticity: a personal sense of felt authenticity. At the same time, Study 1 was limited in that it measured neither employee perceived leader authenticity as the second main aspect of leader authenticity (Cha et al., 2019) nor leader effectiveness as the consequence of leader authenticity.

To address this limitation, in a multi-wave and multi-source field study with leaders and employees, we examined whether the relation between mindful self-regulated attention and leader authenticity holds beyond the confines of a short experimental study. Specifically, we studied whether self-regulated attention is positively related to employee-perceived leader authenticity and effectiveness. Moreover, Study 2 tests the second aspect of our self-regulation

model of leader authenticity: that political skill would enhance the relation between mindful self-regulated attention and leader authenticity. In addition, while Study 1 focused on mindful self-regulated attention at the state level, Study 2 complements Study 1 by investigating mindful self-regulated attention at the trait level and testing whether different representations of the construct function similarly with regard to leader authenticity. In line with prior research and theorizing (e.g., Brown and Ryan, 2003; Hülsheger et al., 2013; Liang et al., 2018; Long and Christian, 2015), our model assumes homology across state and trait levels. That is, we expect the same relationships with leader authenticity whether mindfulness is conceptualized and measured at the state or at the trait level (Chen et al., 2005). Converging results across both studies would provide further support for such homology and suggest a greater degree of generalizability.

Study 2

Employee Perceptions of Leader Authenticity and Leader Effectiveness

Hypothesis 1 stated that mindful self-regulated attention is positively related to leader felt authenticity. Hypothesis 2 is a straightforward extension of this prediction, given that we conceptualize leader authenticity as consisting of both felt and behavioral authenticity (cf. Cha et al., 2019): mindful self-regulated attention will also be positively related to employee-perceived leader authenticity. Moreover, since our model assumes homology across state and trait levels (Chen et al., 2005; Hülsheger et al., 2013; Liang et al., 2018), we believe that self-regulated attention influences perceptions of authentic leadership through the same processes as it affects felt authenticity. Accordingly, the main components of felt authenticity are aligned to the key constituents of authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2005; Kernis, 2003; Lenton et al., 2016). Moreover, we posit that such leaders are also judged as more effective, with leader authenticity acting as the mediating mechanism. Put differently, we argue that mindful self-regulated

attention has an indirect effect on leader effectiveness via employee-perceived leader authenticity.

Leadership effectiveness can be conceptualized as leader task performance and assessed by using employee appraisals (DeRue et al., 2011). Leader authenticity may serve as mediator because employees trust authentic leaders more and experience increased motivation (Gill and Caza, 2018; Norman et al., 2010; Leroy et al., 2015). In addition, authentic leadership positively influences employee identification with the leader, social exchange, and positive employee states such as work engagement. This results in increased employee work performance, organizational citizenship behavior, extra effort, and team performance (Gill and Caza, 2018; Wang et al., 2014). Accordingly, research found authentic leadership to be positively related to employee-perceived leader effectiveness (Banks et al., 2016; Gill and Caza, 2018; Gardner et al., 2011). Thus, we hypothesize:

> *Hypothesis 2: Mindful self-regulated attention is positively related to employee-perceived leader authenticity.*
>
> *Hypothesis 3: Mindful self-regulated attention has an indirect effect on leader effectiveness through employee-perceived leader authenticity.*

The Moderating Role of Political Skill

Our self-regulation model posits internally-oriented self-regulation through mindful self-regulated attention as fundamental for leader authenticity, as indicated in Study 1 and the hypotheses above. However, we also believe that externally-oriented self-regulation has an important role to play. Specifically, we suggest that leader political skill acts as a moderating variable such that it strengthens the positive relation between mindful self-regulated attention and perceived leader authenticity and the indirect effect of self-regulated attention on leader

effectiveness via leader authenticity.

Political skill enables leaders to regulate their behaviors in interactions with others to achieve personal or organizational goals (Ferris et al., 2005; Munyon et al., 2015). While organizational politics tends to have a negative connotation in lay usage, research suggests that political skill is distinct from dark personality traits. For example, political skill shows weak or non-significant relations with the "dark triad" of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (Dahling et al., 2009; Schütte et al., 2015). Instead, political skill is better conceived of as a social effectiveness construct relevant in work environments that facilitates externally-oriented self-regulation (Ferris et al., 2005; Munyon et al., 2015). Munyon et al. (2015: 152) characterize politically skilled individuals as having the capacity to "self-regulate their behavior in ways that convey positive and sincere intentions, and influence and manage the reactions and behavior of others (Treadway, Ferris, Duke, Adams, & Thatcher, 2007)". For instance, political skill was the most important social skill for predicting managerial job performance among other constructs such as emotional intelligence, leadership self-efficacy, and self-monitoring (Semadar et al., 2006). Political skill facilitates employee's and leaders' external behavior regulation resulting in positive impressions and evaluations by others (Munyon et al., 2015; Frieder et al., 2019). Moreover, political skill helps to translate personality, identity, and motives into successful action through behavior regulation (Blickle et al., 2011; Dietl et al., 2017; Hogan and Blickle, 2013; Hogan and Shelton, 1998).

Through mindful self-regulated attention, leaders may become more aware of and better at describing and regulating their thoughts, emotions, values, and goals (Tran et al., 2013; 2014). Political skill may help leaders to consider situational and contextual cues, such as organizational emotional display rules, and express thoughts and emotions genuinely when it is appropriate to

do so (Ferris et al., 2005; Gardner et al., 2009). In this way, political skill may facilitate mindful leaders' authentic behaviors and improve relational transparency. Moreover, while mindful self-regulated attention increases awareness of values and goals, politically skilled leaders will be better able to express value-consistent behavior that is seen as sincere, convincing, and authentic (cf. Ferris et al., 2007; Munyon et al., 2015), given that apparent sincerity is an essential part of political skill.

To illustrate, a leader high on mindful self-regulated attention may be aware of being frustrated and angry by an employee doing sloppy work on an important report, may be able to describe these feelings accurately, and may be able to not react to any impulses to lash out at the employee. Political skill would help the leader make better choices about whether, when, and how to communicate these feelings authentically and effectively to the employee (cf. Gardner et al., 2009). As another example, a leader may feel sympathy and compassion for a grieving employee who lost a family member. Political skill would help the leader recognize when it is situationally appropriate to express these feelings to the employee (e.g., in public or in private).

In support, Ilies et al. (2005) noted that authentic leaders will be more effective in conveying their authentic self to their followers, when they engage in appropriate actions and extraverted behavior. Empirically, these ideas are also in line with research finding that perceptions of ethical and authentic leadership can be enhanced through socially effective behaviors (Liu et al., 2017; Treviño et al., 2003). Our arguments are also consistent with Hogan and Shelton's (1998) view that social skills are required for internal processes (i.e., mindful self-regulated attention) to demonstrate their positive influence. In support, political skill strengthened the positive relation between leader personality and perceptions of leader charisma (Blickle et al., 2014). Taken together, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4: Leader political skill strengthens the positive relation between mindful self-regulated attention and leader authenticity.

Integrating these arguments with Hypothesis 3, we hypothesize that the indirect effect of self-regulated attention on leader effectiveness through leader authenticity is conditional on political skill. This is referred to as first-stage moderated mediation model (Edwards and Lambert, 2007).

Hypothesis 5: Leader political skill strengthens the positive indirect effect of mindful self-regulated attention on leader effectiveness via leader authenticity.

Method

Sample and procedure. A diverse sample of German leaders and employees from a broad range of organizations and occupational backgrounds was recruited by seven students in partial fulfilment of their study requirements. Participants were personally approached by trained students and received upon agreement an e-mail including a link to an online questionnaire and a generated identification code. After providing self-reports, leaders were asked to nominate, by reporting their email-addresses, a maximum of six employees that provided assessments of the leader. Subsequently, employees were contacted via e-mail to participate in the study.

Of the invited leaders, 290 started the questionnaire and 235 leaders provided complete data (81.0% completion rate). Of the employees, 268 started and 237 completed the survey (88.4% completion rate) several days after leaders completed their questionnaire. On average each leader was rated by 1.45 employees, with 122 (74.3%) leaders rated by 1 employee, 24 leaders by 2 employees, 12 leaders by 3 employees, 2 leaders by 4 employees, 1 leader by 5 employees, and 3 leaders by 6 employees (N = 237 employee-raters). In total, we had 164 leader-employee-matched data sets. The leader sample was 64.6% male, 45.5 years of age on average, and worked 47.6 hours per week on average. The employee sample was 44.3 % male, and 39.4

years of age on average.

Measures

    Mindful self-regulated attention. Based on Tran and colleagues' work (Tran et al., 2013; Tran et al., 2014), we used the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ, Baer et al., 2006; Bohlmeijer et al., 2011) to measure all facets of mindfulness, which together make up two core dimensions of mindfulness: self-regulated attention and orientation to experience (Tran et al., 2013). The German FFMQ short form was recently validated in two independent non-clinical samples (Tran et al., 2013). We assessed self-regulated attention with three items each of the three facets forming the core of self-regulated attention: observing, describing, and non-reactivity to inner experience. We used a five-point scale (1 = *never* – 5 = *very often*). The items for observe were, "I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face", "I notice visual elements in art or nature, such as colors, shapes, textures, or patterns of light and shadow", and "I pay attention to sounds, such as clocks ticking, birds chirping, or cars passing"; for describe: "I have trouble thinking of the right words to express how I feel about things" (reverse-scored), "When I have a sensation in my body, it's hard for me to describe it because I can't find the right words" (reverse-scored), and "I can usually describe how I feel at the moment in considerable detail"; for non-react: "In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting", "When I have distressing thoughts, I 'step back' and am aware of the thought without getting taken over by it", and "When I have distressing thoughts, I just notice them and let them go". In order to also consider orientation to experience as second major dimension of mindfulness (Bishop et al., 2004; Shapiro et al., 2006), we followed Tran et al. (2013) and assessed orientation to experience with three items each of the remaining two FFMQ facets that form the orientation to experience factor: acting with awareness, and nonjudging of inner

experience. The items for acting with awareness were: "I am easily distracted", "When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted", and "I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted" (all items reverse-scored); for nonjudging: "I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn't feel them", "I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way", and "I tell myself I shouldn't be thinking the way I'm thinking" (all items reverse-scored).

Tran et al. (2013; 2014) found that the three facets observe, describe, and non-react load on the higher order factor of self-regulated attention, and the two facets act with awareness and non-judge on the higher order factor of orientation to experience. Consistent with these findings, confirmatory factor analyses showed that a hierarchical second-order model in which describe, observe, and non-react are indicators of the self-regulated attention factor and act with awareness and non-judge are indicators of the orientation to experience factor fit the data well (χ^2(84, $N =$ 164) = 145.57, $p < .001$; χ^2/df = 1.73, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .067, SRMR =.085). All items and facets had significant factor loadings on intended factors. Thus, we averaged the respective items into self-regulated attention (α =.76) and orientation to experience scales (α =.79).[3]

Political skill. Leaders assessed their political skill using the German 18-item Political Skill Inventory (PSI; Ferris et al., 2005; Lvina et al., 2012) on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* – 7 = *strongly agree*; α = .89). Sample items are "I understand people very well" and "I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others".

Employee-perceived leader authenticity. Employees rated the frequency of authentic leadership behaviors displayed by the leader on the 16-item Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ; Avolio et al., 2018). We used the official German translation by the publisher Mindgarden with a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = *never* – 5 = *almost always*). The ALQ

measures 4 facets of authentic leadership, which we aggregated, as commonly practiced (Leroy et al., 2015), into an overall score. Sample items are "Says exactly what he or she means" and "Demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions". Cronbach's alpha was .91 for both individual-level and leader-level data.

Leader effectiveness. To rate leader effectiveness, employees completed the 10-item scale developed by Blickle and colleagues (2012). Sample items are: How is this person at … (1) leading a group at work, (2) leading a business, and (3) leading discussions. We used a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *much worse than other persons in a comparable position* – 5 = *much better than other persons in a comparable position*). Cronbach's alpha was .89 for both individual-level and leader-level data.[4]

Aggregating data at the leader level

Because our interest lies at how leader self-regulated attention and political skill relate to perceived leader authenticity and leader effectiveness, we aggregated the authentic leadership and leader effectiveness ratings to the leader-level for leaders that received more than one employee rating. In support of our aggregation decision (Bliese, 2000; LeBreton and Senter, 2008), for leader effectiveness we found an average r_{wg} of .87, using a uniform null distribution, an ICC(1) of .36, and an ICC(2) of .45. For authentic leadership we found an average r_{wg} of .85, using a uniform null distribution, an ICC(1) of .15, and an ICC(2) of .20. Average r_{wg} values in the range of .71 to .90 constitute strong interrater agreement, and ICC(1) = .10 can be considered a medium effect, while ICC(1) = .25 constitutes a large effect (LeBreton and Senter, 2008). For ICC(2) values higher than .60 are usually considered to be sufficient (Bliese, 2000). Therefore, although the findings related to ICC(2) make the suitability of aggregating data somewhat problematic, we consider that the results regarding ICC(1) and the strong inter-rater agreement,

average r_{wg}, justify aggregation. Moreover, the primary reason for the somewhat lower ICC(2) values is, that we were only able to sample 1.45 employees per leader on average (Bliese, 2000; LeBreton and Senter, 2008).

Data analyses

Examining the hypotheses at the leader level, we conducted OLS mediation analyses using a bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 bootstraps to test the (moderated) mediation hypotheses (Hayes, 2013). We also tested whether the effects of mindful self-regulated attention would hold when including orientation to experience as control variable. Following recommended guidelines, we tested the hypotheses with and without the control variable (Becker et al., 2016). Since the pattern of findings remained the same, we only report the findings with orientation to experience as control.

Results and Discussion

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We performed confirmatory factor analyses to assess the discriminant validity of our key study measures. We constructed three to four item parcels as composite indicators for each construct following recommendations to achieve an optimal ratio of sample size to number of estimated indicators (Williams and O'Boyle, 2008). Our hypothesized five-factor model (self-regulated attention, orientation to experience, political skill, leader authenticity, and leader effectiveness) showed very good fit to the observed covariance matrix ($\chi^2(109, N = 164) = 138.71, p = .03; \chi^2/df = 1.27$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .04, SRMR =.05). This model yielded a significant improvement in chi-square over more parsimonious models in which we set two constructs to load onto a single factor: self-regulated attention and political skill ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 150.15, p < .001$); self-regulated attention and orientation to experience ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 193.67, p <$

.001); self-regulated attention and leader authenticity ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 190.94$, $p < .001$); leader

authenticity and effectiveness ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 285.80$, $p < .001$).

Mindful Self-Regulated Attention, Leader Authenticity, and Leader Effectiveness

In support of H2, leader self-regulated attention was positively associated with perceived

leader authenticity (correlation: $r = .20$, $p < .01$, Table 1; regression analysis: $b = .19$ $p < .05$,

Table 2, Model 1). Mindful self-regulated attention was also positively related to leader

effectiveness ($r = .23$, $p < .01$) in correlation (Table 1) and regression analyses ($b = .24$, $p < .01$,

Table 2, Model 3). Results supported the hypothesized mediational model (H3). Specifically, the

indirect effect of self-regulated attention on leader effectiveness via perceived leader authenticity

was positive (indirect effect = .09, *SE* = .04, 95% *CI*[.02; .19], Table 2, Model 1 & Model 4).

Political Skill as Moderator

In support of H4, we found a significant interaction between mindful self-regulated

attention and political skill on perceived leader authenticity ($b = .20$, $p < .05$; 2.3% additional

variance explained, see Table 2, Model 2). Plotting the interaction at low and high levels (+/- 1

SD from mean; Figure 1) of the moderator shows that the positive relationship between leader

self-regulated attention and authenticity was stronger for leaders with high levels of political

skill. We found a significant positive slope for mindful self-regulated attention at high levels of

political skill (+1 *SD*; $b = .37$, $p < .001$) and at the mean ($b = .24$, $p < .01$). At low levels of

political skill (−1 *SD*), the slope of self-regulated attention was not significant ($b = .11$, $p = .25$).

To assess H5, we followed the procedures recommended by Edwards and Lambert (2007)

and used Model 7 of Hayes (2013). We examined the conditional indirect effect of leader self-

regulated attention on effectiveness via authenticity for political skill at 1 *SD* above the mean

(indirect effect = .17, *SE* = .06, 95% *CI*[.07; .32], Table 2, Model 2 & Model 4), at the mean

(indirect effect = .11, SE = .04, 95% CI[.04; .20]), and at 1 SD below the mean (indirect effect = .05, SE = .05, 95% CI[-.04; .15]). Consistent with H5, the indirect effect was significant for high and medium levels of political skill, but nonsignificant at low levels.

Overall, the results of Study 2 suggest that mindful self-regulated attention is positively related to perceived leader authenticity, which, in turn, predicts leader effectiveness. In addition, leader political skill strengthened the relation between self-regulated attention and leader authenticity and its indirect effect on effectiveness, over and above the main effect of self-regulated attention. All hypothesized effects (Hypotheses 2 – 5) remain significant when analyzed without including orientation of experience as control variable.

Supplemental Analyses of Orientation to Experience

While our main purpose for including orientation to experience was to see if any relation of self-regulated attention with leader authenticity and effectiveness would hold over and above orientation to experience, on an exploratory basis, we also examined the role of orientation to experience for leader authenticity and effectiveness. We found that leader orientation to experience was not significantly related to perceived leader authenticity (r = .08, p = .31) and leadership effectiveness (r = .11, p = .16) in correlation and regression analysis (see Table 2). Overall, these findings provide discriminant validity evidence: It was not the case that any dimension of mindfulness predicts perceived leader authenticity and effectiveness. Instead, these effects are specific to mindful self-regulated attention, consistent with our self-regulation model of leader authenticity.

General Discussion

Researchers and practitioners have looked at authentic leaders, who decide and act with transparency from an awareness of their core values, as a possible solution to corporate scandals.

To gain a better understanding of what makes leaders feel and lead authentically, we developed a self-regulation model that considers both mindful self-regulated attention, a form of internally-oriented self-regulation, as well as political skill, a form of external self-regulation of behaviors in interaction with employees, as well as their interaction. In essence, the model posits that mindful self-regulated attention allows leaders to connect to their core selves moment-to-moment, thus forming the foundation of leader felt authenticity. To effectively translate felt authenticity, leaders benefit from political skill, which allows them to externally regulate their behaviors to interact and communicate with their employees more authentically. The model predicts that leader self-regulated attention is positively related to leader felt and perceived authenticity, as well as to leader effectiveness, as mediated via leader authenticity. Moreover, political skill is hypothesized to strengthen the positive relation between leader self-regulated attention and employee perceived authenticity.

To establish the foundational role of mindful self-regulated attention for felt authenticity with a high degree of internal validity, we first conducted an experiment. We found that mindful self-regulated attention increased leader's felt authenticity, relative to a mind wandering control condition. Exploratory analyses suggest that this effect was indeed due to increased mindful self-regulated attention, rather than reduced mind wandering.

Having established the effect on felt authenticity, Study 2 examined whether the effect of self-regulated attention would extend to employee-perceived leader authenticity and leader effectiveness. Moreover, the study examined whether leader political skill would strengthen this effect. Consistent with hypotheses, results from a two-wave multi-source field survey showed that 1) mindful self-regulated attention was positively related to perceived leader authenticity, 2) leader authenticity mediated the positive effect of self-regulated attention on leader effectiveness,

and 3) leader political skill strengthened the relation between self-regulated attention and authenticity.

Theoretical Contributions

The present research makes several theoretical contributions. First, our research contributes to the literature on leader authenticity. Whereas most research has focused on the nature and consequences of leader authenticity, few empirical studies have investigated its antecedents (Gardner et al., 2011; Lemoine et al., 2019; Peus et al., 2012; Randolph-Seng and Gardner, 2012). Reb and colleagues (2015) have argued that mindful leaders will lead more authentically. By showing that leader authenticity mediates the relation between self-regulated attention and effectiveness, the present research supports this argument, and suggests that leader authenticity is an important pathway linking mindful self-regulated attention to leader effectiveness. Moreover, we found that a brief mindfulness exercise influenced leader's felt authenticity, and thereby responded to calls that researchers should employ experimental designs when examining leader authenticity (Gardner et al., 2011). The converging results across Study 1 and 2 suggest that state and trait mindful self-regulated attention function homologously in relation to leader authenticity, consistent with findings in other areas of mindfulness research (Hülsheger et al., 2013; Liang et al., 2018; Long and Christian, 2015). This is, of course, not to argue that relations are always homologous across state and trait mindfulness. For example, research suggests that the relations with subjective vitality and arousal differ across levels (Fritz et al., 2011; Hafenbrack and Vohs, 2018). Nevertheless, the consistent pattern of findings in the present research advances knowledge on both experienced (i.e. felt) and perceived leader authenticity thereby heeding a call to embrace a more comprehensive and complementary view on authenticity at work (Cha et al., 2019). Importantly, our research suggests that political skill

acts as a moderator that strengthens the relation of mindful self-regulated attention with perceived leader authenticity and, in turn, leader effectiveness. This suggests that mindful self-regulated attention may benefit from being complemented by an action-oriented skill such as political skill in order to have full effect. Thus, we have advanced a new perspective on leader authenticity that clarifies how internally-oriented self-regulation and an externally-oriented social skill combine to co-produce increased leader authenticity and subsequent leader effectiveness.

Our findings also inform the political skill literature. While political skill is important to be an effective leader (Semadar et al., 2006), research on its relation with leader authenticity is lacking. Lay views often assume that a political leader is the opposite of an authentic leader, masking his/her true thoughts and feelings to manipulate others (Ellen et al., 2013). Intriguingly, Douglas et al. (2005) proposed that politically skilled leaders would be perceived as authentic, sincere and genuine. The present research suggests that, in combination with high self-regulated attention, political skill may indeed facilitate higher perceptions of authenticity, thus providing evidence on this important question. Interestingly, in the present research political skill and perceived leader authenticity were unrelated ($r = -.01$; $p = .86$). In a post hoc, exploratory analysis, we conceptualized political skill as predictor of leader authenticity and mindful self-regulated attention as moderator ($b = .20$, $p < .05$). Simple slope analyses of the significant interaction revealed a negative relation of $b = -.16$, at $p = .053$ for leaders low in self-regulated attention (- 1SD). We applied the Johnson-Neyman technique (Hayes, 2013) to determine the regions of significance for low levels of self-regulated attention. It revealed that when self-regulated attention is at least .58 scale points or 1.02 SD below the mean, political skill had a negative relation to authentic leadership. However, for medium and high levels of self-regulated

attention there was no relation between political skill and leader authenticity. This suggests that politically skilled leaders also need to mindfully self-regulate their attention to be seen as authentic. Without self-regulated attention, politically skilled leaders might lack the self-awareness required for leader authenticity. This points to a potential dark side of high political skill in the absence of other leader characteristics and adds to the nascent literature investigating possible costs of political skill (Zettler and Lang, 2013).

In addition, our research extends the literature on leader mindfulness by responding to calls to study interpersonal effects of mindfulness (Good et al., 2016) and focus on specific mindfulness dimensions (Chiesa, 2013). Both practitioners and scholars have argued that more mindful leaders are more effective and authentic (Gelles, 2015; Reb et al., 2015). The present research provides support for these claims. In showing that mindful self-regulated attention is positively associated with leader authenticity and effectiveness, this research adds to existing work that has examined leader mindfulness as a broad, unidimensional construct that can benefit employees (Reb et al., 2014). By also considering orientation to experience, the second core dimension of mindfulness (Tran et al., 2013), we extend the organizational mindfulness literature that, to date, has largely focused on main effects of an overall mindfulness factor (Chiesa 2013; Hülsheger et al., 2013; Reb et al., 2014).

Recently, concerns have been raised about a purely instrumentally motivated "McMindfulness" approach to corporate mindfulness that leaves aside ethical aspects fundamental to the traditional practice of "right" mindfulness within contemplative traditions (Kudesia and Nyima, 2015). Also, Fyke and Buzzanell (2013) pointed towards some tensions and complexities involved in cultivating mindfulness and ethical leaders. Moreover, Purser and Milillo (2015: 3) expressed concern that mindfulness has been reduced "to a self-help technique

that is easily misappropriated for reproducing corporate and institutional power, employee pacification, and maintenance of toxic organizational cultures". Similarly, Reb, Sim, and colleagues (2015: 261) suggested that it is possible for leaders to abuse mindfulness for "selfish, political, or antisocial goals". We found that mindfulness approached from a secular perspective is associated with greater authentic leadership – which entails ethical dimensions such as an internalized moral perspective and relational transparency. This result provides some empirical reassurance that leader mindfulness may be aligned with ethical leadership behaviors (cf. Gu et al., 2013; Ruedy and Schweitzer, 2010) despite not explicitly including ethics into its definition and conceptualization.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

A key strength of the present research is its constructive replication of the results for Hypotheses 1 and 2 across two independent studies, using differing research designs and samples. Doing so, we were able to counterbalance limitations of either study. The relation of self-regulated attention with leader authenticity was observed across both an experimental study (felt authenticity) and a field setting (perceived authenticity). Therefore, this investigation is the first to provide causal evidence for the role of self-regulated attention as an antecedent of leader authenticity while, at the same time, demonstrating the generalizability of the findings to an actual organizational context involving leader-employee data.

The approach of the experimental study has strengths and potential limitations. We used mind wandering as the control condition, because it is characterized as a baseline mental state (Hafenbrack et al., 2014; Liang et al., 2018; Mason et al., 2007) and has regularly been employed as the control condition in previous research (Arch & Craske, 2006; Hafenbrack et al., 2014; Hafenbrack and Vohs, 2018; Kiken & Shook, 2011; Liang et al., 2018; Long & Christian, 2015).

We followed recommendations for rigorous control conditions in mindfulness research (Davidson and Kaszniak, 2015): Both conditions were equivalent in length and had the same oral instructor; the structure of the audio recording in the control condition paralleled that of the mindful self-regulated attention induction; participants were blind to which was the experimental and control condition; and the examiners were blind to the intervention that has been assigned to participants. Including mind wandering as an active control group that had matched and standardized non-specific intervention features ensured that our approach is robust against demand effects compared to waitlist control group designs (Davidson and Kaszniak, 2015). We also used several measures to identify and exclude careless responding (Meade and Craig, 2012). Finally, we measured both mindful self-regulated attention and mind wandering and found that, while both measures were affected by the manipulation in expected directions, only self-regulated attention was significantly related to felt authenticity, but mind wandering was not, suggesting that the effect of the manipulation was indeed driven by mindful self-regulated attention, not mind wandering. Nevertheless, future research could further refine the current approach by employing other control groups in addition to the active mind wandering control group. Such other comparison conditions could involve reading texts, writing, or working on regular work tasks (Hafenbrack and Vohs, 2018).

The contributions of the present research need to be qualified in light of its limitations. Both theory and data suggest that mindfulness is a multi-faceted construct whose facets may have different nomological networks (Baer et al., 2008). As a result, there have been calls for researchers to focus on specific dimensions of mindfulness (Chiesa, 2013; Van Dam et al., 2018). Following these calls, we focused on mindful self-regulated attention, which is considered a core mindfulness dimensions, and explored the effects of the other dimension, orientation to

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experience (Bishop et al., 2004; Tran et al., 2013; 2014). While this focus means that we cannot

necessarily generalize the present findings to other dimensions of mindfulness, it can also be

seen as a strength of this research by complementing existing studies on leader mindfulness that

have used the unidimensional MAAS (Reb et al., 2014; Liang et al., 2016). Future research could

more directly compare the relations of different mindfulness dimensions with different types of

leader and follower behaviors and outcomes to gain a more nuanced understanding of the role of

this complex construct in leadership. For example, we wonder if orientation to experience, as a

more externally oriented aspect of mindfulness, is related to interpersonal leadership constructs

such as leader consideration and initiating structure behavior.

We manipulated state self-regulated attention in Study 1 and measured trait self-regulated

attention in Study 2. While this may prevent direct comparability at the measures level, it can be

viewed as an advantage, because we demonstrate that different representations of the same

construct relate similarly to leader authenticity (cf. Hülsheger et al., 2013). This suggests

homology across levels. Another potential concern arises from the use of measures that were

completed by the same source, which might introduce common method variance (Podsakoff et

al., 2012). In Study 2, both the mediating variable leader authenticity and the dependent variable

leader effectiveness were assessed by employees at the same time. To reduce the potential for

response sets among these variables, we a priori used measures that varied with regard to scale

anchors. Moreover, in Study 2 we collected data from two different sources: leader and

employee questionnaire data, and factor-analytic results supported the discriminant validity of

our measures. Furthermore, the interactive effect of self-regulated attention and political skill on

leader authenticity cannot be an artifact of common method variance (Siemsen et al., 2010).

Another potential limitation of this study is the heterogeneous samples that did not allow

controlling for organizational or occupational variables, which might have influenced the findings. However, one could also argue that the samples included leaders from a broad range of occupations and organizations, thus improving the generalizability of the findings. Overall, while we took various steps to strengthen the internal validity of the study, given the cross-sectional nature of Study 2's design, caution should be exercised in drawing causal inferences. Future research could use additional experimental and longitudinal designs, as well as experience sampling methods to triangulate the present findings. For example, experience sampling studies could examine whether the relation between state mindful self-regulated attention and daily observations of perceived authenticity are moderated (i.e., strengthened) by trait political skill.

We decided to focus on mindful self-regulated attention to represent internal self-regulation because little research has examined the role of attention and its regulation in authentic leadership, or leadership in general, as compared to, for example, emotion (regulation). Moreover, mindful self-regulated attention can support regulation of emotions and thoughts, by reducing reactivity to these inner experiences. Finally, self-awareness has been conceptualized as a component of authentic leadership and it seemed plausible that leaders can achieve greater self-awareness by mindfully self-regulating their attention. Having said that, future research could examine other forms of internal self-regulation, including self-control (Tangney et al., 2004) or those aspects of emotional intelligence concerned with awareness and regulation of one's emotions (Mayer et al., 2008).

Further, we decided to focus on political skill to represent external self-regulation because we were particularly interested in interactions between leaders and employees and political skill is a highly action-oriented skill concerned with regulating behavior to be effective in interpersonal interactions and communication (Blickle et al., 2012; Brouer et al., 2013; Huang

et al., 2013; Munyon et al., 2015). Moreover, political skill has been found to be the most important social effectiveness construct (Semadar et al., 2006). Nevertheless, future research could also consider other forms of external self-regulation, including self-monitoring, and those aspects of emotional intelligence concerned with understanding and influencing others' emotions (Mayer et al., 2008).

Practical Implications

While our findings suggest that organizations may benefit from selecting leaders with high self-regulated attention and political skill, we believe that the more interesting practical implications may be in leadership development. This is because both mindfulness and political skill are considered to be learnable and trainable skills (Baer et al., 2008; Ferris et al., 2005; Nübold et al., 2019; Young, 2017). Indeed, our study demonstrated that a short meditation exercise increased felt authenticity. Our results suggest that mindfulness training may be important for politically skilled leaders who try to act authentically but may lack sufficient self-awareness about own values, emotions, and motives to do so convincingly. It is possible that combining mindfulness skills and political skills would lead to a more effective training. To the best of our knowledge, no validated training of this kind currently exists, and it would be interesting to explore how to design such a training to integrate internally oriented attentional self-regulation skills with externally oriented social skills. Such mindfulness-based interventions would probably have additional positive effects on leader well-being.

Endnotes

1   We should note that, despite considerable theoretical and empirical support for the two-factor definition, research and debate on the conceptualization and operationalization of mindfulness is ongoing (e.g., Chiesa, 2013; Grossman, 2011). However, this debate is less crucial for our purposes, as there is wide agreement that self-regulated attention is a core dimension of mindfulness, regardless of the specific model of mindfulness.

2   We did not collect any other dependent variable in Study 1.

3   CFA fit for all 5 facets (20 items) of the FFMQ with a second-order mindfulness factor was not satisfactory, $\chi^2(165, N = 164) = 367.49$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.23$, CFI = .81, RMSEA = .087, SRMR =.113, and observe did not load on the second-order mindfulness factor. Despite this and our theoretical focus on self-regulated attention, on an exploratory basis we conducted all analyses using an overall measure of mindfulness comprising of all five FFMQ facets (see the Supplemental Materials).

4   We collected the following other dependent variables in Study 2: abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), leader vision (Greer et al., 2012), leader-member exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), employee work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006), employee job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2000), employee affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997), and employee satisfaction with leader (Ewen et al., 2014). We report the relationships between these variables and the two dimensions of mindfulness in the Supplemental Materials. We plan to use the dependent variable abusive supervision in another separate manuscript, and collected the other variables for exploratory reasons.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Alpha Reliability Coefficients in Study 2

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Leader self-regulated attention	3.46	0.56	**.76**				
2. Leader orientation to experience	4.18	0.52	.22**	**.79**			
3. Leader political skill	5.34	0.62	.34**	.09	**.89**		
4. Leader authenticity	3.87	0.57	.20**	.08	-.01	**.91**	
5. Leader effectiveness	3.75	0.62	.23**	.11	.20**	.46**	**.89**

Note. $N = 164$ leader (rated by 237 employees). The numbers in bold on the diagonal are reliability coefficients.

*p < .05, **p < .01.

Table 2

*Hierarchical Regressions on Perceived Leader Authenticity and on Leader Effectiveness in Study 2*

Variable	Leader authenticity				Leader effectiveness			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Self-regulated attention	.19*	(.08)	.24**	(.08)	.24**	(.09)	.14†	(.08)
Orientation to experience	.04	(.09)	.03	(.09)	.08	(.09)	.06	(.09)
Leader authenticity							.48**	(.08)
Political skill			-.05	(.08)				
SRA X Political skill			.20*	(.10)				
R^2	.04*		.07*		.06*		.23**	
ΔR^2			.02*				.17**	

Note. $N = 164$ leader (rated by 237 employees). Values are unstandardized regression coefficients; standard error estimates are in parentheses. All lower-order terms used in interactions were centered prior to analysis. SRA = self-regulated attention.

$^{\dagger} p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Figure 1

Interactive Effect of Self-Regulated Attention and Political Skill on Perceived Leader Authenticity in

Study 2
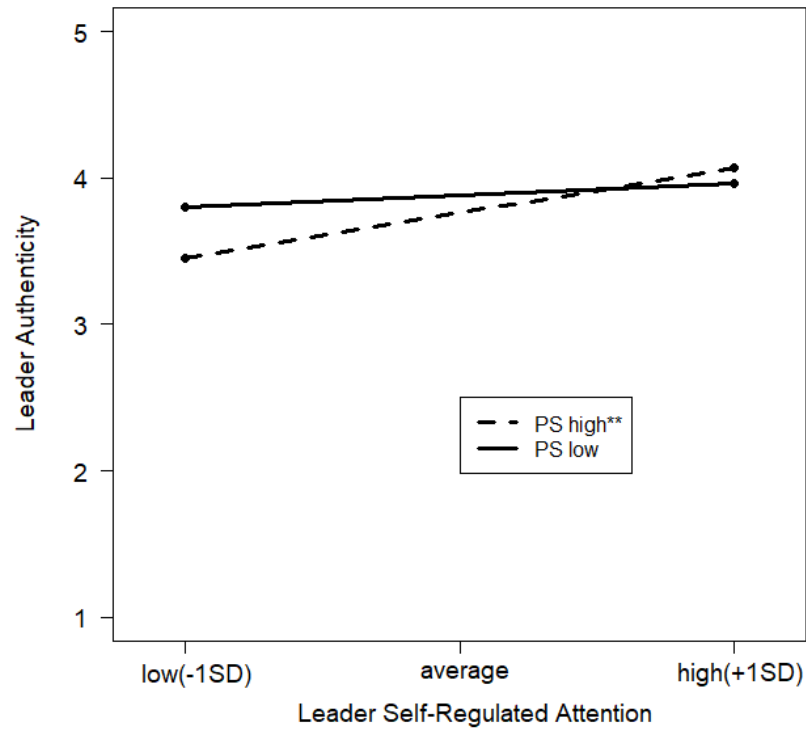
Note. $N = 164$ leader (rated by 237 employees). PS = political skill; Values are predicted values

from Model 2 in Table 2;

**p (slope) $< .01$.

Supplemental Materials

Results for Study 2 when Using an Overall Measure of Mindfulness

Despite our theoretical focus on self-regulated attention, on an exploratory basis we conducted all analyses in Study 2 using an overall measure of mindfulness comprising of all five FFMQ facets.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of FFMQ

CFA fit for all 5 facets of the FFMQ (20 items, α =.82) with a second-order mindfulness factor was not satisfactory, χ^2(165, $N = 164$) = 367.49, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 2.23$, CFI = .81, RMSEA = .087, SRMR =.113, and observe did not load on the second-order mindfulness factor. We nevertheless created an overall mindfulness score and proceeded with the analyses.

Overall Mindfulness, Leader Authenticity, and Leader Effectiveness

We used the same analyses as described in Study 2 of the manuscript for the supplemental analyses (see Table S1 for descriptive statistics and correlations). In support of H2, leader overall mindfulness was positively associated with perceived leader authenticity (correlation: $r = .17$, $p < .05$, Table S1; regression analysis: $b = .23$ $p < .05$, Table S2, Model 1). Leader overall mindfulness was positively related to leader effectiveness ($r = .21$, $p < .01$) in correlation (Table S1) and regression analyses ($b = .31$, $p < .01$, Table S2, Model 3). Results supported the hypothesized mediational model (H3). Specifically, the indirect effect of overall mindfulness on leader effectiveness via perceived leader authenticity was positive (indirect effect = .11, $SE = .05$, 95% CI[.03; .24], Table S2, Model 1 & Model 4).

Political Skill as Moderator

We did not find a significant interaction between leader overall mindfulness and political skill on perceived leader authenticity ($b = .26$, $p = .106$, see Table S2, Model 2), although the interaction term explained 1.6% additional variance. Thus, when using leader overall mindfulness

H4 was not supported. Because the moderation hypothesis H4 was not confirmed, we did not test the related Hypothesis 5 suggesting that the indirect effect of overall mindfulness on leader effectiveness via leader authenticity is conditional on leader political skill.

Overall, the results suggest that leader overall mindfulness is positively related to perceived leader authenticity and leader effectiveness, and that leader authenticity acts as a mediator between overall mindfulness and leader effectiveness. However, leader political skill did not strengthen the relation between overall mindfulness and leader authenticity and its indirect effect on effectiveness.

Exploratory Results for Mindful Self-regulated Attention, Orientation to Experience and Further Variables in Study 2

We found that leader self-regulated attention was positively related to leader-member exchange ($r =$ .18, $p < .05$, Table S3), however it was not significantly related to abusive supervision, leader vision, employee work engagement, employee job satisfaction, employee affective commitment, and employee satisfaction with leader. Orientation to experience was not significantly associated with all variables including leader-member exchange, abusive supervision, leader vision, employee work engagement, employee job satisfaction, employee affective commitment, and employee satisfaction with leader.

Table S1

Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Alpha Reliability Coefficients in Study 2

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Leader overall mindfulness	3.75	0.42	**.82**			
2. Leader political skill	5.34	0.62	.34**	**.89**		
3. Leader authenticity	3.87	0.57	.17*	-.01	**.91**	
4. Leader effectiveness	3.75	0.62	.21**	.20**	.46**	**.89**

Note. N = 164 leader (rated by 237 employees). The numbers in bold on the diagonal are

reliability coefficients.

*p < .05, ***p* < .01.

Table S2

Hierarchical Regressions on Perceived Leader Authenticity and on Leader Effectiveness in Study 2

Variable	Leader authenticity				Leader effectiveness			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Overall mindfulness	.23*	(.10)	.28*	(.11)	.31**	(.11)	.20†	(.10)
Leader authenticity							.48**	(.08)
Political skill			-.05	(.08)				
Overall mindfulness X Political skill			.26	(.16)				
R²	.03*		.05*		.04*		.23**	
Δ*R²*			.02				.19**	

Note. N = 164 leader (rated by 237 employees). Values are unstandardized regression coefficients; standard error estimates are in parentheses. All lower-order terms used in interactions were centered prior to analysis.

† *p* < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01.

Table S3

Descriptive Statistics, and Correlations between Mindful Self-regulated Attention, Orientation to Experience, Political Skill, Leader Authenticity, Leader Effectiveness, and Exploratory Outcomes in Study 2

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Leader self-regulated attention	3.46	0.56	**.76**											
2. Leader orientation to experience	4.18	0.52	.22**	**.79**										
3. Leader political skill	5.34	0.62	.34**	.09	**.89**									
4. Leader authenticity	3.87	0.57	.20**	.08	-.01	**.91**								
5. Leader effectiveness	3.75	0.62	.23**	.11	.20**	.46**	**.89**							
6. Leader vision	3.67	0.81	.03	-.02	.04	.48**	.43**	**.92**						
7. Leader-member exchange	3.96	0.55	.18*	.07	.00	.68**	.51**	.52**	**.83**					
8. Employee work engagement	4.85	1.09	.13	.08	.04	.35**	.27**	.42**	.43**	**.94**				
9. Employee job satisfaction	4.11	0.66	.05	.06	-.04	.31**	.23**	.43**	.46**	.78**	**.86**			
10. Employee satisfaction with leader	4.19	0.69	.04	.05	-.11	.49**	.37**	.45**	.56**	.19*	.24**	**.91**		
11. Employee affective commitment	4.12	0.79	.10	.10	.06	.40**	.23**	.29**	.35**	.64**	.63**	.21**	**.90**	
12. Abusive supervision	1.28	0.31	-.10	-.08	.03	-.42**	-.19*	-.25**	-.47**	-.20*	-.32**	-.39**	-.23**	**.82**

Note. *N* = 164 leader (rated by 237 employees). The numbers in bold on the diagonal are reliability coefficients.

p < .05, ***p* < .01.