Laura Urrila

Be(com)ing other-oriented

The value of mindfulness for leaders and leadership development

▲ ▲ ▲

Vaasan yliopisto
UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

Tiivistelmä

Tässä väitöskirjassa selvitetään, kuinka 'mindfulness' eli 'tietoinen läsnäolo' (suomeksi myös 'hyväksyvä tietoinen läsnäolo', 'läsnäolevuus', 'mielellisyys', 'tietoisuustaidot') voi auttaa johtajia kehittymään toiseen suuntautuvassa johtajuudessa. Väitöskirjaan kuuluu kolme artikkelia, jotka tuottavat uutta tietoa mindfulness- ja johtajuuskirjallisuuteen lisäämällä ymmärrystä tietoisen läsnä-olon merkityksestä johtajan sosiaalisten suhteiden tukena, ihmisten johtajina. Väitöskirjassa tutkitaan 62 mindfulness-koulutukseen osallistuneen johtajan kokemuksia laadullisen ja pitkittäisen interventiotutkimuksen keinoin. Aineisto käsittää 62 kirjallista ennakkotehtävää ja 62 intervention jälkeistä haastattelua. Ensiksi tämä väitöskirja kokoaa yhteen aiemman tutkimustiedon mindfulness-interventioiden ja mindfulnessin harjoittamisen vaikutuksista johtajiin. Se asemoi johtajia koskevan mindfulness-tutkimuksen johtajuuden kehittämisen kenttään ja selkeyttää mindfulnessin käsitettä arvopohjaisena ja kehityksellisenä harjoitteena sekä ihmisten välisessä vuorovaikutuksessa esiintyvänä ilmiönä. Toiseksi tutkimuksen empiiriset löydökset vahvistavat tietoisen läsnäolon tärkeyttä sosiaalisen johtajuuskyvykkyyden kehittymiselle. Tutkimus lisää ymmärrystä siitä, kuinka mindfulness-osaaminen edistää johtajien sosiaalisen tietoisuuden kehittymistä kattaen toiseen suuntautuvan ajattelun, tunteen ja toiminnan ulottuvuudet. Kolmanneksi väitöskirja rakentaa siltaa mindfulnessin ja palvelevan johtamisen välille tarjoamalla tietoa mindfulness-koulutuksen käyneiden johtajien palvelevan johtamisen käytännöistä heidän soveltaessaan mindfulness-oppeja johtamistyössä hyödyttääkseen johdettaviaan. Neljänneksi väitöskirja tarjoaa näkemyksiä kehityspoluista, joiden kautta johtajuus voi rakentua yhä toiseen suuntautuvammaksi, näyttämällä kuinka mindfulness-koulutus auttaa johtajia kehittymään muodollisen kehittämisohjelman ja jatkuvan omaehtoisen itsensä kehittämisen yhdistelmän keinoin, sekä kokonaisvaltaisesti tiettyjen yksittäisten taitojen kehittämisen sijasta. Löydökset ovat erityisen hyödyllisiä johdon kehittämisinterventioita valitseville HR-päälliköille ja kehittämis-ammattilaisille.

Asiasanat: Interventiotutkimus, johtajuuden kehittäminen, johtajana kehitty-minen, mindfulness-koulutus, omaehtoinen johtajana kehittyminen, palveleva johtaminen, sosiaalinen tietoisuus, tietoinen läsnäolo, toiseen suuntautuva johtajuus

Abstract

This dissertation investigates how mindfulness may help leaders tap into their other-orientation. This dissertation consists of three papers which contribute to literature on mindfulness and leadership by increasing the understanding of how mindfulness learning may support leaders in social relations, in their role of leading others. Taking a qualitative longitudinal intervention approach, this dissertation examines the experiences of leaders who participated in a mindfulness training program. The data for analysis were collected from 62 leaders. Materials comprise 62 written pre-intervention assessments and 62 post-intervention interviews. First, this dissertation integrates prior knowledge of the implications of leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices, positioning the research on leader mindfulness within leadership development, and clarifying mindfulness as a value-based developmental practice and interpersonal phenomenon. Second, the empirical findings highlight the potential significance of mindfulness for increasing social leadership capacity. This work builds an understanding of how mindfulness learning and practice foster the development of leaders' social awareness across the dimensions of other-oriented thought, emotion, and behavior. Third, this dissertation builds a bridge between mindfulness and servant leadership by advancing understanding of how mindfulness-trained leaders engage in servant leadership behaviors while integrating mindfulness into their leadership work to develop themselves and to serve their followers and teams. Fourth, this dissertation provides insight into developmental pathways with the potential to build leaders' capacity for other-oriented leadership by demonstrating how mindfulness training helps leaders develop through a combination of a formal program and continuous self-development, and holistically instead of providing training in specific skills. The findings are particularly useful for HR managers and development professionals evaluating and selecting leader development interventions.

Keywords: Intervention research, leader development, leadership development, leader self-development, mindfulness training, other-orientation, servant leadership, social awareness

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

When I started planning this doctoral research five and a half years ago, I could not have imagined where this endeavor would take me mentally, emotionally, relationally, and physically. Entering the academic world after ten plus years of working in the world of business, I started this PhD journey as an Alice in Wonderland. The learning curve has been steep, and there are numerous people I would like to thank for making this job so educating and enjoyable.

First, my most sincere gratitude goes to my thesis supervisor Professor Liisa Mäkelä. Liisa, I have highly appreciated your supervision style. Thank you for the trust, respect, and autonomy. Thank you for caring about me and my career. Thank you for co-authorship of Paper 2. All his way, your advice and our discussions have given me a broader outlook which has truly benefited this dissertation.

Heartfelt thanks to my second supervisor Professor Riitta Viitala. When I called you, Riitta, in the Spring of 2017 to talk about my idea to do research on mindfulness in organizations, you instantly shared my excitement and immediately started to think through how we could make this research happen. I have had your support ever since.

I am grateful to our Dean, Professor Adam Smale, for all the support and guidance. Thank you, Adam, for hiring me as a doctoral student, which has given me the opportunity to focus on my research and grow as a scholar.

I thank all my wonderful colleagues in the School of Management and HRM research group, and the academic community, from whom I have learned a lot. The 'Helsinki office folks' have been very meaningful to me during my PhD journey, so thank you, Catharina Von Koskull, Jukka Partanen, and Jennie Sumelius, and others for corridor talks, lunches, and summer days. A very special thank you, Dina Myllymäki, Kate Pak, and Natalia Fey for the Monday Writing Club. It has been indispensable. During doctoral studies, I have had the chance to participate in great courses organized by the Graduate School. Special thanks must go to Marko Kohtamäki for the Academic Writing course, which was pivotal for me, not the least because Marko and Vinit Parida convinced me to do a systematic review despite how challenging it is as a method for someone who has just started in the academia.

In 2019-2020 I had the chance to spend three months as a visiting scholar in Monash Business School, Monash University, Australia. That time was an unforgettable experience to our family. Thank you, Helen DeCieri for inviting, and

Cathy Sheehan and Nathan Eva for co-hosting me. Nathan, thank you for valuable feedback, co-authorship of Paper 3, and brightly pushing me to aim higher.

Thank you, Eeva Jaakonsalo for the smoothest ever partnership. You designed a mindfulness intervention of a highest quality and delivered it five times during 2019 for the purposes of this research. It played a crucial role. I also want to thank the organizations and individuals who participated in this research.

Thank you, Professor Emerita Iiris Aaltio and Professor Richard Badham for positive pre-examination statements and valuable advice. I look forward to an interesting discussion with my opponent Professor Emerita Aaltio.

I thank my friends for the encouragement and fun. Reetta Oksa and Mari Laukkanen, always listening to me. Saara Julin and Saara Pynnönen, dear friends from the early times in Vaasa. Naistenvuoro and Railit, important groups I am privileged to belong to.

Finally, yet most profoundly, I thank my family and relatives for believing in me and walking this path with me. Thank you, Jarmo, Kiia, Mikko, Anne, Martti, Raija, Pauli, Terhi & Co, Leena & Co, Harri, Ilkka and Marja-Leena. My deepest love and gratitude to my parents Erja and Markku who have always been there for me and helped us *so* much. My dad, Doctor of Philosophy in Education, is a role model in his own right.

My son Kuutti turns eight on the week of my doctoral defense, exactly one month from now. Thank you, Kuutti, for being curious about mummy's research stuff and asking an insightful question or two every now and then. You are the light and love of my life. P.s. I think the defense will be quite exciting, like a Taiga ride in Linnanmäki.

Helsinki, 11.11.2022

Laura Urrila

Contents

X

Figures

Tables

Abbreviations

.b	'dot be' Mindfulness in Schools program
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease discovered in 2019
HEP	Health Enhancement Program
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
KSAs	Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
MAAS	Mindfulness Attention and Awareness Scale
MBCT	Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy program
MBI	Mindfulness-Based Intervention
MBSR	Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program
POS	Positive Organizational Scholarship
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta Analyses
SIY	Search Inside Yourself program

Publications

[1] Urrila, L. (2022). From personal wellbeing to relationships: A systematic review on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders. *Human Resource Management Review* 32(3): 100837. Reprinted with permission from Elsevier.

[2] Urrila, L. & Mäkelä, L. (in press) Mindfulness-trained leaders' experiences of their enhanced social awareness. A revised version of the paper has been accepted for publication in *Management Learning*.

[3] Urrila, L. & Eva, N. (in progress) Leadership practices of mindfulness-trained leaders intending to serve the team. A revised version of the paper has been submitted to a journal.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1　Background

> *Mindfulness wasn't really heard of years ago, and suddenly, you know, there's all these things to help people, employers, employees. And everything seems to be geared up these days for the employee, to help them...*

> (Anonymous leader interviewee)

Up to 95 percent of employers globally include emotional and mental health programs, and 50 percent include stress management and resiliency programs, in their well-being platforms, according to a survey (Fidelity and Business Group on Health, 2020). Amongst the 20000 mental health apps that exist today, two of the most popular ones focus on *mindfulness* (i.e., present-moment awareness) and meditation (Deloitte Insights, 2022). Employee stress reduction has long been the primary driver of offering mindfulness education in organizations for employees in general (Eby et al., 2019), but lately, researchers and practitioners have come to acknowledge that workplace mindfulness has an interpersonal or collective dimension where the focus shifts from the individual to the community (e.g., Badham & King, 2021; Eby et al., 2020; Reina et al., 2022). When seen as "the awareness that arises through intentionally attending in an open, caring, and discerning way" (Shapiro & Carlson, 2017, p. 8), mindfulness may be viewed as a value-based contemplative practice and interpersonal phenomenon that is cultivated in relationships (Purser & Milillo, 2015; Reb et al., 2015; Skoranski et al., 2019), such as between leaders and followers.

The accelerated interest among leaders and development professionals worldwide in the improvement of work life has led to modern organizations using *mindfulness-based interventions* (MBIs) with their leaders, managers, and supervisors to enhance the individual, team and organizational functionality. Mindfulness-based interventions are developmentally focused activities built around the mindfulness concept that contain meditation and awareness practices, and psychoeducational content. The ways how interconnectedness, purposeful collaborative action, ethics-oriented organization and leadership could be enhanced with mindfulness have been posed as potentially significant questions (Badham & King, 2021). Overall, the assumption that an individual's mindfulness or mindfulness practice could influence other people through prosocial attitudes

and behaviors (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019) is seen interesting from a leadership perspective (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Reb et al., 2014; Rupprecht et al., 2019; Schuh et al., 2019). The prospect of strengthening leaders' *other-orientation* —i.e., taking into consideration others' needs and interests (e.g., Anderson & Sun, 2017)— through mindfulness necessitates further exploration in the context of organizational leadership, which is the focus of this dissertation. As its main task, this research seeks to understand how a mindfulness intervention can support organizational leaders in social relations, in their role of leading others.

Taking care of other people and the environment is considered as "normatively appropriate behavior" in organizations (Brown et al., 2005), and leadership ethics is seen to be integrated in the individual leader's capacity to set direction and influence others (Eisenbess, 2012). In their role in motivating others towards accomplishing a common goal, leaders can profoundly influence organizational outcomes and their followers' behavior, well-being and performance on multiple levels through the interactional and social processes that take place in organizations (Auvinen et al., 2013; Leroy et al., 2018; for a review, see Inceoglu et al., 2018). A better ability of leaders to support their followers could lead to a positive transformation of work teams, organizations and societies (Brown et al., 2005; Eisenbess, 2012; Neal, 2018). It has often been mentioned that to lead others, one must first be able to lead oneself (Drucker, 2001; Hunter 2015). It has also been suggested that good leadership depends on the leader's *self-awareness* and *social awareness* that determine the extent to which people are conscious of their own and others' internal states, and that influence their ability to act thoughtfully and with a sense of responsibility in the organizational environment (Sutton et al., 2015). Thus, to be able to support their followers, an individual leader should strive to develop a higher-level of awareness of their own values, motivations and goals (Hunter, 2015; Neal, 2018), be aware of their followers' needs and interests, and even be willing to put their own needs aside for the benefit of others (Reb et al., 2015). Among relational and ethics-based theoretical approaches to leadership that shift the focus from the individual leader to the follower and the collective, *servant leadership* is an other-oriented approach to leadership that emphasizes the leader's self-awareness, selflessness, and motivation to serve and support others (e.g., Eva et al., 2019; van Dierendonck, 2011).

The aspiration for genuinely other-oriented leaders who operate from a deep self-awareness and prioritize their follower's needs assigns a whole new question to researchers, development professionals and organizations that invest in leader and leadership development programs, as to what kind of development is needed to

ensure the effectiveness of development efforts. Traditionally, the field of leadership education practice has been dominated by competency-based frameworks which focus on educating leaders on a certain set of leadership skills and competencies in a seemingly easily learnable way (Day et al., 2021). But how individuals develop as leaders inherently involves human developmental processes that evolve over time, and development is largely dependent on the leader's internal motivation and willingness to develop themselves on an ongoing basis (Day et al., 2021; Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Viitala, 2005). Incidentally, *leadership development* differs from traditional *training* which focuses on acquiring specific skills, in that development is more long-lasting, more holistic, and also more difficult to evaluate (Day et al., 2021).[1] Instead of a mere acquisition of skills and knowledge, leader development initiatives that are believed to best support the career journey of a human being who is also a leader are likely to be those that are aligned with ongoing adult development, focus on the enhancement of holistic functioning, and which are practice-based (Day et al., 2014; Laccrenza et al., 2017). Consequently, individuals' personal responsibility for their own development is increasing in the 21st century leadership development context which has seen a shift towards *leader self-development* (Boyce et al., 2010; Day et al., 2021). Furthermore, a distinction has been made between the two types of development that fall under the umbrella term of *leadership development*: *Leader* development refers to the goal of improving the critical *intra*-individual leadership capabilities of leaders that focus on the leader themselves (e.g., self-awareness and personal productivity), while *leadership* development covers the development of the *inter*-individual leadership capabilities of leaders that concern other people involved in the leadership process (e.g., collaboration and coaching) (Day et al., 2021). To develop as a leader, it is imperative that the individual leader proactively engages in self-development behavior, such as self-reflection on leadership experiences based on internal and external feedback that can support the development of self- and social awareness (Boyce et al., 2010; Day & Dragoni, 2015; Liu et al., 2021; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). Based on these understandings, leaders need support in how to develop themselves (leader self-development) to

---

[1] Day et al. propose that the terms *training* and *development* differ from each other significantly (Day et al., 2021). For instance, when training addresses a specific set of skills, development is more holistic. Where training is often a one-off event, development occurs over time. Development is also more experiential by nature, which makes development more difficult to evaluate, and more difficult to become aware of. Development requires the skill for self-reflection, and eventually could lead to improved self- and social awareness. Acknowledging the differences outlined by Day et al. (2021), in this dissertation, the term *training* is occasionally used to refer to mindfulness programs or mindfulness interventions. Essentially, mindfulness training is discussed in this dissertation as a developmental approach that is experiential, practice-based, holistic, continuous, difficult to evaluate, and rooted in self-development.

become better leaders (leader development) in the context of others (leadership development).

It appears that *leadership effectiveness*—which refers to the capacity to set direction, align efforts, and motivate people to achieve goals (Day & Dragoni, 2015)— is currently being redefined, as good leaders are increasingly expected to be motivated by the right reasons, and expected to relate to and influence others in both effective *and* ethical ways (Newstead et al., 2021). It has been suggested that the development of good leadership and organizations that are built on altruistic values of honesty, integrity and kindness, involve an individual leader's commitment to developing a greater awareness of one's inner life and their willingness to *serve others* (Fry & Kriger, 2009). It has been proposed that the enhancement of these critical aspects influencing leaders' capacities to lead others well requires systematic development efforts which place emphasis on the development of the internal perceptual, emotional and embodied sensing capacities of leaders (Hunter, 2015; Neal, 2018). In general, the developmental outcomes of leaders and leadership development may be achieved through on-the-job leadership experiences and interventions (Day & Dragoni 2015). While formalized development efforts are needed, there is also a need for more flexible and sustainable leader development initiatives and organizational support that promotes leader self-development behavior (Boyce et al., 2010; Heslin & Keating, 2017; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). A mindfulness-based intervention which typically contains meditation and awareness practices, psychoeducational content and the opportunity for self-reflection, is a strongly practice-based and self-developmental approach which requires that the individual voluntarily engages in the practices and developing oneself (Reb et al., 2015). Therefore, mindfulness interventions and practices aimed at leaders may provide a way to support the development of leaders' other-orientation.

This dissertation approaches the study of the phenomenon by combining two theoretical perspectives which may be particularly useful in advancing the theoretical and empirical understanding of mindfulness in the context of leadership: specifically, an other-orientation in leadership and mindfulness in organizations. Both areas are further elaborated on in the *Theoretical background* section of this dissertation. The perspective of other-orientation in leadership (e.g., Anderson & Sun, 2017) draws from literature on self- and social awareness (e.g., Carden et al., 2021), servant leadership (e.g., Eva et al., 2019), and leadership development (e.g., Day et al., 2021). The perspective of mindfulness in organizations focuses on workplace mindfulness interventions and practices (for reviews see Eby et al., 2019; Jamieson & Tuckey, 2017), the interpersonal and collective conceptualizations of mindfulness (e.g., Badham & King, 2021;

Skoranski et al., 2019), and the application of mindfulness for leaders (e.g., Roche et al., 2020). Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framing of the research.
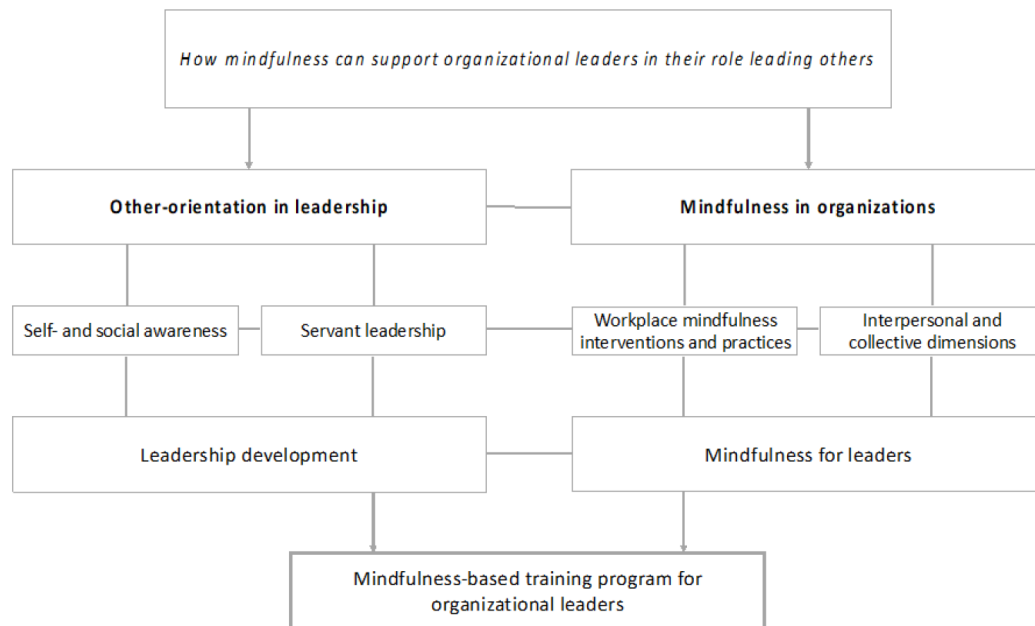
Figure 1. Theoretical framing of the research

1.2 Positioning

Organizations and the human resource management (HRM) literature acknowledge the value of other-oriented leaders who support their followers through taking care of the followers' well-being, developing them, modeling positive behaviors, and building relationships among team members (Eva et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2022). However, it has been recognized that despite the social and relational nature of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), a genuine other-orientation may be difficult to develop through traditional leadership training (Eva et al., 2019; Lange & Rowold, 2019; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). For instance, it has been acknowledged that formal development programs can only initiate the continuous development of self- and social awareness at the core of leading people wisely (Svalgaard, 2018). The servant leadership literature has provided little guidance on practices that may positively impact an individual's other-orientation (Eva et al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2019). Existing literature indicates that mindfulness and servant leadership are inherently linked (Reb et al., 2015), as mindfulness practice involves the holistic development of the physiological, cognitive/attentional, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual qualities of an individual in their relationship to self and others (Kristeller, 2004), and an other-

orientation and deep self-awareness are key components of both servant leadership and mindfulness (Eva et al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2019; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Sendjaya, 2015). While it stands to reason that a holistic approach to development—such as mindfulness—is required to develop genuine other-orientation, the field is lacking empirical evidence to support these views. Moreover, in existing studies on mindfulness for leaders, a strong theoretical or empirical positioning in leadership development research is seldom evident (Urrila, 2022). As mindfulness-based interventions offered for leaders in organizational settings are primarily seen as an effort to improve the individual leader capabilities deemed critical for effective leadership, research should be expected to address both the leader *and* leadership development literature, and explicate and distinguish the means of facilitating effective leadership and expanding leadership capacities through leader development (an individual focus) and leadership development (a collective focus) (Day, 2000).

Research on mindfulness for leaders (for reviews, see Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019; Urrila, 2022) and in workplace settings in general (for a review, see Eby et al., 2019) has tended to focus on mindfulness as an individual stress-reduction and attention-enhancement technique (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019; Lundqvist et al., 2019). The dominant approach has received considerable critique concerning the narrow understanding of the concept, and which has been proposed to reduce the originally interconnected mindfulness practice to a personal self-help technique, and to even invite ethical misconduct such as focusing attention on harmful goals and reduce the originally interconnected wisdom practice to a personal self-help technique (e.g., Badham & King, 2021; Islam et al., 2017; Purser & Milillo, 2015). Moreover, the positivist approach to assessing the influence of mindfulness-based interventions on individuals using predefined well-being and performance-related outcome measures has been proposed to overlook other types of implications of workplace mindfulness (e.g., Choi & Leroy, 2015; Karjalainen et al., 2021). The need for more empirical studies on outcomes other than the well-being-related outcomes of workplace mindfulness interventions has been clearly expressed in the field (e.g., Caporale-Berkowitz et al., 2021). Thus, advancing the research on mindfulness in work-related settings may require assessing mindfulness as a developmental practice that supports relationships and the collective good, rather than as an instrumental personal stress-reduction and attention-enhancement technique (Purser & Milillo, 2015; Skoranski et al., 2019).

Intrinsically, mindfulness practice involves contemplation directed towards internal and external phenomena (meditation), reflexive monitoring of one's mental states and actions (introspection), and making purposeful choices intended to serve oneself and others (ethical conduct) (Purser & Milillo, 2015). Thus,

mindfulness and mindfulness practice have been conceptualized as an interpersonal and collective phenomenon that occurs in the context of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Badham & King, 2021; Skoranski et al., 2019). Empirical research on mindfulness in relationships originating outside of management research indicates that mindfulness practice can benefit interpersonal relationships by influencing the interlinked processes of other-directed attention, affect and behavior, such as perspective-taking, compassion, and sharing that is cultivated in relationships (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007; Fazia et al., 2020; Vich et al., 2020; for reviews see Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019). But so far, much of the existing empirical research on mindfulness in relationships is set in specific non-work contexts.

The significance of mindfulness for social relations has also been recognized in management literature, but much of the literature discussing the social and relational importance of mindfulness training for leadership development has been theoretical. That is perhaps surprising given the recognition that other-orientation and taking an interest in the needs of others may be viewed as a key aspect of mindfulness in leadership (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). It has been suggested that mindfulness-based interventions and training programs could enhance task-, change-, ethics- and relations-oriented leadership (Roche et al., 2020), support the development of positive leadership behaviors that foster desirable employee outcomes (Arendt et al., 2019; Gonzales-Morales et al., 2018; Liang et al., 2016; Pinck & Sonnentag, 2018), and support holistic leadership development (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Roche et al., 2020). However, emerging empirical research (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Reb et al., 2014; Reitz et al., 2020; Schuh et al., 2019) is reaching beyond personal well-being and work productivity to address a variety of ways in which mindfulness interventions and practices could benefit leaders as a specific audience, and eventually improve leadership quality. Theoretically, the awareness of the self (self-awareness) and others (social awareness) that is enhanced by mindfulness practice could have a significant impact on the development of leaders, for instance through improved reflection of feedback, listening, trust and respect, collaboration, better conflict management, and reduced emotional contagion that is expressed in leader-follower relationships (e.g., Good et al., 2016; Hyland et al., 2015; Roche et al., 2020; Stedham & Skaar, 2019; Vu & Burton, 2020). While prior studies report leaders' mindfulness practice as having some relational influences (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Rupprecht et al., 2019; Wasylkiw et al., 2015), prior qualitative studies have not focused on how leaders view mindfulness to benefit their relations with followers. Thus, empirical research investigating how the awareness of the self and others enhanced by mindfulness influences the

development of leaders has been called for (e.g., Good et al., 2016; Hyland et al., 2015).

Despite the recognized importance to better understand development programs that combine classroom and experiential learning approaches such as mindfulness interventions, according to Day et al. (2021), the current understanding of the processes related to the development of a leader's self-views, including their self-awareness, is thin. Discussing mindfulness in the context of leadership development inherently concerns both developmental outcomes and the processes involved (Day et al., 2021), but prior studies on leaders' mindfulness practices have mostly focused on the outcomes (e.g., Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019). Thus, focus should not be on the outcomes alone, but also on developing an understanding of the mechanisms that enable their development through organizational mindfulness interventions. In relation to how mindfulness-based interventions and practices may support leaders in their role leading others, an investigation considering the developmental outcomes as well as the processual aspects of development would be useful.

Overall, with the norm in organizational mindfulness research having been centered on measuring mindfulness states and pre-defined outcome variables, there has been a call for studies that deploy qualitative and longitudinal approaches to enable an open inquiry into aspects and processes that cannot be measured or predetermined (Choi & Leroy, 2015; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Karjalainen et al., 2021). In particular, there seems to be a place for research that would investigate the experiences of mindfulness-trained leaders in the context of their relationships with followers.

1.3   Research questions and intended contributions

Connected to the recognized need to better understand the phenomenon of mindfulness in the leadership development context, the overarching objective of this dissertation is to advance the understanding of how mindfulness can support organizational leaders in their role of leading others. Four research questions were formulated to address the 'research gap' elaborated in the previous section, and to fulfill the stated research objective:

> **RQ1:** What are the implications of mindfulness interventions and practices for leaders based on prior literature?

Research Question 1 highlights the importance of understanding the application and implications of mindfulness in the context of leadership, and for leaders as a

specific audience. Paper 1 takes a conceptual approach to answering Research Question 1 in the form of a systematic literature review. Paper 1 uncovers the implications of mindfulness interventions and practices for leaders by synthesizing the findings of prior empirical studies and demonstrating that leaders' mindfulness practices affect various developmental outcomes that are viewed as important for leaders and leadership. Based on the findings, it proposes a comprehensive future research agenda for theoretical and empirical advancement that recommends looking beyond 'essential' well-being and work productivity outcomes and exploring the 'transformative' outcomes of mindfulness interventions and practices related to leaders' relationships and their inner growth that involve enhanced self-awareness and social/contextual awareness. Thus, Paper 1 sets the stage for the empirical part of the current dissertation, as it brings to the fore the inter-individual nature of leader mindfulness and reveals the importance of social relations for mindfulness in the leadership context, which is the focus of Papers 2 and 3. The analytical focus of both empirical studies (Papers 2 and 3) is on understanding if and how leaders perceive mindfulness learning to support their day-to-day leadership in the context of leading a team of followers.

> **RQ2:** How does mindfulness training contribute to the development of leaders' social awareness?

Research Question 2 investigates how mindfulness can support the development of leaders' other-orientation from the perspective of social awareness. Expanding the theme highlighted in Paper 1, Paper 2 builds on interpersonal conceptualizations of mindfulness and prior works that challenge the predominant emphasis on stress-reduction and attention-enhancement of workplace mindfulness research and practice. Prior research on mindfulness for leaders and in workplace settings in general has tended to focus on mindfulness as an individual stress-reduction and attention-enhancement technique which can lead to enhanced well-being and productivity. Only in recent years has the research field seen a growing number of contributions indicating that leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices may affect various developmental outcomes that are viewed as particularly important for leaders and leadership. The emergent literature has sparked interest to explore the role of mindfulness for leaders' relationships, and from the perspective of an awareness of the social and relational leadership context. The study examines the experiences of 62 mindfulness-trained leaders through a qualitative longitudinal pre-post intervention research design.

> **RQ3:** How can mindfulness training support servant leadership?

Research Question 3 investigates how mindfulness can support or strengthen leaders' other-orientation by adopting a servant leadership lens. Based on findings

reported in Paper 2, it became clear that many of the mindfulness-trained leaders cared for the well-being and growth of their followers. Research Question 3 was inspired by the interesting finding that many mindfulness-trained leaders reported that they were keen to bring their newly-acquired mindfulness learning into their teams, so that their followers could benefit. Taking these learnings into action seemed important for them, and many interviewees also spoke about followers as their key priority in leadership. However, this research does not investigate whether mindfulness leads to servant leadership. Rather, it is interested in exploring how mindfulness and the genuine other-orientation characteristic of servant leadership might interact, and if mindfulness could support those who want to serve others (which is a linkage suggested by several authors: Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Reb et al., 2015). Thus, drawing from the recognition of prior theoretical literature that proposes mindfulness and servant leadership are linked and that mindfulness training may help develop servant leadership, Paper 3 focuses on investigating if and how mindfulness-trained leaders engage in servant leadership behaviors. As in Paper 2, the study examines the experiences of 62 mindfulness-trained leaders with a qualitative longitudinal pre-post intervention research design.

 RQ4: What kind of developmental pathways have the potential to build leaders' capacity for other-oriented leadership?

Research Question 4 draws attention to the processual aspects of mindfulness-based leadership development that may be crucial in enabling the development of leaders' other-orientation. Research Question 4 builds upon the recognition shown in Paper 1 that existing research does not provide a sufficient understanding of the mechanisms that can bring about beneficial learning and developmental outcomes through mindfulness. Both empirical papers (Paper 2 and Paper 3) provide conceptual frameworks which shed light on the potential mechanisms or 'developmental pathways', and propose why or under what circumstances similar kinds of experienced developmental outcomes for leaders could be achieved in the future, in organizations who employ mindfulness for their employees.

Overall, this dissertation consists of three scientific papers (Papers 1-3) which concern the need to better understand the phenomenon of mindfulness in the leadership context, from the perspective of social relations. The intended contribution of this dissertation to literature on mindfulness and leadership aligns with the identified research problem, the stated research objective of how mindfulness can support organizational leaders in their role leading others, and the specific research questions that are posed (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4). First, this dissertation integrates prior knowledge of the implications of mindfulness for

leaders, positioning research on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices within leadership development, and clarifying mindfulness as a value-based developmental practice and interpersonal phenomenon that leaders engage in (Paper 1). Second, the dissertation builds an understanding of how mindfulness learning and practice foster the development of leaders' social awareness across the cognitive, affective and behavioral domains of human functioning, highlighting the potential significance of mindfulness for social leadership capacity (Paper 2). Third, this research advances the understanding of how mindfulness-trained leaders engage in servant leadership behaviors while integrating mindfulness into their leadership work to lead and to develop themselves, and also to serve their followers and teams, so building a bridge between mindfulness and servant leadership development (Paper 3). Fourth, this dissertation provides insight into the developmental pathways that may have the potential to build leaders' capacity for other-oriented leadership by demonstrating how mindfulness training can help leaders to holistically grow and develop their other-orientation through a combination of a formal program and self-development, instead of providing training in specific skills (Papers 2 and 3).

Table 1 provides an overview of the papers that comprise this dissertation.

Table 1.   Overview of the dissertation papers

	Paper 1	**Paper 2**	**Paper 3**
Title	From personal wellbeing to relationships: A systematic review on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders	Mindfulness-trained leaders' experiences of their enhanced social awareness	Leadership practices of mindfulness-trained leaders intending to serve the team
Research questions addressed	RQ1, RQ4	RQ2, RQ4	RQ3, RQ4
Perspective	Leader and leadership development	Social awareness	Servant leadership
Type of research	Conceptual: Systematic literature review	Empirical: Qualitative intervention research	Empirical: Qualitative intervention research

1.4   Structure of the dissertation

The main body of this dissertation consists of six sections. The *Introduction* discusses the background and positioning of the research, and outlines the research questions and intended contributions. Readers are given information about the key concepts, the state of the existing research, and the objectives of the current dissertation. Readers are also familiarized with the structure of the dissertation.

The *Theoretical background* covers a review of key literature on other-orientation in leadership and mindfulness in organizations. It focuses on areas which are most relevant for the chosen perspective and the objectives of the current research, in order to better understand how mindfulness interventions and practices can support the development of leaders' other-orientation.

The *Methodology* section positions this dissertation in its research philosophical context by discussing the underlying ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions, as well as the adopted view of human nature and the chosen methods. This section details the choices made in the conceptual and empirical parts of this research concerning the research strategy and design, data collection, and data analysis. The evaluation of qualitative research is discussed and reflected on.

The fourth section, *Research papers: Summaries of findings*, provides the summaries of findings of Papers 1-3 that comprise this dissertation. The purpose of the summaries is to restate the findings of the papers, not to provide theoretical or methodological background information, nor to discuss the value of the research.

The *Discussion* section presents a detailed discussion of the theoretical contributions and practical and societal implications of this dissertation. In doing so, this section elaborates on the unique value of the current research for literature on mindfulness and leadership in connection to prior work, and highlights its practical value for HR managers and development professionals, mindfulness and leadership coaches, and individual leaders. This section also addresses limitations in the research and future research recommendations.

The final *Conclusion* section summarizes the key points and brings together the main arguments made in this dissertation.

The full texts of Papers 1-3 are placed at the end of the document.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1   Other-orientation in leadership

According to a common definition, *leadership* is "the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal accomplishment (Hersey et al., 1979, p. 418). Rost's (1993) definition specifies leadership as an influence relationship between leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes. Organizational *leaders* as "individuals who hold leadership positions" may be defined through their role, which is to set and facilitate development and direction, and engage and motivate other people — mainly followers—towards accomplishing a common goal (Day & Dragoni, 2015, p. 134). *Leadership effectiveness* refers to the collective and individual capacity to set direction, align efforts, and motivate people to achieve goals (Day & Dragoni, 2015).

To date, no 'general theory of leadership' has been created (Grint, 2011). Instead, there are numerous established and emerging theories or approaches which aim to explain leadership from certain perspectives, such as the organizational perspective (e.g., transformational leadership and strategic leadership), the leader's perspective (e.g., trait-based theories involving the leader's qualities, abilities and capabilities), the follower's perspective (e.g., Leader-Member Exchange theory and servant leadership), the team's perspective (e.g., team leadership and shared leadership), or the situational or contextual perspectives (e.g., contingency theories, international and cross-cultural approaches) (Grint, 2011). In general, theoretical approaches to leadership attempt to answer who can be a leader and what makes an effective leader, explain the purpose of the leadership process involving the leader, follower and common organizational goals and environments, and to understand the relational dynamics between people in an organization.

Defining organizational leadership as an influence process implies a context in which human beings interact with each other. Research indicates that leader-follower relationships may be the most important relationships people have at work, and can profoundly influence followers' well-being and performance (Inceoglu et al., 2018). This evolving understanding has created space for newer relational and ethics-based theoretical approaches that shift the focus of leadership from the individual leader to the *other*—i.e., the follower or the collective. These include issues of authentic leadership, ethical leadership, and servant leadership. Integrated with the individual leader's capacity to set a

direction and influence others, taking responsibility for other people and the environment—known as leadership ethics—is viewed as "normatively appropriate" behavior in modern organizations (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120; Eisenbess, 2012). Leaders may be seen as relational beings, where emphasis is placed on creating positive relationships, for instance, through a coaching and respective style. Having an 'other-orientation' (i.e., an interest in meeting the legitimate needs of others) is viewed as necessary to build strong relationships with followers (Anderson & Sun, 2017).

While the flawed nature of leadership is part of humanity, it has been suggested that there is demand for effective leadership that addresses the process of achieving positive change in individuals and organizations, by way of influencing others (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012; Grint, 2011). In a broader picture, Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) focuses on what elevates individuals and organizations, what can go right in organizations, what is experienced as good, and what is seen as inspiring (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). As Cameron and Spreitzer (2012) point out, the history of Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) can be traced back to William James' (1902) writings on 'systematic healthy-mindedness', which may be defined as the tendency to see all things as good, and happiness as 'man's chief concern'. POS represents new leadership thinking, as it is interested in leadership associated with achieving positive change (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). But leaving aside positivity jargon, Alvesson and Einola (2019) have suggested that how leaders could better deal with the experienced dilemmas concerning morality, ethics, integrity, being oneself and work relations, should be issues addressed by leadership research. The efforts to improve the quality of leadership are the focus of *leadership development*, and as focal questions of leader and leadership development efforts that aspire to build leaders' capacity for other-oriented leadership, the remainder of this section will discuss *what* should be developed and *how*.

2.1.1   Self- and social awareness

Expanding an individual's capacity for leadership entails fostering work-facilitation (e.g., thinking and acting strategically), self-management (e.g., self-awareness and the ability to learn), and social capabilities (e.g., building relationships and work groups) (Day, 2011). According to Viitala (2005, p. 440), leadership competence is a holistic concept that entails "technical, management, people, attitude, value and mental skill components". This holistic competence affects leaders' behaviors and performance (Viitala, 2005). In particular, the social skills of leaders contribute towards their capacity to be an effective leader in social

situations involving followers, here referred to as *social leadership capacity* (Day, 2011; Day & Dragoni, 2015; Mumford et al., 2000). Social skills and abilities relevant for a leader include building relationships, managing communication and conflict, and developing others. However, a leader also requires self-view skills in the form of self-awareness and social awareness (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Apart from specific knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), leaders need the ability to develop their self-view or self-concept as a leader (i.e., leadership self-efficacy, self-awareness, and leader identity) that supports the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of holistic functioning, and affects the development of social and interpersonal competencies that lie at the core of leadership to enhance trust, respect and organizational performance (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Fry & Kriger, 2009; Liu et al., 2020). Indeed, it has been claimed that effective leadership relies on the leader's self-awareness and social awareness that influence their ability to act with a sense of responsibility in the organizational environment (Brown et al., 2005; Day, 2000; Eisenbess, 2012; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017).

The concept of *social intelligence* refers to a form of intelligence separate from general intelligence that involves the ability to understand other people, and "to act wisely in human relations" (Thorndike, 1920, p. 228). Salovey and Mayer (1990) define *emotional intelligence* as a type of social intelligence involving the ability to understand one's own and others' emotions, and to use that understanding to guide one's thinking and actions. In management literature, social and emotional intelligence have been viewed as intertwined concepts, with social intelligence being the other-oriented extension of emotional intelligence. This combination involves the interacting cognitive processes, emotions and actions that are required by an effective organizational leader to respond wisely in challenging social situations that arise within groups (e.g., Gill, 2011; Goleman, 1995; Mumford et al., 2000).

Self-awareness and social awareness are considered as key components of social and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Carden et al. (2021) define self-awareness as consisting of an awareness of one's emotions, cognitions and physiological responses that drives one's behaviors and assists an awareness of one's influence on others. According to Carden et al. (2021), the 'self' may be viewed as both an intra- and inter-individual construct by nature, meaning that it is made of both conscious and unconscious dimensions of oneself, and perceived in relation to others. 'Awareness' may be understood as a combination of one's cognitive awareness concerning one's perception, thinking and awareness of others' feelings, and one's impact on others. It is argued that awareness is a multilevel construct, in that it has both conscious and unconscious levels which the individual may or may not be aware of, but may be able to bring to conscious

awareness by processing the goings-on of one's mind and body (Carden et al., 2021).

Self-awareness is "a higher-level concept which includes the extent to which people are consciously aware of their interactions or relationships with others and their internal states" (Sutton et al., 2015: 611), and entails the other-oriented quality of consciousness which may be conceptualized in relation to other people as social awareness. Social awareness involves an introspective reflection of the multidimensional self, informed by observations of others (Carden, 2021). Even though the importance of self-awareness has been widely recognized in management literature, social awareness has been given relatively little attention in research, and is often discussed alongside or as a sub-category of self-awareness (Svalgaard, 2018; for a review see Carden et al., 2021). A significant developmental outcome for a leader that may improve the individual leadership capacity and pave the way to improved leadership quality over time is a transformative shift in the leader's way of being and leading that stems from the development of self-awareness and social/contextual awareness (Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017). Importantly, being present for and aware of followers in social situations is deemed critical for an individual leader's capacity to be an effective leader (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Dane & Rockmann, 2020; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Reb et al., 2014).

According to current knowledge, self-awareness and social awareness may be developed through a life-long process of evolving and developing as a human, through practicing reflexivity in action or retrospectively based on internal and external feedback, and also through practices that encompass and stimulate cognitive, emotional and sensory functions and introspection (Carden et al., 2021). As a consequence, research has been called for to understand the benefits of self- and social awareness, and to explore different methods of teaching them (Carden et al., 2021).

2.1.2   Servant leadership

Servant leadership is an other-oriented approach to leadership that emphasizes the leader's self-awareness, selflessness and motivation to serve and support others (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership was originated by Greenleaf (1970, p. 15), who viewed that: "The servant-leader is servant first—It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead." Servant leadership is claimed to be a unique form of relational and moral leadership, as it

primarily focuses on the development of others and has an outward focus towards the community, placing the leader's concern for the organization, or self, last (Eva et al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2019; 2021; Sendjaya et al., 2008). Among the theoretical approaches to leadership which are founded in leadership ethics and deep self-awareness, servant leadership entails a particular emphasis and attempt to understand an other-oriented leadership style. Furthermore, meta-analytic studies have demonstrated that servant leadership can benefit the organization by bringing value to the individual employee, the community, and the leader themselves (e.g., Banks et al., 2018; Hoch et al., 2018).

A key component of servant leaders is being a steward of their employees, that is, being trusted with followers' well-being and growth (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Sendjaya et al. (2008) refer to the covenantal relationship as a dimension of servant leadership marked by shared values, commitment, mutual trust and a concern for the welfare of the other. According to Lemoine et al. (2021), servant leaders focus on the follower's holistic development rather than their performance. For instance, Pircher Verdorfer (2019) found that genuine servant leadership behaviors of standing back, humility and authenticity were linked to followers' respect for their leaders and an acceptance of their leaders' influence. In addition, leadership exists both dyadically and across the team (Liden et al., 2014a). Therefore, servant leaders aspire to create a servant culture within their team (Liden et al., 2014b). Studies have also demonstrated that servant leaders could influence the culture of the team by encouraging follower authenticity and value-based action through positive modelling (Madison & Eva, 2019). According to the tenets of servant leadership, one first has an internal calling to serve and then progress to leadership (Greenleaf, 1970 & 1977). Notably, servant leadership is not only about 'doing' acts of service for others, but also about 'being' (Sendjaya, 2015). Therefore, self-awareness and self-concept are core dimensions of servant leadership, as the leader needs to understand who they are and what motivates them to serve and lead, and that way engaging in servant leadership becomes intrinsically motivating (Chen et al., 2015; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Sendjaya, 2015). Moreover, servant leaders need to understand and learn ways to replenish themselves to avoid the mental fatigue and depletion caused by regularly engaging in servant leadership behavior (Liao et al., 2021).

While the literature on the outcomes of servant leadership is abundant (see Hoch et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Neubert et al., 2021 for meta-analyses), there is a lack of research on servant leadership development (Eva et al., 2019). Authors have posited that servant leadership development is required in organizations (e.g., Hunter et al., 2013). Some have provided 'how-to' guides to engage in servant leadership (e.g., Lemoine et al., 2021), and others have provided examples of

programs (e.g., Eva & Sendjaya, 2013), yet a thorough analysis of method(s) to develop servant leaders is missing. The leadership development literature distinguishes two forms of development (Day, 2000), where the aim of *leadership* development is to expand the collective capacity (leadership processes and social structures) in order to achieve effective leadership, while *leader* development focuses on developing the individual leader (Day, 2000; Day & Dragoni, 2015; Day et al., 2014). Thus, servant leader development would encompass intrapersonal development (self-awareness and discovering a motivation to serve), and servant leadership development would encompass learning the skills to be an effective servant leader (learning how to serve followers and the community). Consequently, an effective servant leadership development intervention would need to address both aspects holistically (Bragger et al., 2021).

2.1.3   Leadership development

Leadership development scholars are interested in how individuals develop as leaders, and how collections of individuals develop a capacity for leadership (Day et al., 2021). This area of study involves both learning and development outcomes, and processes (Day et al., 2021).

It should be noted that individual leader development is different from collective leader development (Day, 2000; Day et al., 2004). *Leadership development* is a broader concept which may be seen to include *leader development* (Day et al., 2021). The main concern of *leadership* development is to expand the collective capacity (i.e., leadership processes and social structures) to achieve effective leadership, while *leader* development aims to expand the individual leader's capacity to be effective in a leadership role (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Day et al., 2014). The difference can be understood so that leadership development concerns the collective (i.e., followers and teams), and leader development concerns the individual leader. The outcomes of leader development concern the leader themselves (e.g., the leader's personal characteristics, traits, qualities, skills, self-views and behaviors), while the outcomes of leadership development concern the external world and other people (e.g., leader-follower relationships, actual social interactions, team leadership practices).

Leadership learning and development occur at both individual and collective levels, but they concern different levels of analysis, and their associated learning outcomes are of different kinds (Day et al., 2021; Wallace et al., 2021). Importantly, individual-level (e.g., individual leader) learning and development influences the collective level (e.g., team of followers) through social interactions among the

members of the collective (Wallace et al., 2021). Leaders can develop a collective leadership capacity (which can be seen as a leadership development outcome) through contributing to the developmental processes that support the collective, for instance, when leaders establish collaborative working practices that affect team members' ability for self- and team leadership, or when leaders provide team members with coaching that enhances the team member's skills to resolve interpersonal conflict. Thus, the individual leader is in key position of passing knowledge, learning and development on to followers. To be effective in the leader role, a leader needs a variety of skills in both leader and leadership development.

Leadership competencies tend to dominate the field of leadership development practice (Day et al., 2021). The competency frameworks include a certain set of leadership knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) in a seemingly easily learnable way. However, to stay mentally alive and optimize one's performance in complex and fast-paced organizational environments, leaders need not just new kinds of skills training, but support that provides for leader self-view development in terms of leadership self-efficacy, self-knowledge and self-awareness, and leader identity (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Liu et al., 2021). Hunter (2015, p. 356) highlights the importance of leader self-view development: "just as leaders need tools to manage external realities, they also need tools to manage the internal ones". This kind of development has influences on the cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of human functioning, and bears implications for interpersonal contexts at the core of leadership function (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Rather than merely addressing the acquisition of skills and knowledge, it may have transformative potential (Day et al., 2014; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Neal, 2018). All in all, a distinction has been made between the acquisition of leadership skills and leadership maturation. Instead of specific skills and behaviors, it has been viewed that research on leadership and leader development should focus on the development of leaders' cognitive, affective and motivational qualities, values and identities which mark leadership maturation and characterize "leadership experts" (e.g., Wallace et al., 2021, p. 2). However, leadership development literature is currently lacking in research on aspects of leader maturation (Wallace et al., 2021).

Ideally, development efforts are based on understanding the individual development needs of leaders (Day et al., 2014), but determining the particular capabilities an individual needs in different phases of their career is difficult (Day & Harrison, 2007; Orvis & Ratwani, 2010). Even more importantly, how individuals develop as leaders is inherently connected to change, developmental psychology, and adult maturation, therefore leader development involves complex processes which take time to evolve (Riggio & Mumford, 2011). Clearly, effective leader development is an ongoing process that depends on the leader's internal

motivation to actively develop themselves (DeRue et al., 2012; Heslin & Keating, 2017; Reichard & Johnson, 2011) and acquire "a deeper understanding of one's operating environment, and one's self as a leader" (Boyce et al., 2010, p. 161). As Day et al. (2021, p. 5) state: "Personal responsibility for leader development will increase concomitant with enhanced personal responsibility for work and careers. Relying on organizations to provide and structure developmental opportunities might be considered an outdated 20th century proposition." As a matter of fact, leader development research and practice has shifted towards flexible and sustainable leader development initiatives which emphasize leader self-development (Boyce et al., 2010). To contribute as a leader, individuals must continuously engage in self-development behaviors such as experiential on-the-job learning and active reflection on internal and external feedback, that help them assess themselves, make sense of their experiences, and build self-awareness (Heslin & Keating, 2017; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). It appears that instead of offering guidance on *what* to develop, organizational leader and leadership development initiatives should help leaders understand *how* to develop themselves (Reichard & Johnson, 2011).

Some leadership and leader development initiatives focus on an explicit top-down acquisition of skills through traditional classroom instruction, and providing specific materials that should result in improved leadership capacity. Other initiatives rely on a more implicit bottom-up learning approach which focuses on drawing from experiences that support the development of leadership. As Day et al. (2021) point out, many leader development programs combine classroom and experiential types of learning approaches. Viitala (2005) highlights that in order to become aware of one's developmental needs, a leader must first be educated in leadership competencies that offer a frame of reference for common leadership development and organizational issues. Important in the presence of both approaches is the consideration of *processes* related to the development of an individual's leader identity (Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue & Ashford, 2010), their motivation to lead and develop as leader (e.g., Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Rosch & Villanueva, 2016), and the leader's self-views such as self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-identification (Day & Dragoni, 2015). It has been proposed that leader development which occurs through on-the-job experiences does not occur automatically (DeRue et al., 2012; Heslin & Keating, 2017), but is largely dependent on the leader's internal motivation and willingness to develop themselves (Reichard & Johnson 2011), and this can result in increased self-awareness and ongoing development as a leader (Reichard & Johnson, 2011). To date, theorizing on how these processes contribute to leader development is thin (Day et al., 2021).

Interpersonal and social leadership skills are considered as the most difficult to develop, as they are connected to the leader's growth as a human being (Viitala, 2005). Nevertheless, systematic efforts to enhance individuals' higher-level awareness of their values, motivations and goals may be required to achieve a positive transformation of work teams, organizations and societies (Neal, 2018). For instance, Mäkelä et al. (2021) emphasize that practical interventions that address leader psychological well-being and relationship-building skills may be particularly valuable for building positive leader and follower attitudes. Leader development interventions that are believed to best support the career journey of a human being who is also a leader are likely to be those that are aligned with ongoing adult development and those that focus on an enhancement of holistic functioning (Day et al. 2014), bearing a transformative, and sustainably different value to what was before (Neal 2018), instead of a mere acquisition of skills and knowledge. In addition, practice-based leadership training is acknowledged to be most effective, preferably combined with other delivery methods (Laccrenza et al. 2017). Therefore, there is a need for organizational support and formalized efforts that promote continuous self-development behaviors such as experiential learning and utilizing feedback to support the development of leader self-awareness (Heslin & Keating, 2017; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). According to Svalgaard (2018), such leadership programs support the development of self- and social awareness, but the newly-enhanced self- and social awareness may be forgotten after the individual goes back to the routine of organizational life. The question thus remains open as to how the newly-found self- and social awareness could be maintained outside of the formal program context.

In sum, the most effective leader and leadership development interventions may be practice-based (Laccrenza et al., 2017), aligned with ongoing adult development (Day et al., 2014), and focused on the enhancement of holistic functioning (Day et al., 2014). However, an important question remains that deserves greater research attention: "What interventions are necessary to turn experiences into the acquisition of new capabilities?" (Day et al., 2021, p. 4).

2.2   Mindfulness in organizations

Mindfulness practice has its roots in the Buddhist contemplative traditions originating over 2500 years ago. The western medical and psychological domain has known of mindfulness since the late 1970s. While numerous well-known conceptualizations have been developed for mindfulness, there remains no scholastic consensus on its definition (Choi & Leroy, 2015; King & Badham, 2019; Nilsson & Kazemi, 2016). Common definitions describe mindfulness as a state of

attention to and awareness of events and experience in the present moment (e.g., Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003) that can be pursued intentionally through formal mindfulness meditation practice or informal practice, and a way of 'being' (Kabat-Zinn, 2003); for instance: "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Another definition, offered by King and Badham (2019, p. 6), presents mindfulness as "a quality or state of mind that attends to experience, avoiding or overcoming mindlessness by giving full and proper attention to presence, context and purpose", drawing attention to the contextual and relational nature of mindfulness in organizations. Helpfully, it contrasts mindfulness with mind*less*ness, pointing to the nature of mindfulness as a wisdom practice.

Attention, awareness, and present-centeredness are key components of mindfulness featured frequently in the definitions of mindfulness (Nilsson & Kazemi, 2016). Research associates mindful attention with its neurobiological role in stress regulation and consequent effects such as sleep quality, cognitive performance, capacity and flexibility (Good et al., 2016). Research also demonstrates that mindfulness has a role in changing automatized behaviors, mindful attention thought to create space between the stimulus and the habitual response, enabling choicefulness and more effective behavioral regulation. Via attention, mindfulness is suggested to influence emotions and shape and alter the lifecycle of emotional reactions as well as the overall emotional experience (Good et al., 2016).

'Being present' may be understood as open attention and mindful awareness that entails both directly experiencing whatever arises to the attention of the mind (experiencing self), together with the attitude of minimizing any interpretations and emotional reactivity (observing self) (Parker et al., 2015). Shapiro et al. (2018, p. 1694) describe 'mindful awareness' as a way of relating to one's experience as it is (for instance, positive, negative, or neutral) in each moment in an "open, kind, and receptive manner". This kind of experiencing is direct and promotes non-judgmentality. The improved self-regulation, the ability to observe one's emotional states, creates freedom from fixed thinking tendencies, of habitual responses to emotions and automatic behavioral patterns (Shapiro et al., 2006). It has been suggested that mindfulness practice increases the human capacity of objectivity about one's internal experience, which enables taking another's perspective. This shift in perspective also known as 'reperceiving' is "the hallmark of mindfulness practice", and a key mechanism bringing about positive outcomes of mindfulness (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 378). Mindful awareness thus adds the component of 'attunement' between the direct experience and observing of the situation in a

broader context of one's 'being' and life. In the interpersonal context, mindfulness enables focusing on the other person with an attitude of kindness and compassion (e.g., Parker et al., 2015). As a practical example: In an emotionally challenging, unpleasant situation involving another person, mindfulness enables a thoughtfully considered, interpersonally attuned response instead of an automatic reactive response (Parker et al., 2015). Thus, getting in touch with one's 'being' involves an active mind (Purser & Milillo, 2015).

Research on mindfulness originating in psychological contexts has tended to focus on mindfulness as a technique of attention-enhancement. The conceptualizations of mindfulness originating from Buddhism, on the other hand, portray mindfulness as aspects of attention *and* deep awareness of one's experience which may lead to 'awakening' (Gethin, 2011). This implies that mindfulness practice has the capacity to facilitate tapping into the deep wisdom and value-based evaluation that humans are capable of (Gethin, 2011). In line with Buddhist conceptualizations of mindfulness as a contemplative wisdom practice, mindfulness may be understood as a developmentally oriented, value-based practice that intrinsically involves meditation (i.e., contemplation directed toward internal and external phenomena), introspection (i.e., reflexive monitoring of the mental state and actions), and ethical conduct (i.e., making purposeful choices) (Purser & Milillo, 2015). This understanding is viewed to advance the debate about mindfulness in the organizational context (Badham & King, 2021).

Research has focused mainly on the investigation of mindfulness as an individual trait- or state-like psychological capacity (construct), and as an intentional activity of paying attention (practice) to induce a mindful mental state (Reb et al., 2015), as part of a clinical or therapeutic intervention designed to enhance mindfulness and improve health and well-being (Brown et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 2011; Keng et al., 2011). The three basic types of empirical research on mindfulness are correlational research, laboratory-based research, and intervention research (Keng et al., 2011). It is typical that the research has attempted to measure the mindfulness quality as a static trait or state, or change in mindfulness quality, using self-assessment questionnaires such as the Mindfulness Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003). What explains the interest in mindfulness as a character attribute is the notion that "We are all mindful to one degree or another, moment by moment. It is an inherent human capacity" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145-146). Mindfulness is also considered a quality or skill that can be developed through practice. A multitude of practice-based mindfulness interventions have been designed for various needs, and for clinical and non-clinical audiences. These include Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1982), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Segal et al.,

2002), Health Enhancement Program (HEP) (Hassed et al., 2009), '.b' (pronounced 'dot be') Mindfulness in Schools program (Kuyken et al., 2013), and Search Inside Yourself (SIY) (Caporale-Berkowitz et al., 2021), to mention only a few of the researched interventions. The operationalization of mindfulness as an intervention typically involves developmentally oriented activities built around the concept of mindfulness, including meditation and awareness practices, psychoeducational content, and self-reflection (Fyke & Buzzanell, 2013; Glomb et al., 2011; Good et al., 2016; Hyland et al., 2015; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

It is worth noticing that despite the popularity of meditation-based mindfulness programs, mindfulness may be practiced without meditating or engaging in the formal practices. Mindfulness practice may occur either during a mindfulness-based intervention, or as independent practice outside the context of formal programs. It may take the form of a *formal practice*, i.e., a dedicated time for mindfulness meditation or mindful awareness, or an *informal practice*, i.e., a mindful 'way of being' accessible at any moment (Brendel et al., 2016). Essentially, mindfulness is an engagement that "takes a variety of forms, from a range of formal practices that are undertaken for varying periods of time on a regular basis, to informal practices that are aimed at cultivating a continuity of awareness in all activities of daily living" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 147).

2.2.1   Workplace mindfulness interventions and practices

Mindfulness in the context of work differs from mindfulness in the context of health problems, which have traditionally been the starting point for much of the research on mindfulness. As in the medical and psychological domain, in the organizational context mindfulness has also been studied from the perspective of natural between-person differences (as a trait), natural within-person fluctuations in mindfulness (as a state), or the effect of mindfulness-based interventions or training programs (Alberts & Hülsheger 2015). Nevertheless, making mindfulness relevant for working adults who do not, for instance, identify themselves as having any significant illness moves the focus from clinical individual-level health issues like anxiety or depression, to organizational issues to do with functioning, performance and change (Reb & Atkins, 2015).

As mindfulness is being brought to working people as part of different kinds of training and development programs, the role and impact of mindfulness-based interventions in the context of work is the major focus of research that explores mindfulness in organizations (Jamieson & Tuckey, 2017). There are many different kinds of mindfulness interventions on offer for different organizational audiences.

It is usual that mindfulness interventions are tailored according to the needs of the audience and targeted outcome measures, because it is expected that the content of the intervention or practice approach will affect the expected outcome (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). For instance, some approaches to organizational mindfulness focus on stress-reduction and well-being (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019; Pipe et al., 2009; Zolnierczyk-Zreda et al., 2016), while others approach mindfulness as a spiritual practice (e.g., Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015; Vu & Gill, 2017). Mindfulness training programs offered in workplace settings —even ones that are apparently similar in content— are often heterogenous in terms of length and intensity, because they need to meet the requirements of contemporary work environments in regard to limited time commitment and flexible delivery methods (Bartlett et al., 2019). The comparison of different kinds of interventions is difficult unless the interventions and their matched comparison conditions are the same or the intervention descriptions provide the same details, unless enough studies use the same outcome measures and report the outcomes in a transparent way, and unless the studies apply the same longitudinal assessments beyond pre-post measures (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). However, it is in the interest of human resource management professionals and researchers alike to attempt to assess the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions and practices.

Mindfulness and mindfulness practice is reported to influence a variety of workplace outcomes in the domains of well-being, performance, and relationships (Glomb et al., 2011; Good et al., 2016; Hyland et al., 2015). Thus, in the application of mindfulness to work-related purposes, measuring the psychological 'mindfulness' quality has become secondary. First, among a wide range of targeted workplace outcomes, employee well-being (i.e., the experience of overall health and satisfaction at work) and stress reduction is the number one driver of mindfulness education being brought into organizations (Eby et al., 2019). Research reports that MBIs can improve the use of coping strategies (Walach et al., 2007), recovery from work (Hülsheger et al., 2015; Querstret et al., 2017), sleep (Hülsheger et al., 2015; Querstret et al., 2017), job satisfaction (Hülsheger et al., 2013), emotional exhaustion (Hülsheger et al., 2013), and work-family conflict (Michel et al., 2014; Kiburtz et al., 2017). Second, research is investigating the impacts of mindfulness training on job performance, showing promising results on reduced multitasking, increased memory, improved focusing (Levy et al., 2012), and a reduced escalation of commitment and decreased counterproductive work behaviors (Hafenbrack, 2017). Third, mindfulness has been suggested to affect interpersonal behavior and the quality of dyadic and workgroup relationships, with studies demonstrating outcomes such as reduced negative emotions and retaliatory reactions to perceived injustice (Long & Christian, 2015), and enhanced team functioning and conflict management (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

Research on mindfulness in the context of work tends to be outcome-focused, meaning that the focus is on investigating the effects of mindfulness as a psychological quality or as a practice. While research has shown that practicing mindfulness can help individuals working in stressful environments like the corporate world and healthcare to restore their personal resources, this limited application has elicited criticism. Mainly, the expectation of 'individual-instrumental approaches' to mindfulness designed to achieve specific beneficial outcomes has brought criticism towards the instrumental use of mindfulness in organizations as a shallow self-help technique (Badham & King, 2021; Purser, 2018). Moreover, according to critics, promoting mindfulness techniques (such as managing unpleasant emotions by accepting them as they are) as a self-help tool could make people lose their ability for healthy criticism and docilely adapt to systemic causes of stress in search for a better ability to cope and perform in a demanding environment (e.g., duPlessis & Just, 2021; Purser, 2018; Walsh, 2018). This could corrupt mindfulness practice that is intended to connect people, and not to separate them from each other and the context they live in (Purser, 2018). Purser and Loy (2013, p. 4) assert that "right mindfulness is guided by intentions and motivations based on self-restraint, wholesome mental states, and ethical behaviors—goals that include but supersede stress-reduction and improvements in concentration."

It appears that mindfulness encompasses and may have consequences for the human functional domains of physiology, cognition, emotion, behavior, interpersonal relationships, spirituality, and also the nature of self (e.g., Brown et al. 2016; Good et al. 2016), and therefore, mindfulness is considered as a holistic approach to the human experience. Thus, despite its instrumental value of provenly bringing a multitude of benefits to individuals and organizations, Kabat-Zinn (2011, p. 284) notes that mindfulness is "not one more cognitive- behavioural technique to be deployed in a behaviour change paradigm, but a way of being and a way of seeing that has profound implications for understanding the nature of our own minds and bodies, and for living life as if it really mattered." Available every moment of the day, a way of being is a human state where one's thoughts, feelings, emotions and images shape one's actions, intentions and attitudes (Karssiens et al., 2014). Consequently, it has been predicted that in the future, the expectations for workplace mindfulness interventions will not be restricted to providing a buffer against stress and instigating performance improvement, but rather be seen as a method to assist managing change and transformation (Hunter, 2015).

2.2.2 Interpersonal and collective dimensions

Current literature expands the understanding of mindfulness from being a within-person psychological capacity, to an interpersonal phenomenon that takes place in interactions and social processes (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019). Research discusses mindfulness as an inter-individual phenomenon (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019) through references to *interpersonal* (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007), *relational* (e.g., Vich et al., 2020), *social* (e.g., Fazia et al., 2020), and *collective* mindfulness (e.g., Badham & King, 2021).

Researchers and practitioners acknowledge that "'workplace mindfulness' has a collective dimension" (Badham & King, 2021, p. 538). Collective mindfulness may be seen as heightened attention to signals that could, unnoticed, lead to organizational catastrophes (Weick et al., 1999). In the organizational context mindfulness may be seen to occur in the level of the organization or between people (Reina et al., 2022). The beneficial transformational effects of mindfulness in organizations may emerge through the interactional and social processes that occur between people, such as creating a healthy learning environment and enhancing interpersonal functioning (Shapiro et al., 2015). As such, the focus of development shifts from individual to organizational. The 'collective-instrumental' approach to mindfulness in organizations focuses on how organizational performance could be enhanced with mindfulness (Badham & King, 2018). The 'collective-substantive' approach addresses interdependence, purposeful collaborative action, and ethics-oriented organization and leadership, putting less emphasis on the self-centered concerns of individuals (Purser & Milillo, 2015; Roche et al., 2020). In other words, collective and substantive approaches to mindfulness emphasize values such as interconnectedness and collaboration (instead of within-person attention and awareness), and practices that support mindful consideration and reflection (instead of stress-reduction and performance-related outcomes) (Badham & King, 2021; duPlessis & Just, 2021).

Much of the empirical research on mindfulness as an interpersonal phenomenon originates in non-work contexts such as parental interaction, romantic relationships, and friendships. That research indicates that practicing mindfulness may benefit interpersonal relationships by influencing the interlinked processes of other-directed attention, affect, and behavior (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007). In studies of the cognitive aspects of mindfulness related to attention, thinking and perceiving in relationships, Carson et al. (2004) found mindfulness intervention to increase people's acceptance of one another in romantic relationships. Since the emotional aspects of mindfulness related to feelings and their effect on relationships have been studied, focus has been placed on emotional awareness

and cultivating prosocial emotions via interventions (for a review, see Galante et al., 2014). For example, mindfulness meditation has been associated with interpersonal forgiveness (Karremans et al., 2020) and compassion (Condon et al., 2013; Fredrickson et al., 2008). Studies on the behavioral aspects of mindfulness related to volition in relationships showed that mindfulness interventions increase prosocial behavior, that is voluntary actions such as helping, intended to benefit others (for a meta-analysis, see Donald et al., 2019). In addition, communication quality improved owing to reduced negativity and verbal and non-verbal aggression in stressful interpersonal dialogue (Barnes et al., 2007), and constructive and compassionate responding (Barnes et al., 2007; Condon et al., 2013). Currently available evidence on mindfulness intervention studies reviewed by Donald et al. (2019) suggests that mindfulness meditation enhances prosocial behaviors through empathetic concern/compassion, and that mindfulness-based compassion meditation may enhance prosociality via the mechanisms of emotion regulation and positive affect. The regulation of affect and personal distress enhanced by mindfulness has been found to determine how compassionately, altruistically, or kindly people respond to others (Skoranski et al., 2019; Donald et al., 2019). Skoranski et al. (2019) argue that mindful attention exhibited in the constant dynamic process of interpersonal interaction between people, supports a mutual positive affect and reinforces positive behaviors, causing a recursive loop through which the relationship becomes increasingly mindful. Fredrickson et al. (2008) showed that cultivating positive emotions through a mindfulness-based intervention in working adults was linked to improved personal resources, including maintaining positive relations with others. To explain the linkages between the attentional, emotional and behavioral aspects of mindfulness in relationships, they propose positive affect as a central mechanism driving positive change in and between people. Thus, when taken to the organizational context, mindfulness may be seen as a dynamic interpersonal process that interacts at multiple levels (Hülsheger, 2015; Skoranski et al., 2019).

Summing up, mindfulness and mindfulness practice are known to bring benefits related to an individual's health, well-being, functioning and relationships (Reb et al., 2015), and should therefore influence the connection with other people (Skoranski et al., 2019). Mindfulness and mindfulness practice which involves raising an awareness of oneself in the context of others has been conceptualized as a developmental phenomenon occurring in the context of interpersonal relationships. Importantly, Skoranski et al. (2019) highlight that mindfulness could be examined as an experience that is shared between people, and driven by empathy and compassion which are seen as the key components of mindfulness cultivated in interpersonal interactions. The assumption that an individual's mindfulness or mindfulness practice should influence other people through

prosocial attitudes and behaviors (Donald et al, 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019) is highly valuable from a leadership perspective (Schuh et al., 2019). However, much of the existing empirical research on mindfulness in relationships is set in specific non-work contexts (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019). Thus, the other-oriented components of mindfulness such as perspective-taking, compassion and sharing that are cultivated in relationships (Skoranski et al., 2019) warrant exploration also in the context of organizational leadership.

2.2.3   Mindfulness for leaders

As leadership is inherently relational and takes place in leader-follower interactions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Uhl-Bien, 2006), the interpersonal and collective conceptualizations of mindfulness (e.g., Badham & King, 2021; Skoranski et al., 2019) may be particularly relevant for leadership. The emerging understanding that an individual's mindfulness may influence not just the person themselves, but other people (Eby et al., 2020; Schuh et al., 2019), makes such a quality significant from a leadership perspective. When examining mindfulness and leadership broadly from the relational perspective, existing research links trait mindfulness with leader authenticity (Dietl & Reb, 2021), transformational leadership behavior (Lange & Rowold, 2018), employee well-being and performance (e.g., Pinck & Sonnentag, 2018; Reb et al., 2014; Reb et al., 2019; Schuh et al., 2019), and servant leadership (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). For instance, in a study by Pircher Verdorfer (2016), leader trait mindfulness was reported to predict servant leadership behaviors, namely humility, standing back and authenticity, as perceived by followers.

Research on mindfulness interventions for leaders (for reviews, see Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019; Urrila, 2022) and in workplace settings in general (for a review, see Eby et al., 2019) has tended to focus on measuring well-being- and productivity-related outcomes (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019; Lundqvist et al., 2019). However, following the practical application of mindfulness in contemporary organizations, a steadily growing line of research is focused on mindfulness-based interventions that aim to improve leadership quality (e.g., Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019; Rupprecht et al., 2019). These approaches employ notions of mindfulness as a holistic developmental practice that intrinsically involves contemplation directed toward internal and external phenomena (meditation), introspective monitoring of mental state and actions, and value-based evaluation that only people are capable of, concerning not only oneself but other people (Gethin, 2011; Purser & Milillo, 2015). Mindfulness practice involves the holistic development of the physiological, cognitive, attentional, emotional, behavioral and

spiritual qualities of an individual in their relationship to the self and others (Kristeller, 2004). When dealing with a diversity of people and information, developing oneself profoundly and holistically through a curious and open awareness of experience —a novel concept in leader development— may bring effectiveness *and* meaningfulness for a leader (Karssiens et al., 2014).

Current empirical and theoretical studies indicate potential value in further exploring the discernible link between mindfulness and leader development. Specifically, a leader's mindfulness practice may facilitate a positive form of leadership involving their ability to take the perspective of others (e.g., Wasylkiw et al., 2015), empathize with others (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017), and internalize the social and ethical norms for behavior. Lange and Rowold (2018) found mindfulness intervention to support transformational leadership behavior and reduce destructive leadership, and Nübold et al. (2019) found that it supported authentic leadership development. Schuh et al. (2019) report both leader trait mindfulness and mindfulness practice to be positively linked with leader fairness via procedural justice enactment (the key leadership task of making decisions for the team), which was found to subsequently reduce employee emotional exhaustion (a key indicator of employee stress and well-being), and lead to enhanced employee performance. Furthermore, recent research indicates that leaders view mindfulness-based practices as something that supports their growth as human beings and leaders (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017), and that leaders' mindfulness practice is seen as a method to facilitate transformation in organizations (e.g., Reitz et al., 2020). In sum, while mindfulness is known to improve stress management and focusing abilities, recent research reaches beyond well-being and work productivity to address a variety of ways in which mindfulness-based interventions and practices could benefit leaders as a specific audience, and improve leadership quality (King & Badham, 2018; Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015). The expectation that mindfulness training could have positive impacts on many aspects of individual and organizational functioning (Good et al., 2016) makes it a viable method of individual leader development, and thus an intriguing research topic to be investigated more deeply.

It has been suggested that mindfulness training may be offered for leaders, managers and supervisors as part of a leader development program in the hope that their learning will "spill over" and improve the individual leader's critical leadership capabilities and have beneficial organizational and team level effects (Hülsheger, 2015). As an example, Gerpott et al. (2020) found that a leader other-orientation can enhance social mindfulness and followers' other-orientation, which is a key objective of servant leadership. Developing leaders with mindfulness could be integrated into and support the development of transformational,

authentic, ethical and servant leadership styles, which according to Anderson and Sun (2017) encompass many of the characteristics of mindfulness, including showing authentic care, gratitude and an acceptance toward others, self-awareness, and a self-regulation of emotion and behavior. The link between mindfulness and servant leadership has been argued (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Reb et al., 2015; Roche et al., 2020). Reb et al. (2014, p. 43) state that "leaders who are fully present when interacting with the subordinates may derive a better understanding of their employees' needs which may allow them to more effectively support employees", suggesting that the leader's enhanced awareness and attention in an interpersonal context may result in selfless leadership behavior. Servant leadership focuses on the development of others, and has an outward focus towards the community (Lemoine et al., 2019; 2021). At the same time, self-awareness and self-concept are core dimensions of servant leadership, as the leader needs to understand who they are and what motivates them to serve and lead (Chen et al., 2015; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Sendjaya, 2015). Importantly, mindfulness training can be seen as an invitation to a mindful 'way of being' (Kabat-Zinn, 2011), but notably, there is a lack of research on servant leadership development (Eva et al., 2019). The literature recognizes that mindfulness training could be a viable method to develop servant leaders on a sustained basis through the development of self-views and regular formal and informal mindfulness practice (Reb et al., 2015), thus supporting leaders in the continuous human developmental process inherent to servant leadership (Phipps, 2010). While self-concept and the intention to be a servant leader are key characteristics of servant leadership (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), mindfulness interventions represent leader development efforts that focus on the holistic development of leaders instead of the mere acquisition of knowledge and skills, and can thus support the development of leaders' self-views (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Therefore, leader mindfulness training may be assessed as a potentially effective method to develop genuine other-orientation and servant leadership. But currently, empirical research on the linkage between the two aspects is lacking.

Summing up, mindfulness may have relevance as a holistic leadership development approach for organizational leaders in influencing employees and achieving sustainable organizational outcomes on multiple levels. Training in specific leadership skills (such as servant leadership) as part of traditional leadership education may not be the only way to influence leadership behavior (Lange & Rowold, 2019). Instead, the key to leadership development may be to develop leaders holistically, by enhancing their higher-level awareness (Neal, 2018). As Davidson and Kaszniak (2015, p. 582) put it: "A key target of contemplative practice is awareness itself." Therefore, the ultimate targeted outcome of mindfulness training has further transformative value over any

instrumental, directly measurable benefits, and indeed, this is an ongoing developmental process.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1   Research philosophy

The field of business and management draws from multiple theoretical bases, which has both caused philosophical disagreements and resulted in the coexistence of multiple research philosophies, paradigms and methodologies (Saunders et al., 2019). Research philosophy entails the underlying assumptions related to ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge), axiology (the researcher's own values), and human nature (the 'model of man'). These distinguish different research philosophies about the development of knowledge in a particular field and determine a researcher's view of the nature of social science (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Saunders et al., 2019). Methodology refers to "the way in which one attempts to investigate and obtain 'knowledge' about the social world" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 2). In this section, the paradigmatic context of the research as well as the underlying assumptions are discussed to shed light on the adopted view of social-scientific reality underpinning the methodological choices of the current research.

A *paradigm* is a philosophical position and a specific way of looking at a social-scientific context (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Defining one's research philosophy, designing a research project, and being able to justify the methodological choices requires awareness and reflexivity (Saunders et al., 2019). For example, whether one believes in multi-paradigmatic research and relativism is a research philosophical view (Saunders et al., 2019). This dissertation could be positioned within the *critical realism* research paradigm. According to the philosophy of critical realism, the purpose of organizational research is to explain what people experience in terms of the underlying structures of reality which shape observable events (Saunders et al., 2019). Rational thought is used to evaluate theories and concepts, even though theories and concepts can never offer certain knowledge (Saunders et al., 2019). For critical realists, what people experience are sensations or representations of what is real, which can be deceptive (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, critical realists believe that to understand the world, one must first engage with the direct experience (sensation), then reason backwards from the experience to the underlying reality (mental processing, abduction or 'retroduction') (Saunders et al., 2019). The aim of critical realist researchers is not to prove causality, but instead to see the big picture and seek to understand the deeper, underlying mechanisms which may cause organizational events (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.1.1   Ontological and epistemological position

Ontology refers to the philosophical study of the reality concerned with the nature of being, becoming, and existing. It is concerned with the very nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The ontological debate occurs between the nominalist and realist positions. For instance: Is reality tangible and can it be observed objectively, or is reality a product of the mind, experienced subjectively? The nominalist ontological position assumes that the social world is a product of the mind, made of names, concepts, and labels given by people to structure reality (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). For the nominalist ontology, the observing mind is in a key position in forming an observation. From a realist ontology perspective, the social reality is the same for everyone, so it regards social and physical phenomena objectively and attempts to study them in the same way as nature is studied by natural scientists (Saunders et al., 2019).

The relativist, 'mildly subjectivist' (Saunders et al., 2019) ontological position of the current research stands in between the two extremes, but closer to the subjectivist end, suggesting that there may be multiple realities. Closely connected to language usage, the meaning of mindfulness is constructed in communication and interaction between people. Despite efforts to provide a common definition, different scholars and practitioners emphasize different aspects of mindfulness depending on their situations and contexts. For instance, one person may treat mindfulness as a stress-relieving pocket tool, while another one sees it as a life-changing eye-opener. For an organization, mindfulness may be an external process, whereas for an individual, it may be an internal process. This implies "a field in which alternative and sometimes opposing camps may struggle over the meanings and applications of the term" (Islam et al., 2017, p. 2). Due to the heterogeneity attached to it, Islam et al. (2017) characterize workplace mindfulness as an 'empty signifier', meaning that there is no one agreed definition for it or its effects. Rupert Gethin (2015, p. 9), a Buddhist scholar, states:

> Mindfulness is a word, and like other words, mindfulness is used in a variety of ways. That is, different people, whether ancient Buddhists or contemporary neuroscientists, may use and define mindfulness --- in different ways and it is not clear what standards we might use to judge any given account of mindfulness.

Epistemology refers to the philosophical study of knowledge. It is concerned with the grounds of knowledge, like how knowledge can be obtained, the forms it can take, and how to determine what is 'true' or 'false' (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 1). The epistemological debate occurs between the positivist and anti-positivist positions, the objective and the subjective, and asks questions such as whether knowledge is hard and objective (the positivist position), or soft and more

subjective, spiritual, transcendental, and "based on experience and insight of a unique and essentially personal nature" (the anti-positivist position) (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 1-2)? Positivism relates to the objectivist and value-free attempt to seek regularities and causal relationships among observations. In stark contrast to the stance of the critical realism paradigm, positivism contains the extreme idea of 'direct realism' (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 138), tightly connected to the realist ontological position that assumes that the social world is tangible, consisting of hard and relatively unchanging empirical entities, as in the natural world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). As Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 4) put it: "For the realist, the social world exists independently of an individual's appreciation of it." Instead of seeking regularities and causal relationships among observations distinctive to the positivist epistemology, the anti-positivist epistemology emphasizes the uniqueness of the cases and situations studied. Knowledge is gained through reasoning and inference. As Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 5) highlight: "For the anti-positivist, the social world is essentially relativistic and can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are to be studied."

The epistemological position of the current research is at the anti-positivist end, and instead of viewing only measurable facts and numbers as the acceptable form of knowledge or data, this dissertation rather hones the individual interviewees' experiences and opinions. In line with the tenets of the anti-positivist epistemology, "one can only 'understand' by occupying the frame of reference of the participant in action. One has to understand from the inside rather than the outside." (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 5). The content of a first-person description is always directly linked to the lived, conscious experience of a human who experiences it as subjectively relevant and for which the subjective self, the first person, can provide an account (Varela & Shear, 1999). For instance, by focusing on the leader's personal experience, as in this dissertation, management research can respond to questions concerning the internalized role and the development of an individual leader (Rostron, 2022).

3.1.2 Axiological position and view of human nature

The researcher's own values and ethics, their axiological position, play a role in how they view and conduct research (Saunders et al., 2019). The researcher's axiological position influences the selection of a topic of importance for oneself. Likewise, the adopted research philosophy, methodological choices, and techniques and procedures reflect the researcher's own values (Saunders et al., 2019). According to the value-laden critical realism axiology, researchers should

try to be as objective and realistic as possible. Saunders et al. (2019) point out that as a critical realist researcher, one must be aware of how the researcher's background and experiences might influence the research and seek ways to gain objectivity and minimize any bias. As a researcher who is a mindfulness instructor herself, a deep interest in and appreciation of the phenomenon has naturally affected my choice of research. However, I have intentionally focused on staying in the researcher role. Early in the research planning phase, I partnered with a mindfulness trainer who took care of the intervention delivery. In the interviewing phase, I avoided expressing my opinions or fondness of mindfulness to the interviewees, so as to give space for the interviewees to freely describe their experiences of mindfulness training. The purpose was to avoid potential response biases where interviewees may provide answers that they think the interviewer wants to hear (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015).

The philosophical debate about the 'human nature' is concerned with how the 'model of man' is reflected in social sciences (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 6). The views of social scientists are placed between voluntarist and determinist positions. According to the determinist view, the actions of man are determined totally by their environment or situation. According to the voluntarist view, on the other hand, man is totally autonomous and free-willed. Bearing high relevance for social-scientific theories, the chosen position defines the nature of the relationship between man and society, although not all scientists adhere to the extremes (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The view adopted by the current research is towards the voluntarist end of the continuum. In contrast to the idea of people being controlled and externally motivated (e.g., as per the functional paradigm), the voluntarist view of the human nature assumes that everyone is intrinsically motivated, responsible, and actively involved in the creation of their own —and the common— reality. In this dissertation, leaders are represented as individuals who are capable of leading and developing themselves to influence conditions that shape their lives (Bandura, 1982).

The philosophical assumptions related to ontology, epistemology, axiology, and the human nature constitute the research methodology which determines the choice of methods to be made.

3.1.3   Chosen methods

In social sciences, there are methodologies which attempt to investigate the social world in the same ways as the natural world which is made of tangible elements, aiming for objectivity, known as nomothetic methodologies. There are also

methodologies which treat the social world as 'softer', personal and subjective, known as ideographic methodologies (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 2). The nomothetic research tradition typically utilizes quantitative methods such as standardized tests and surveys. The ideographic research tradition, in contrast, deploys qualitative methods, such as case studies and interviews. As Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 6) highlight: "The ideographic approach to social science is based on the view that one can only understand the social world by obtaining first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation." The aim is to find and understand something general in the often relatively small research samples. Therefore, and in contrast to the views of the positivistic paradigms, the aim of qualitative research is not statistical generalization. However, to some extent, the subjective experiences of all human beings are universal, and the patterns and themes —the general— to be discovered are interesting from the perspective of a qualitative researcher.

Historically and traditionally, the study of leadership has been dominated by quantitative methods, and especially cross-sectional (i.e., one point in time) self-administered survey design (Grint, 2011). Experimental quantitative research designs have also been used, but less so. As theoretical interests within the field of leadership evolve, methods of studying leadership also evolve. It has been expressed by researchers that the field would benefit from a greater methodological diversity. Increasingly, qualitative methods have become mainstream in the study of leadership (Grint, 2011, p. 15), and have also been called for in the study of mindfulness (Choi & Leroy, 2015). In line with the philosophical assumptions underlying this dissertation, its methodological positioning is ideographic. The current research utilizes qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Qualitative analysis is appropriate in business research when the aim is to interpret and gain a holistic understanding of the issues studied (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). The decision to pursue qualitative research is based on the aim of capturing the accounts of leaders who have participated in mindfulness interventions of their experiences of mindfulness, principally the motivations and intentions directing their behavior, and to reveal interesting themes and patterns in the collected materials. Importantly, mindfulness practice is a subjective, first-person experience. Thus, the descriptions of leaders of their experiences of mindfulness training and practice were at the focus of this study, and for this context, the subjective self or the first person can provide a subjectively relevant account (Varela & Shear, 1999).

This qualitative research approaches the research problem and the research objective both conceptually and empirically. The conceptual part of this dissertation (Paper 1) takes a systematic literature review approach, analyzing the

findings of 30 prior studies on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices. The empirical part of this dissertation (Papers 2 and 3) takes a qualitative longitudinal intervention approach, by studying the pre-intervention assessments and post-intervention interviews of 62 leaders who participated in an eight-week long mindfulness training program.

Table 2 summarizes the used research methods.

Table 2.   Summary of research methods

	Conceptual research	**Empirical research**	
	Paper 1	**Paper 2**	**Paper 3**
Research design	Systematic literature review	Qualitative intervention research	Qualitative intervention research
Unit of analysis	Publications on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices	Organizational leaders who attend mindfulness training	Organizational leaders who attend mindfulness training
Data collection strategy	Single-method	Multi-method	Multi-method
Time horizon	Longitudinal (2009-2020)	Longitudinal (pre- and post-intervention)	Longitudinal (pre- and post-intervention)
Data	30 prior empirical studies	62 written assessments and 62 interviews	62 written assessments and 62 interviews
Analysis method	Thematic content analysis	Thematic content analysis	Thematic content analysis
Scientific reasoning	Inductive	Inductive	Inductive

Next, the chosen methods in the conceptual and empirical parts of the current research are discussed in detail, in terms of the research strategy and design, data collection, data analysis, and quality evaluation.

3.2   Conceptual research: Systematic literature review

The conceptual part of this dissertation is a systematic literature review, which was the first step in the doctoral dissertation process. The findings of the systematic literature review are reported in Paper 1.

As Tranfield et al. (2003) state, the literature review is a key tool in management research to manage the diversity of knowledge for a specific scholarly inquiry. To advance the current understanding of leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices, it made sense to conduct a systematic, integrative review. The review process followed the guidelines proposed by Tranfield et al. (2003) for a systematic literature review. Figure 2 illustrates the systematic literature review process.
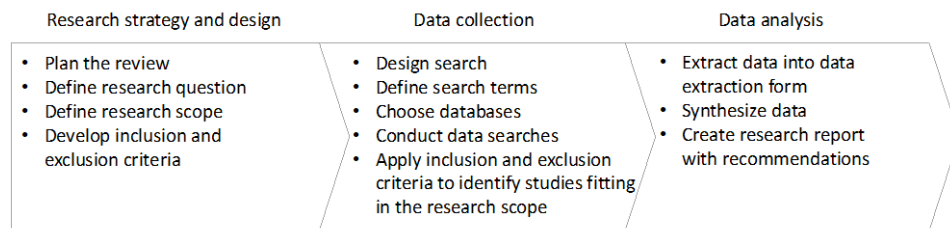
Figure 2.   Systematic literature review process

3.2.1   Research strategy and design

The primary objective of the conceptual study was to qualitatively review the available empirical literature on the topic —mindfulness for leaders— and offer a comprehensive analysis of the current state of knowledge, and priorities for future research. The study was designed to address the research question "What are the implications of mindfulness interventions and practices for leaders based on prior literature?".

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were first developed to delimit the study and to guide the identification of relevant studies fitting the review scope. A 'gold set', a small number of relevant articles identified early in the process, helped to develop

the criteria, provided terms, and assisted in testing the effectiveness of the search. Presenting a review without the operationalization of mindfulness as a practice was avoided. The studies had to be set in organizations and concern leaders who engaged in mindfulness practice. Thus, for an article to be included in this systematic literature review, it had to present an empirical study on mindfulness-based approaches and mindfulness practice among leaders (either a formal intervention or independent practice) in the organizational context. The studies had to be available in English and be published in peer-reviewed journals. No other quality criteria were set.

3.2.2   Data collection

The next step in the systematic literature review process was to obtain the data for analysis. Designing the data search involved defining the search terms and choosing the databases. A search was designed that would produce all of the available articles on the topic, but not generate a non-purposefully large mass of results. Different search strings were tested, and the search was refined in an iterative manner. The search string included Boolean operators AND / OR to combine synonyms or alternative terms related to the topic. The aim was to provide full, up-to-date, cross-disciplinary coverage of the available literature. Therefore, the selected databases had to include multidisciplinary reference databases and core medical and psychology databases.

To obtain the review sample, database searches across five databases (Ovid MEDLINE, ProQuest Central, APA PsycInfo, Scopus, and Web of Science) were conducted using the search string: mindfulness AND (leader OR leadership OR manager OR managerial OR supervisor OR supervisory) in the abstract, title and keywords, including all subject areas and years up until March 2020. The searches identified 1949 titles. In addition, the strategy of searching for additional references through personal inquiries was also used. Three additional, potentially relevant studies were obtained through personal inquiry.

Then, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to identify studies fitting in the review scope. After the removal of duplicates, 1150 studies were assessed for eligibility based on their titles or abstracts, and 35 studies were scrutinized based on the full texts. Studies that operationalized mindfulness solely as a trait or state were excluded as a distinct line of research (Eby et al., 2019). Theoretical and review articles were excluded, as were studies that focused on unrelated topics, contexts, or populations, such as coaching instead of mindfulness, parenting instead of organizations, or patients, students or general employees instead of

leaders. The focus of the review remained on the individual leader as a mindfulness practitioner, even though some of the reviewed studies included multilevel data. Publication types that did not fit the criteria for inclusion such as commentaries, letters, editorials, book chapters and dissertations were discarded, so too were two studies unavailable in English. Finally, a total of 30 empirical studies (28 journal articles and two unpublished conference papers expected to be published in peer-reviewed journals) were included in the review sample.

The search was reported using a PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta Analyses) flow diagram, as recommended by Booth et al. (2012) (Figure 3). It shows the different stages of the systematic search and indicates the number of titles excluded at each stage.
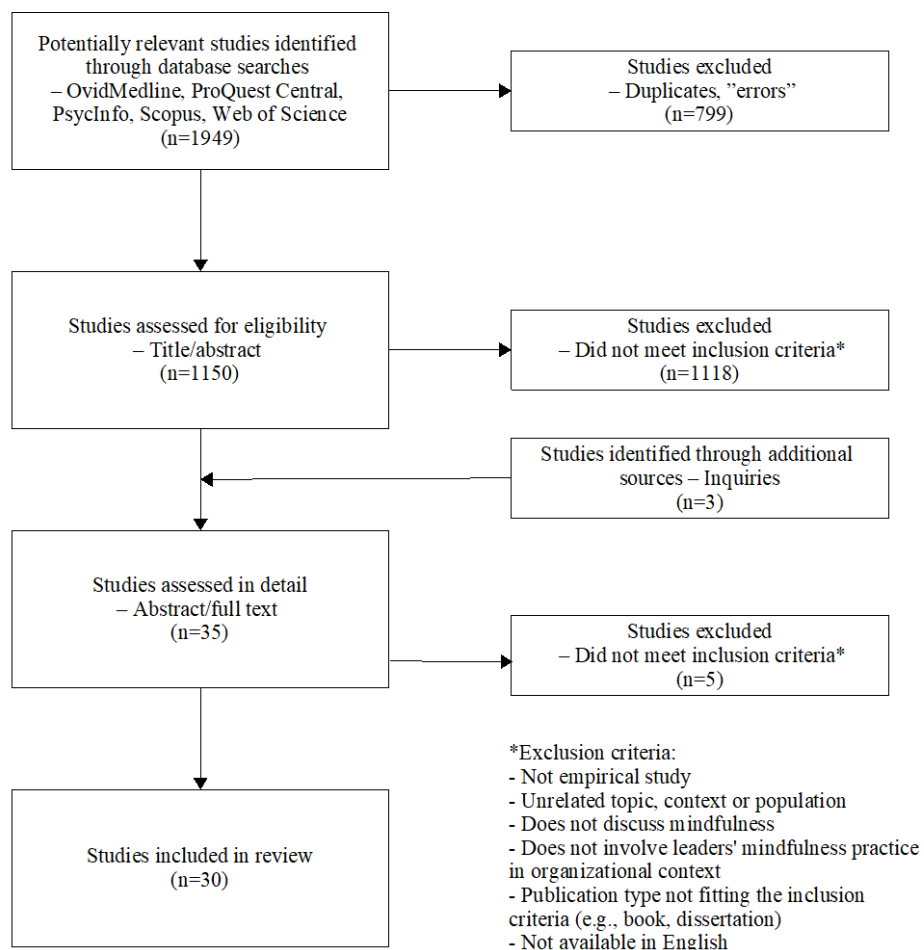
Figure 3. Flow diagram of systematic literature search (Urrila, 2022)

3.2.3   Data analysis

The analysis of the review material was guided by a data extraction form recommended by Tranfield et al. (2003) that was created in the beginning of the review process and developed throughout to guide the meaningful synthesis of information. Publication characteristics (author/s, year of publication, source title, impact factor), study characteristics (methodological approach, study design, informants, country), mindfulness operationalization (definition, questionnaire, type of intervention/practice), and leadership-related outcome-focus were coded for each study.

Thematic synthesis is a tried and tested process used in the systematic review of qualitative data. It progresses from coding raw data into descriptive and analytical themes. In the spirit of systematic reviewing, the method preserves a direct and transparent link between the primary studies and the conclusions of the review. (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

To support rigorous analysis and the presentation of findings in a transparent manner, and also to provide a meaningful synthesis of the findings, the reported outcomes of leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices were organized into a comprehensive framework in the form of a thematic data structure recommended by Gioia et al. (2012). The primary study-centric terms and codes presented as first-order concepts, and researcher-centric themes presented as second-order themes demonstrate the connections between the data and the emerging concepts, while the aggregate dimensions answer the research question on a theoretical level.

3.3   Empirical research: Qualitative intervention research

The current empirical research investigates leaders' experiences of mindfulness training through a qualitative intervention approach featuring a longitudinal pre-post design. The findings of the research are reported in Papers 2 and 3. Figure 4 illustrates the qualitative intervention research process.

Research strategy and design	Data collection	Data analysis
• Create a research plan • Set up partnership with a mindfulness training company • Agree on intervention delivery concerning content, lenght, intensity, participants, and schedule	• Engage participating organizations • Recruit individual participants • Deliver research interventions • Collect written materials at data collection point 1 • Conduct interviews at data collection point 2	• Transcribe interviews and prepare materials for analysis • Code data into themes • Analyse data to distill the meaning • Present and report findings

Figure 4. Qualitative intervention research process

3.3.1 Research strategy and design

The research process commenced in Spring 2017 with writing a research plan. Doctoral studies started in the Autumn 2017 when the intervention research design with multiple data collection points was defined. Longitudinal designs are being increasingly favored in leadership research in both quantitative and qualitative studies, because as opposed to cross-sectional designs, the long-term approach allows for processual analysis which is considered useful in examining leadership as a process (Grint, 2011). Interventions may be examined qualitatively, viewing interventions as "producing outcomes not directly but only via introducing resources into a setting which local actors may then use and in doing so may trigger mechanisms", and so might generate beneficial outcomes (Warren et al., 2020). Intervention participants are expected to be able to provide realist accounts of how the intervention works for them.

A partnership was set up in 2018 with a company that offers organizations programs in mindful leadership. An agreement was reached upon the delivery of mindfulness interventions for the current research. Details were agreed upon concerning the research intervention content, length, intensity, target participants, and schedule. Five Finnish organizations agreed to participate in this intervention research.

3.3.2 Data collection

Intervention

To obtain intervention data, five eight-week mindfulness training programs, 'interventions' were organized in 2019, one for each participating organization. Each intervention consisted of six 90-minute live group sessions delivered at an

approximately 1.5-week interval. The interventions were led by an experienced mindfulness instructor and business coach.

The research intervention was a 'corporate mindfulness program', aimed at corporate, and public, sector employees, intending to address the well-being- and performance-related challenges of the modern business, and working environment. The group sessions included psychoeducational content, guided mindfulness practices, self-reflection, and discussion. The purpose of the intervention was to increase the participants' knowledge of mindfulness and to introduce mindfulness practices. Each session contained information, but the emphasis was on experiencing and sharing experiences and supporting the participants' motivation for independent practice.

The mindfulness program was built around four main themes: Attention, Insight, Acceptance, and Resilience. As a practice-oriented approach, the program included different types of (formal) mindfulness meditation practices marked as 'basic', 'dynamic', 'calming', and 'short'; one of each type of practices per each main theme, in total 16. The theme of Attention included the formal practices of 'Breathing anchor', 'Walking', 'Body scanning', and 'Hourglass'. The theme entailed information on paying attention, and conscious awareness, the 'medical background' on mindfulness and its 'proven effects', the concept of the 'auto pilot mode', the physiology and neuropsychology of mindfulness, meditation, and breathing, direct experience, and the interconnectedness and separateness of thoughts, emotions, and the body. The theme contained self-reflective questions on sleeping habits and the motivation to practice mindfulness. The theme of Insight included the formal practices called 'You are not your thoughts', 'Moving in awareness', 'Body scanning (long)', and 'Water drops'. It entailed information about intention for practicing mindfulness, being mindful on a daily basis, interpretations, detaching from thoughts and emotions, and multitasking. There was a task on limiting and positive self-beliefs. The theme of Acceptance included the formal practices of 'Open awareness', 'Difficult situations', 'From head to toe', and '3-6-3'. There was information about 'the pillars of mindfulness' (non-judgmental attitude, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go), the qualities of awareness (open, conceptual, and embodied), and the experience of stress. The participants were given a self-reflective task to analyze causes of stress and one's reactions to it, and to experiment with mindfulness to observe one's stress. The theme of Resilience included the formal practices called 'Compassion', 'Continuously in balance', 'Mountain meditation', and 'This is me'. Information was provided on compassion and self-compassion. There were tasks on taking a 'self-compassion break' and keeping a gratitude journal.

The program also contained content about the motivation to practice mindfulness with the aim to help participants establish a regular mindfulness practice of their own preference. As the program was delivered for leaders, there were opportunities for discussion that was relevant for that audience, such as on leading a team.

The participants were given a handbook containing psychoeducational content and self-reflection practices. They received guidance for independent practice and had access to a mobile application featuring 16 mindfulness meditation recordings. The given recommendation for the daily individual practice was 10-15 minutes.

Participants

The participants of this study were 62 organizational leaders (56 female, 6 male) who participated in a mindfulness intervention offered to them by their organizations. The participants were drawn from five Finnish organizations across different industries. Twenty-two participants worked in health, seventeen in insurance, nine in forestry, ten in information technology, and four in production. A 'leader' was defined as a manager or supervisor who had direct reports. On average, the participating leaders had 17 direct reports. Their experience in leadership positions varied between one and 30 years (average 10 years). Their ages varied between 26 and 63 years (average 45 years). In terms of nationality, 52 informants were Finnish and 10 had other European nationalities. All participants actively participated in the intervention. Participation in the intervention was voluntary, and participants were not paid for their participation in the research.

Data

Data collection took place between January and November 2019, alongside the five rounds of intervention delivery. The data collection process was the same for all of the research interventions. Figure 5 illustrates the intervention and data collection procedures.
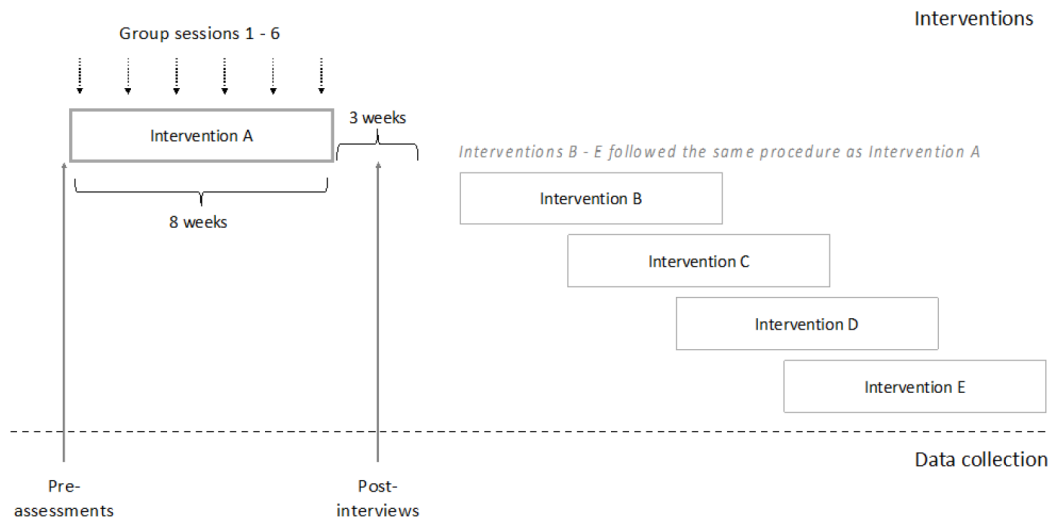
Figure 5.   Intervention and data collection procedures

Extensive qualitative data were gathered to provide an adequate account of the experience of the participants, who were seen as 'knowledgeable agents' willing and able to describe their organizational reality, thoughts, intentions and actions (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 17). The data for analysis were collected from 62 written pre-intervention assessments and 62 post-intervention interviews.

Written pre-tasks were completed by the intervention participants before the intervention commenced. The participants were asked to write a self-reflective text about their recent experience and their expectations for personal development and the mindfulness training (see Appendices for the pre-assessment task for participants). The lengths of the written tasks were typically one to two pages of typewritten text.

After the intervention ended (maximum three weeks), participants were interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to let the mindfulness training participants describe their experiences throughout the mindfulness training process, and describe the perceived impacts on their reality and actions. The interviews were semi-structured. The semi-structured interview method is the most popular research design in qualitative leadership research because it is applicable to all kinds of research questions and environments (Grint, 2011). I asked the participants open-ended questions about their experiences of mindfulness training. The interview guide followed a structure which allowed freedom and flexibility for the participants to describe their personal experience in a way that was meaningful for them, and for the interviewer to modify the interview guide according to the areas of interest brought up by the interviewees as the interviewing progressed (see Appendices for the interview guide). Everyone

was asked about their experiences with mindfulness training (e.g., What do you think of mindfulness as a learning experience?), how they understood and practiced mindfulness (e.g., Please describe what mindfulness means to you, in your terms?), how they viewed their development as a leader (e.g., What is the most important area of development for you personally as a leader?), and if and how they viewed that mindfulness could support them in their leader role (e.g., Do you feel the mindfulness training offered for leaders, and mindfulness practice, could support your leadership and how?). The interviewees were encouraged to talk openly, also outside the interview guide. Asking follow-up questions required stepping outside the guiding structure when the interviewer sensed an area of importance for the interviewee. Examples were asked for, in order to allow an in-depth exploration and enrich the interviewees' descriptions. The interview duration varied between 26 and 76 minutes (average 48 minutes). Thirty-nine interviews were conducted face-to-face and 23 remotely.

3.3.3   Data analysis

In the current research, each interviewee's personal experience of mindfulness training was studied with an aim to find meaning. As Patton (2014, p. 33) puts it: "Statisticians count it" and "Qualitative inquirers find meaning in it".

The data preparation and analysis processes were similar for Papers 2 and 3. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview transcripts and written materials were downloaded into the NVivo software. To ensure the anonymity of interviewees, each interviewee was assigned a code which consisted of a letter according to their intervention group (A-E) and a participant number within the group. The interview excerpts in Papers 2 and 3 were labeled accordingly (e.g., A1).

The data analysis process started with open engagement with the materials. As the researcher, I immersed myself in the data to familiarize myself with the content. An initial engagement with the data had already begun in the interviewing phase, and notes were taken continuously with materials read several times. It became evident that the interviewed leaders' experiences covered multiple areas of life, and that they had experienced a wide range of benefits related to personal well-being (e.g., sleep improvement), work effectiveness (e.g., reduced multitasking), inner growth (e.g., clarified meaning of life). This gave a holistic understanding of the vast source of information available.

The leaders' descriptions of their experiences of mindfulness training were analyzed. Keeping in mind the focus on leadership-related matters, the data analysis process continued with a coding of the leaders' descriptions concerning their relations with followers. Paper 2 was developed based on the inductive analysis of the leaders' descriptions of perceived influences on leader-follower relations. The findings on the leaders' enhanced other-orientation across the cognitive, emotional and behavioral domains are reported in Paper 2. The research question of Paper 3 was formed based on the observations made during the development of Paper 2, in particular their keenness to share their newly-acquired knowledge and learning with their followers. The findings elaborated in Paper 3 concerned leaders' practices. Servant leadership themes emerged naturally from the data, and the follower-perspective seemed significant in many of the leaders' experiences. It was found that followers' well-being was a key priority for many leaders, and many interviewees said that they wanted to bring their newly-acquired mindfulness learning to their team. Early in the process of developing Paper 3, I started making hand-written notes about the observed connection to servant leadership. Therefore, a research question was formed that included an already established construct of 'servant leadership', and Paper 3 was framed in this context.

To distill the meaning that was in the data, in the coding process the raw data was classified into thematical categories in an iterative process. Themes and sub-themes were identified. Regular discussions between the researcher and the co-authors concerning the themes provided a deeper understanding of the findings. The method commonly known as the 'Gioia method' is suitable for research to be applied in the anti-positivistic way, and for the analysis of qualitative data that contains themes and processes to be revealed, rather than pre-defined variables (Gioia et al., 2012). The Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2012) was used as a toolkit to support the analysis and presentation of the qualitative research data in this research. Data structures were created to illustrate the connections between different levels of analysis. The informant-centric terms and codes presented as first-order concepts and the researcher-centric themes presented as second-order themes demonstrate the connections between the data and the emerging concepts, while the aggregate dimensions answer the research question on a theoretical level (Gioia et al., 2012). The Gioia method also facilitates new concept development by way of theoretical aggregation (i.e., the abstraction of codes into themes). Based on the findings, conceptual frameworks were developed for both studies.

3.4   Critical evaluation of the research choices

The evaluation of qualitative business research concerns its scientific nature, quality and trustworthiness (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Due to the unique kinds of data and data process of many qualitative studies, often in practice, the research evaluation process is tailored accordingly (Aaltio & Puusa, 2020). It is important to use good tools and be open about how the analysis has been carried out, and how the researcher has come up with the results. Nevertheless, a systematic evaluation of one's research choices and adoption of explicit evaluation criteria is recommended to increase transparency, and to facilitate discussion of the strengths and limitations of the research (Aaltio & Puusa, 2020; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). As Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) highlight, a researcher should use their adopted criteria to evaluate the research continuously during the research process, not only at the end, because then the applied evaluation criteria can guide the research towards achieving a higher quality.

Next, a (self-)critical evaluation is presented concerning the quality and trustworthiness of the current research, the subjectivity of the researcher, and the key concepts of the research.

3.4.1   Quality and trustworthiness

The primary goal of qualitative research like the current study is to learn about the subjective experiences of individuals. In qualitative research, it is not possible to make the same kinds of generalizations based on research outcomes as in positivist, quantitative research. More precisely, one can make analytical generalizations, which is distinct from statistical generalization, but rather says something general about the observed phenomenon. Thus, according to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015), qualitative research that relies on relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology should be evaluated using criteria that are developed to accommodate these philosophical assumptions, instead of using the traditional criteria consisting of the notions of validity, reliability and generalizability which are considered more suitable for evaluating quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed an alternative set of criteria which is based on the concept of trustworthiness. It has been suggested that attention to trustworthiness (i.e., dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability: Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is a key principle in establishing qualitative rigor, and especially important when dealing with large qualitative data sets (White et al., 2012). Dependability is concerned with the researcher's responsibility to offer information to the reader about the logical and traceable progress of the research process. Transferability

concerns the researcher's responsibility to demonstrate connections and some degree of similarity between the current and previous research. Credibility concerns the researcher's familiarity with the data and the sufficiency of the research materials to base claims and interpretations on. Confirmability concerns the idea that there are demonstrable linkages between the research materials, interpretations, and reality.

In this research, attention to quality and trustworthiness was established through the systematic planning and organization of the entire research project throughout the design, intervention delivery, data collection, data analysis, and reporting phases. In the data collection phase, for instance, following the principles of research ethics and the notion that research should be conducted with the participants' informed consent (i.e., that the participant enters the research study voluntarily, with information about what the research entails, what it means for them to take part, and what they are consenting to), the research participants were asked to read the information document prepared about the research and sign an Informed Consent form. In the document, the participants were provided with information about the data collection and handling procedures, and assured of the confidential nature of their participation. In the data analysis and reporting phases, data tables and data structures followed the guidelines proposed by Gioia et al. (2012), increasing rigor and providing transparency into the data and abstraction process (e.g., Aaltio & Puusa, 2020). Triangulation is a method used to increase the trustworthiness of the research by deploying multiple data sources, data types, methods, or researchers (e.g., Aaltio & Puusa, 2020), and was achieved in this research through collecting different types of data (written materials and interviews) from 62 individuals from five different organizations across five industries at two different data collection points of the intervention process (pre- and post-intervention). In addition, where co-authors were involved (Papers 2 and 3), the rationale for the thematic structure was discussed iteratively, which fostered transparency among the author team.

3.4.2   Subjectivity of the researcher

Recognizing and stating one's subjectivity as a researcher increases one's objectivity, and thus, the credibility of the research (Aaltio & Puusa, 2020). Realizing this requires reflexivity as a researcher. In this research, as the researcher I considered and exposed my background as a mindfulness instructor and practitioner. I also made the conscious choice early in the research process to remain in the researcher role and not get involved in the delivery of the research interventions. When interviewing the research informants, I was cautious not to

accentuate my expertise nor get into any value-laden discussions about the research topic with the informants.

3.4.3   Conceptual evaluation of 'mindfulness' as a research subject

In pursuing qualitative research on mindfulness, a conceptual evaluation is necessary. As discussed earlier, there remains no scholastic consensus on the definition of mindfulness, but instead numerous definitions exist (Choi & Leroy, 2015; King & Badham, 2019; Nilsson & Kazemi, 2016). Moreover, mindfulness may be placed, for instance, in a spiritual, meditation, neuroscience, or business background, in each of which it is granted to be treated differently (Gethin, 2015; Islam et al., 2017). Because of the heterogeneity, and the co-existence of several alternative perspectives from which mindfulness has been viewed, mindfulness can be described as a socially constructed phenomenon; Individuals see it differently, and the views of an organization and an individual on how and why it should be used may differ. Despite the heterogeneity and complexity of the concept, a dominant approach to study mindfulness has been to treat is as a straightforward attention-focused construct that can be measured using tools such as the MAAS (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The dominant approach has received considerable critique concerning the narrow understanding of the concept, as it has been proposed to reduce the originally interconnected mindfulness practice to a personal self-help technique, and to even invite ethical misconduct such as focusing attention on harmful goals (e.g., Badham & King, 2021; Islam et al., 2017; Purser & Milillo, 2015). Moreover, the positivist approach to assessing the influence of mindfulness-based interventions on individuals using predefined well-being and performance-related outcome measures has been proposed to overlook other types of implications of workplace mindfulness that cannot be measured via surveys (e.g., Choi & Leroy, 2015; Karjalainen et al., 2021).

To advance the research on mindfulness in work-related settings, in this research mindfulness has been seen as a developmental practice introduced via a formal intervention that occurs in the context of the organizational processes and relationships and could thus bear inter-individual implications, rather than be used for solely personal ends. Drawing from the interpersonal and collective conceptualizations of mindfulness (e.g., Badham & King, 2021; Skoranski et al., 2019), the analytical focus of this study was on the leaders' experiences in the context of their followers. The focus on the experiences of leaders who had been offered the opportunity by their organizations to voluntarily participate in a mindfulness training program, and who due to their roles naturally consider organizational, group and individual perspectives, offered valuable insight into

how mindfulness is interpreted in organizations (Ihl et al., 2020). It should be acknowledged that adopting a social constructivist understanding of the concept and deploying a qualitative approach have limitations, for instance the risk of revealing further conceptual complexity and not providing a view of more than 62 leaders working in as few as five organizations. When statistical measurement of variables or change (such as change in the psychological 'mindfulness' quality or any specific leadership-related outcome) is not possible nor the aim with a qualitative method, qualitative mindfulness intervention research focuses on understanding the individuals' mindfulness learnings, practices and experiences in depth, and identifying possible mechanisms that may bring about outcomes that could afterwards be measured by quantitative studies. All in all, the qualitative approach facilitated an open exploration of how leaders perceive mindfulness to manifest in interpersonal workplace relationships across multiple other-oriented dimensions and expressions of mindfulness at work.

3.4.4   Trendiness and timelessness of leadership research and development

As a subject of study, leadership, and its development, is at the same time trendy and timeless. Popular and commercialized leadership ideas are often criticized of being mere fashions that come and go (Guthey et al., 2022). They have been claimed to trivialize and positivize a complex phenomenon that leadership is (Alvesson & Einola, 2019). However, within the management learning and leadership development domain, novel and popular leadership approaches and fashions —such as mindfulness and servant leadership— are considered sociologically significant vehicles for individual and collective learning, because they respond to the demands of the present time and influence how people think and learn about leadership (Elkjaer, 2022; Guthey et al., 2022). In times of uncertainty, followers rely on their supervisors' support more than ever, and the improvement of leaders' well-being-related attitudes, values and behaviors have been listed as key focus areas to be integrated into future leadership development programs (Rudolph et al., 2021). This study presents mindfulness as a personal and timely vehicle for internalizing the constantly shifting expectations attached to good leadership (Guthey et al., 2022; Rooney et al., 2021; Rostron, 2022). Taken to the leadership context, mindfulness training may influence how people understand and learn about what might constitute good and wise leadership. However, the literature discussing the social and relational aspects of mindfulness in leadership is limited. Therefore, the focus of this study is on exploring if and how mindfulness can support the development of leaders' other-orientation.

Among relational and ethics-based theoretical approaches to leadership that shift the focus from the individual leader to the follower and the community, servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970) is an other-oriented approach that places primary focus on supporting the development and well-being of others (Lemoine et al., 2019). It also entails a particular emphasis on the development of self-awareness, as the leader needs to understand who they are and what motivates them to serve and lead (Chen et al., 2015). Literature indicates that genuine other-orientation may be difficult to develop through traditional leader training (Lange & Rowold, 2019; Lemoine et al., 2019; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). So, it has been proposed (e.g., Reb et al., 2015) that mindfulness-based leadership development interventions could strengthen leaders' desire to serve, specifically because mindfulness practice can increase the human capacity of objectivity about one's internal experience, which enables taking another('s) perspective (Shapiro et al, 2006).

The systematic development of leaders through mindfulness could be explained by the very pragmatic orientation of mindfulness to improve the lives of the leaders themselves (Reb & Atkins, 2015). Mindfulness is centered around an individual-level practice, and (until recently) has been studied mostly as an intra-individual, within-person phenomenon. Leadership, on the contrary, is an inherently inter-individual phenomenon of which existence is reliant on other people. Leadership development, respectively, concerns both the development of the individual leader and the broader entity of leadership including people that part of the leader's group of influence. It is only natural that a leader aspires to develop oneself to benefit others. Why, then, does one want to study mindfulness as a potentially effective leadership development method? One might think that some other kind of development initiative designed primarily to address leadership of others (e.g., servant leadership training, interpersonal communication course, coaching focused on people leadership issues, power-sharing activity) would make an obviously better candidate for a particularly good leadership development method. There seems to be a paradox, yet this study is grounded on the idea that mindfulness could help individuals become better leaders of people.

When viewed as a value-based developmental practice and interpersonal phenomenon that is cultivated in relationships (such as between leaders and followers), mindfulness taps to the timeless principles of leadership. Recent mindfulness literature has demonstrable evidence that mindfulness training encourages participants to engage in a holistic practice of paying attention with a caring intention to become aware of oneself (one's thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behaviors) and one's interpersonal relationships (Shapiro & Carlson, 2017; Skoranski et al., 2019). Given that there is a need to develop leaders who strive to develop a higher-level of awareness of their own values, motivations and goals

(Hunter, 2015; Neal, 2018) and who are aware of their followers' needs and interests and even willing to selflessly put their own needs aside for the benefit of others (e.g., Eva et al., 2019; Neubert et al., 2022; Reb et al., 2015), an inherent link between mindfulness and an other-oriented leadership style, such as servant leadership, has been suggested (e.g., Reb et al., 2015). Developing oneself (first) to serve others may thus be required, as "you cannot give from an empty cup". As this may be as true as it is easier-said-than-done, it seemed logical to study leaders who voluntarily engaged in a practice-based, inside-out way of development.

4 RESEARCH PAPERS: SUMMARIES OF FINDINGS

This compilation dissertation consists of three papers that investigate different aspects of mindfulness training as a leadership and leader development intervention. The purpose of this section is to introduce the papers and summarize the findings of the papers. The aim here is not to provide any theoretical or methodological background information nor discuss the contributions of the individual works. The theoretical background and methodology are provided in the separate sections of the dissertation. The implications of the research findings are discussed in the *Discussion* section. The full texts of the papers can be found in the *Appendices* of the dissertation (Paper 1, Paper 2, Paper 3). The author contributions are recognized in the *Appendices* of the dissertation (Author contributions).

Paper 1, "From personal wellbeing to relationships: A systematic review on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices for leaders" is a single-authored systematic literature review article. It was published in 2022 in the peer reviewed *Human Resource Management Review* journal (Chartered Association of Business Schools, CABS, AJG2021 ranking 3, Finnish Publication Forum ranking 1). An earlier version of Paper 1 was presented and published in the conference proceedings of the 79th annual meeting of the Academy of Management (AoM) in 2019 in Boston.

Paper 2, "Mindfulness-trained leaders' experiences of their enhanced social awareness" is a co-authored empirical study. The first author is Laura Urrila. The second author is Professor Liisa Mäkelä from the School of Management, University of Vaasa (Finland). At the time of writing this dissertation introduction, a revised version of the paper has been accepted for publication in the peer reviewed *Management Learning* journal (CABS AJG2021 ranking 3, Finnish Publication Forum ranking 2). An earlier version of Paper 2 was presented and published in the conference proceedings of the European Academy of Management (EURAM) in 2020 (online).

Paper 3, "Leadership practices of mindfulness-trained leaders intending to serve the team" is a co-authored empirical study. The first author is Laura Urrila. The second author is Associate Professor Nathan Eva from the Monash Business School, Monash University (Australia). An earlier version of Paper 3 was presented and published in the conference proceedings of the 82nd annual meeting of the Academy of Management (AoM) in August 2022 in Seattle. At the time of writing this dissertation introduction, an embellished version of Paper 3 is under consideration for publication (status 'Awaiting Reviewer Assignment') in a top-tier

management journal (CABS AJG2021 ranking 4*, Finnish Publication Forum ranking 2).

4.1   Paper 1: "From personal wellbeing to relationships: A systematic review on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders"

Paper 1 focuses on investigating the implications of mindfulness interventions and practices for leaders by synthesizing the findings of prior empirical studies.

The reviewed material of 30 empirical articles included twelve quantitative, thirteen qualitative, and five mixed-method studies. The reviewed studies were published in 2009-2020, most of them in management and health publications. The studies focused on assessing the effects of leaders' mindfulness practice and displayed a variety of mindfulness interventions and practices that differed in terms of length, intensity, delivery method and content. All of the reviewed quantitative studies (and four of the five mixed methods studies) involved a mindfulness-based intervention and a survey. Of the reviewed qualitative studies, half were intervention studies and half involved an independent mindfulness-based practice occurring outside a formal intervention context. The reviewed studies assessed if mindfulness interventions and practices could build individual leadership capabilities related to leaders' personal resources, leadership effectiveness, leadership qualities and behaviors, leadership relationships, and leadership ethics. Some of the reviewed studies had a narrow focus, although it was quite common among the studies to measure multiple outcomes.

The results of the analysis reveal that leaders' mindfulness practice can affect various developmental outcomes for leaders. The findings comprise 28 outcomes which were categorized into four thematic clusters according to areas of impact (personal well-being, work productivity, relationships, and inner growth) across two dimensions (essential and transformative). First, roughly 40% of the reviewed studies focused primarily on evaluating the impact of mindfulness practice on leader well-being. Notably, research evidence shows that mindfulness practice can extend the personal resources of individuals in high-stress roles at top and middle management levels, and that mindfulness is suited for environments like healthcare and the corporate world. For instance, several of the reviewed quantitative studies found improvements in self-reported stress following a mindfulness program. Second, numerous reviewed studies assessed the impact of mindfulness practice on leaders' work productivity and performance. For instance, mindfulness practice was reported to affect leaders' information processing and

cognitive functioning in the behavioral and physiological domains. Third, the review revealed various findings related to leaders' interpersonal relationships, and illustrated that changes in how leaders think, feel and act around other people as a result of practicing mindfulness contribute to maintaining high-quality professional relationships. Several studies reported the results of mindfulness practice on social/contextual awareness and engaging with others. For instance, it was reported that leaders who had participated in interventions experienced a reduced focus on themselves in the work context. Fourth, the impact of mindfulness practice on leaders' inner growth was addressed by several of the reviewed qualitative studies. For example, it was reported that open awareness practice enhanced leaders' awareness of their personal experience and brought a sense of connectedness, safety, appreciation and gratitude. Overall, the reviewed studies reported generally positive results immediately after a mindfulness intervention or practice period, which indicates they were effective in achieving the targeted outcomes. A few studies reported not having achieved all of the measured outcomes, indicating that a particular form of mindfulness practice was more effective for some of the targeted outcomes than others.

As an important finding, the review revealed outcomes that seemed to be equally important yet critically distinct. This observation persuaded me to present the findings of prior studies across two dimensions: essential and transformative. On one dimension (essential), research participants' experience of mindfulness practice was seen as a helpful, essential technique for stressful and demanding work situations appearing to affect leader well-being and work productivity. The other dimension (transformative) reflects the reviewed studies presenting mindfulness practice as having a more profound role in helping leaders to reflect on their inner life and facilitating their interaction with other people. Reflecting these aspects, a conceptual framework (Figure 6) was created that facilitates looking beyond well-being to other aspects of leadership more broadly.
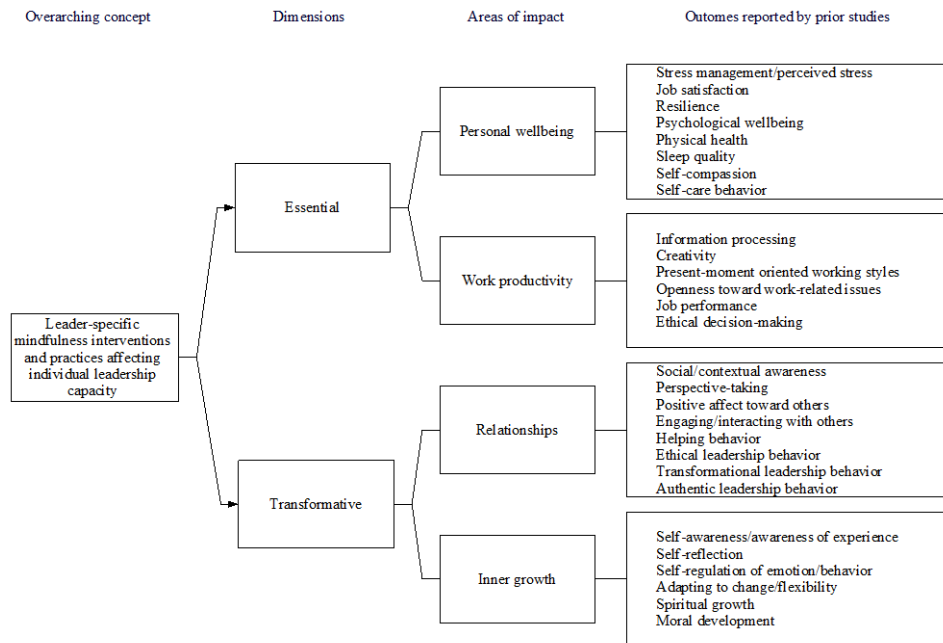
Figure 6.   Impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders (Urrila, 2022)

4.2   Paper 2: "Mindfulness-trained leaders' experiences of their enhanced social awareness"

Paper 2 focuses on examining whether and how mindfulness training contributes to the development of leaders' social awareness by studying the experiences of 62 leaders who participated in an eight-week-long mindfulness training program.

In the first part of the findings, the leaders' pre-intervention expectations of mindfulness training are presented to illuminate the context in which the leaders worked and their leadership and leader development priorities concerning mindfulness training. It is reported that the leaders hoped that mindfulness training could improve the overall well-being of themselves and the entire team, their focusing abilities and work performance, connecting with others, and personal leader development.

The second part of the findings presents the post-intervention interview findings. Here, the focus is on the leaders' expressions of social awareness across three related yet distinct dimensions—other-oriented thought, other-oriented emotion, and other-oriented behavior. The analytical focus is on the leaders' experiences in the context of their followers. The findings on other-oriented thought capture the

leaders' experiences in the cognitive domain regarding perceptions and attitudes: present-moment orientation, perspective-taking, and redefining 'self' as leader. The findings on other-oriented emotion cover the affective domain involving the management of feelings and emotional states: emotional awareness, emotional self-regulation, and cultivating positive emotions. The findings on other-oriented behavior capture the leaders' experiences in the behavioral domain: thoughtful communication, facilitating mindful work environment, and sharing.

A systematic approach by Gioia et al. (2012) was utilized to analyze the data and present findings through a thematic data structure (Figure 7).
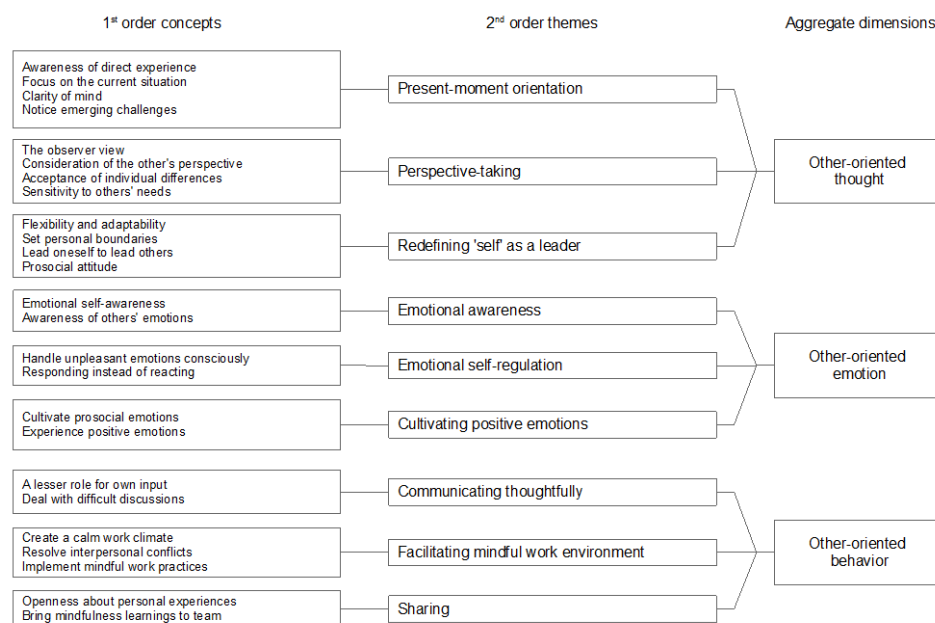
Figure 7.   Data structure for leaders' experiences of mindfulness training

In the final part of the findings, the leaders' understandings of mindfulness as a leader development method are discussed. The mindfulness learning the leaders had acquired seemed to refine the leaders' expectations of mindfulness. The more knowledge the leaders acquired about mindfulness, the less specific and instrumental became the outcomes they expected from mindfulness. The leaders perceived that the enhanced other-orientations induced by mindfulness training strengthened their views of themselves as someone who could positively influence challenging work situations. They also commonly recognized that the eight-week training was only the beginning of a longer development process. The positive experiences during the training program motivated the leaders to consider

mindfulness as a practice they would like to engage in on long-term. After the intervention, the leaders discussed their desire to establish practical personal mindfulness practice. The leaders also shared their reflections on the distinct characteristics of mindfulness training as a method of leadership and leader development among other HRD programs that they had attended in the past. Commonly, the focus on the development of self-views and awareness was seen as a unique feature of mindfulness. Overall, the leaders found that mindfulness assisted an essential role for effective leaders of positively influencing their followers, which culminates in the enhanced presence for and awareness of others.

4.3   Paper 3: "Leadership practices of mindfulness-trained leaders intending to serve the team"

Paper 3 focuses on exploring if and how mindfulness interventions and practices aimed at leaders might foster servant leadership development by studying the experiences of 62 organizational leaders who participated in an eight-week-long mindfulness training program.

The findings on pre-intervention leadership challenges reported in the written tasks before the mindfulness program started are presented. The leaders predominantly experienced struggles with demanding workloads, difficult relationships with followers, and challenges with team functioning, all of which influenced how they engaged in leadership. All three of these pre-intervention themes illustrate that many of the leaders had a motivation to serve their followers, however, they faced several barriers to implementing an other-oriented leadership approach. Thus, while there seemed to be a will, the workable strategies and tools to engage in servant leadership were missing.

The findings on post-intervention servant leadership practices are discussed in detail in three sections focusing on the self, the follower, and the team. An analysis of the post-intervention interviews identified 23 servant leadership behaviors across six themes. Leaders reported engaging in newly acquired servant leader behaviors while integrating mindfulness into their leadership work, which benefited themselves (self-awareness and self-care), their followers (relationship building, follower development and well-being), and their teams (culture) (Figure 8). First, leaders used mindfulness to focus on self so that the leader is motivated and has a capacity to engage in servant leadership behaviors, which is consistent with the tenets of servant leadership. Leaders viewed mindfulness as a holistic personal development approach entailing the key themes of self-awareness and self-care. For example, leaders brought up the theme of authenticity, arguing that

mindfulness had been helpful in understanding and maintaining their authenticity in the workplace. Second, it is reported that many leaders found that mindfulness had changed their experience of how they lead others. They understood that without understanding who they are (self-awareness) and having capacity (self-care), they could not trust themselves to fully support their employees, which is a key insight for servant leaders. The interviewed leaders recognized that mindfulness skills were required as a precursor to support followers in their day-to-day leadership work and improve the quality of leader-follower relations, which are reflected in the themes of relationship building, follower development, and follower well-being. For instance, interviewees understood that having acquired mindfulness learnings and useful tools to deal with various workplace challenges, they were in a key position to apply those learnings to help followers overcome adversity. Third, many of the leaders felt that mindfulness could benefit the culture of their team, not just their one-on-one interactions. Their desire was to create a positive working environment that is characterized by trust, appreciation, inspiration, and motivation, which is echoed in the theme of team culture. This aligns with the research on how servant leaders create a servant culture within their team. For instance, the interviewed leaders generally saw themselves as role models who influence other people, and believed that mindfulness offered opportunities for smarter working and helped develop a team that worked better together through encouraging collaboration.

In sum, despite facing several barriers to implementing an other-oriented leadership approach, it was found that the leaders keenly brought their newly acquired mindfulness learnings and practices to followers in one form or another, even when they did not have any prior experience or concrete idea of how mindfulness can be used in leadership.

1st order concepts   2nd order themes   Aggregate dimensions

Practice self-reflection
Maintain authenticity
Develop emotional skills
Gain transformative insights

Self-awareness

Establish personal mindfulness practice
Restore mental resources
Protect personal boundaries
Maintain healthy habits

Self-care

Developing oneself
as a servant leader

Dedicate time and attention to followers
Engage in active listening
Provide individualized support to followers
Share vulnerabilities
Support followers with interpersonal challenges

Relationship building

Mentor, coach, and guide
Develop followers' skills
Support followers' emotional development
Support followers' career development

Follower development

Serving the follower

Share knowledge about mindfulness
Introduce mindfulness practices
Encourage follower self-care
Help followers overcome adversity

Follower wellbeing

Servant leadership
practices of
mindfulness-trained
leaders

Model positive behaviors
Cultivate mutual appreciation
Encourage collaboration

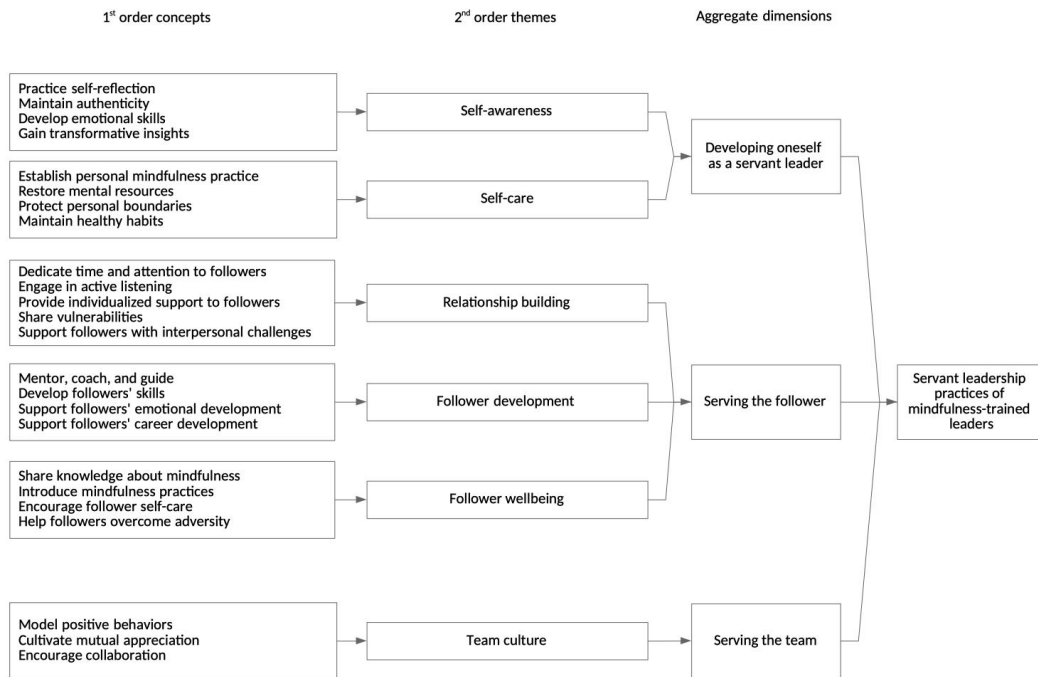Team culture

Serving the team

Figure 8. Data structure for the servant leadership practices of a mindfulness-trained leader

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical contributions

This dissertation set out to explore how mindfulness can support the development of leaders' other-orientation, which is an emerging area of scholarly attention within research on mindfulness in organizations. Despite the recognition that other-orientation and taking an interest in the needs of others may be seen as a key aspect of mindfulness in leadership (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016), prior research on mindfulness for social relations has been largely theoretical, and a thorough investigation has been lacking into how mindfulness may help leaders tap into their other-orientation in their role of leading others (e.g., Dietl & Reb, 2021; Roche et al., 2020; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). Drawing from the concepts of self- and social awareness and servant leadership (e.g., Eva et al., 2019), interpersonal and collective conceptualizations of mindfulness (e.g., Badham & King, 2021; Skoranski et al., 2019), the application of mindfulness in leadership (e.g., Roche et al., 2020), and leadership development (e.g., Day et al., 2021), the research problem was approached conceptually and empirically. The conceptual research (Paper 1) took a systematic literature review approach, by analyzing the findings of 30 prior studies on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices. The empirical research (Papers 2 and 3) took a qualitative longitudinal intervention approach, by studying the pre-intervention assessments and post-intervention interviews of 62 leaders who participated in an eight-week long mindfulness training program. A qualitative approach allowed for an open exploration of multiple other-oriented dimensions and expressions of mindfulness perceived by the leaders. The analytical focus was on the leaders' experiences in the context of their followers.

Figure 9 presents a synthesis of empirical findings and theoretical contributions of Papers 1-3. In sum, Paper 1 identifies the impacts of leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices based on prior studies, placing emphasis on the social relations aspect. Paper 2 provides leaders' accounts of their enhanced social awareness after mindfulness training, pointing to the need to further examine leaders' practices. Paper 3 reveals how leaders integrate mindfulness into their servant leadership practices, further confirming the value of mindfulness for leaders and leadership development. Together, the papers in this compilation dissertation offer novel empirical and theoretical insight into how mindfulness interventions and practices can strengthen leaders' other-orientation in the context of leading followers. Next, the contributions to the literature on mindfulness and leadership are discussed.
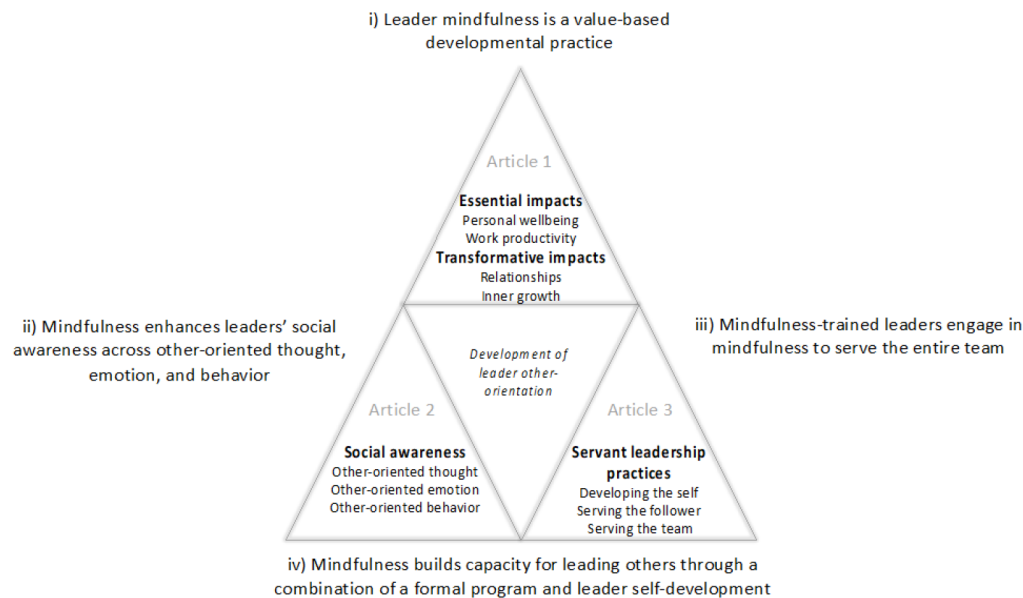
Figure 9.   Synthesis of empirical findings and theoretical contributions

5.1.1   Leader mindfulness is a value-based developmental practice

This dissertation clarifies leader mindfulness as a value-based developmental practice. In an attempt to help establish the theoretical foundations for the study of leader-specific mindfulness practice in the context of leadership and leader development, leader-specific mindfulness practice may be approached as being embedded in the individual leader development process. Paper 1 integrates prior knowledge on the implications of mindfulness interventions and practices for leaders, and identifies future research needs. Advancing research on mindfulness in the leadership context necessitated a review that would thoroughly discuss the added-value of mindfulness training as a potentially effective method that can help leaders develop the core capabilities required to manage job responsibilities and people effectively. Paper 1 is the first systematic literature review published with a primary focus on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices. A previous literature review (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019) on the outcomes of mindfulness and meditation interventions for leaders exists, but it is limited in terms of review material and not fully focused on mindfulness. The current review (Paper 1) includes 20 recent leader mindfulness studies published after 2016 which were not available to the previous review. Moreover, while the prior review (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019) emphasizes the occupational well-being perspective and overlooks the need for a more nuanced discussion on the leadership and leadership development concepts, the main argument of the current study is that leadership

and leadership development constitute the fundamental theoretical backdrop for the emergent research on leader-specific mindfulness.

What makes the application of mindfulness particularly relevant in a leader development context has not been adequately captured in literature on mindfulness in leadership. To facilitate an understanding of the viability of mindfulness as a method of improving the leadership capacity of leaders and to clarify which aspects make mindfulness practice particularly relevant for leaders, this dissertation looks at leaders' mindfulness practice through the lens of leader self-development. A novel definition is given in Paper 1 that captures its essence as a leader self-development approach that relies on leaders' motivation to develop through raising awareness of their experience to support not only themselves but other people. This dissertation proposes that leader-specific mindfulness practice is a *holistic leader self-development approach in which a leader engages in raising present-moment awareness of their experience as a leader with the intention to improve the lives of themselves and others* (Urrila, 2022).

Leader-specific mindfulness practice is proposed to be embedded in the continuous leader self-development process that is characterized by an individual leader's voluntary intention and motivation to actively expand their internal capacity (Reichard & Johnson, 2011) relating to their self-view as a leader that is known to be a critical factor in leadership effectiveness (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Mindfulness practice involves an active mind that is oriented towards connecting with oneself (Purser & Milillo, 2015). Mindfulness interventions aimed at leaders emphasize a systematic development of their internal qualities —the perceptual, emotional, and embodied sensing capacities (Hunter, 2015)— that can raise self-awareness and social awareness, which are key leadership capabilities to be developed through leader development (e.g., Day, 2000; Day & Dragoni, 2015). It has been suggested that those trained in contemplative practices would be best equipped to reflect on and describe their own experiences (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). Therefore, helping individuals to be aware of their behavior as a leader through mindfulness practices such as meditation and introspection may support leadership development behaviors such as reflection on leadership experiences and support a person's development to become a better leader. Mindfulness practice is expected to raise leaders' awareness of their own values, motivations, and direction, and increase the sense of interconnectedness, and therefore help leaders lead themselves to lead others well and make the right choices (Hunter, 2015). Interest has grown since the 2000s in ethical leadership in organizations (Brown et al., 2005). An increased awareness of oneself and one's context that can be cultivated through mindfulness interventions may foster ethical behavior among decision-makers (Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010), helping to fulfill the leader's

moral responsibility to improve not just their own lives and functioning, but also those of others (Ciulla & Forsyth, 2011). Paper 1 also contains references to the other-oriented nature of leaders' mindfulness practice, which is further elaborated in Paper 2 and Paper 3.

This research integrates findings reported by previous studies of the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices when applied to the leadership context. The review reported in Paper 1 identifies various leadership-related developmental outcomes of leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices across the areas of personal well-being, work productivity, relationships and inner growth, including self-care behavior, creativity, self-awareness, social/contextual awareness, ethical behavior, and adapting to change. A key finding is the importance of mindfulness practice not only for the often-targeted essential benefits of personal well-being and work productivity, but also for the desired development of transformative leadership capabilities such as self-awareness, social/contextual awareness, and ethical leadership behavior that can support leaders' relationships and inner growth. Importantly, a conceptual framework based on prior findings is provided that not only synthesizes the key themes and outcomes in a consistent way to inform researchers and practitioners alike on the potential implications of mindfulness for leader development, but also provides a resource for designing future studies and deriving implications for the application of mindfulness in leader development programs. This dissertation sets the phenomenon of mindfulness in the practical and theoretical context of leader and leadership development, through discussing the developmental nature of mindfulness practice (e.g., Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Purser & Milillo, 2015), and the dependence of effective leadership on the subjects possessing an awareness of themselves and others (e.g., Day & Dragoni, 2015; Reichard & Johnson, 2011).

Based on the findings of the review, in Paper 1 the theoretical and empirical shortcomings of prior research are identified, and a detailed future research agenda is recommended that encourages looking beyond well-being, and more broadly to other leadership criteria such as ethical decision-making, adapting to change, and leadership relationships. Importantly, future research on leader mindfulness should be clearly positioned in leadership development. Overall, advancing the relatively new and growing research on mindfulness in the context of leadership requires rigorous theoretical and empirical research efforts to gain a better understanding of the concept of mindfulness as a leader-specific practice, when and in what forms leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices may be most effective, what the essential and transformative outcomes of these practices are for leaders and their sphere of influence, and how and through which processes mindfulness can support individual and collective-level leadership development.

Through reviewing prior literature, this dissertation highlights the need to focus on understanding the experiential processes induced by mindfulness through which leaders learn and develop to become better leaders, instead of measurable outcomes alone. The empirical papers (Papers 2 and 3) of this dissertation respond to several of the calls made in Paper 1, including positioning research on leader mindfulness interventions firmly in the leadership and leader development literature, providing insight into the processes related to the developmental impacts of leader mindfulness training, and methodological innovation and rigor.

5.1.2 Mindfulness enhances leaders' social awareness across other-oriented thought, emotion, and behavior

This dissertation advances the understanding of how mindfulness learning and practice foster the development of leaders' social awareness across other-oriented thought, emotion, and behavior. Paper 2 builds on the key finding from Paper 1 that it is necessary to look beyond essential well-being and work productivity outcomes, and explore the transformative outcomes of mindfulness interventions and practices related to leaders' relationships and inner growth that involve enhanced self-awareness and social/contextual awareness. The leaders learned that mindfulness practice could help them become better leaders of people through raising their social awareness (Carden et al., 2019; Svalgaard, 2018). This research illustrates how leaders perceive mindfulness learning to foster the development of their social awareness in three interlinked domains of human functioning - the cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The findings reported in Paper 2 capture the leaders' experiences in the cognitive domain regarding perceptions and attitudes; in the affective domain involving the management of feelings and emotional states; and in the behavioral domain in fostering positive leadership behaviors. While prior studies report leaders' mindfulness practice as having some relational influences (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Rupprecht et al., 2019; Wasylkiw et al., 2015), this study provides unique evidence that leaders view mindfulness practice as a transformative experience that has a holistic influence on the development of their interpersonal capabilities and social awareness, as applied in social interactions with followers.

This dissertation builds on prior proposals suggesting that the awareness of the self and others, as enhanced by mindfulness, could significantly influence the individual leader's capacity to be an effective leader in today's global environment which is marked by major transformations and crises that threaten people's well-being, functioning and sense of safety, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic and war (e.g., Antonakis, 2021; Humphrey et al., 2008; Hyland et al., 2015; Mumford

et al., 2000). As Rudolph et al. (2021) note, in times of uncertainty followers rely on their supervisors' support more than ever, and the improvement of leaders' well-being-related attitudes, values and behaviors have been listed as key focus areas to be integrated into future leadership development programs. In essence, this research demonstrates how mindfulness learning and practice seem to encourage self-reflective observation leading to the development of perceptions and emotions, and integrating that understanding into leaders' everyday leadership practices and interactions with followers. Importantly, Paper 2 reveals that the leader practitioners do not view mindfulness as a value-neutral cognitive technique (or personal 'pocket tool') only to aid staying calm and focused when social situations require (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Karjalainen et al., 2021; Roche et al., 2020; Vu & Burton, 2020). Instead, the leaders viewed the mindfulness practice as facilitating an ongoing transformative personal development process closely linked to motivation and the intention to improve the relational leadership processes that they are key contributors to. By indicating that mindfulness can strengthen leaders' capacity to act for the collective good, the findings challenge the predominant emphasis of workplace mindfulness research and practice (e.g., Eby et al., 2019) and aid in re-establishing the interconnected ethical and relational elements of mindfulness feared lost in the adaptations and assessments of mindfulness interventions in corporate settings (e.g., Badham & King, 2021; Purser, 2018; Walsh, 2018).

Further expanding the contribution made by Paper 1, the empirical findings of this research contribute to the research on relational mindfulness within management and organization studies by clarifying mindfulness as a value-based developmental practice and interpersonal phenomenon (Purser, 2018; Skoranski et al., 2019). The empirical findings of Paper 2 support the argument that mindfulness is not merely an intra-individual phenomenon, but also an inter-individual one expressed in the dynamic everyday interactions that occur between people (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019). These findings extend those from studies on general populations (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007; Condon et al., 2013; Karremans et al., 2020) by offering an empirical insight into a specific work-related relational context (namely leadership), in which relationships may often be seen as non-voluntary and business-like, and lacking emotional expression (Humphrey et al., 2008).

5.1.3   Mindfulness-trained leaders engage in mindfulness to serve the entire team

This dissertation advances the understanding of how mindfulness-trained leaders engage in servant leadership behaviors by integrating mindfulness knowledge and

learnings into their leadership, making servant leadership work for themselves, their followers, and their teams. The pre-intervention assessment revealed that leaders face several barriers (such as demanding workloads and interpersonal difficulties among team members) to implementing an other-oriented leadership approach. The post-intervention interviews demonstrated that by integrating mindfulness knowledge and learnings into their leadership, leaders can circumvent these barriers. Leaders adopted leadership practices to lead and develop themselves, and to serve their followers and teams, as reported in Paper 3. Interestingly, the leaders keenly brought the newly acquired mindfulness learnings and practices to followers in one form or another, even when they did not have any prior experience or concrete idea of how mindfulness can be used in leadership. Raising the awareness of the self and others through mindfulness was a resource for leaders that helped them engage in supportive and caring behavior towards their followers. Inter-individual mindfulness involves actively engaging in the mindful way of being, which also seemed to be a key to servant leadership behavior, as someone's ability to be mindful in relationships (such as leader-follower) shows in how they act in real-life situations. These observations change the way we think about leader mindfulness interventions and servant leadership development, because they illustrate that the development of genuinely other-oriented leadership builds through the multi-level, mindful pathways of continuously applying practices of leading and developing oneself and others.

Paper 3 provides another aspect to leader-specific mindfulness by drawing from the recognition made in previous literature that mindfulness and servant leadership may be inherently linked (e.g., Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Reb et al., 2015). Supported by empirical findings related to the integration of mindfulness into servant leadership practices, Paper 3 builds a theoretical, empirical, and practical bridge between mindfulness and servant leadership development. Paper 3 contributes to the currently under-researched area of servant leader development (Eva et al., 2019) by showing how mindfulness training seems to strengthen the leader's awareness of their motivations and behaviors, and those around them. Providing mindfulness training to masses of employees is often not an option, nor is it the only way to promote mindfulness in organizations (Hülsheger, 2015). However, this dissertation provides a detailed understanding of the ways how mindfulness-trained leaders can integrate mindfulness learning into their leadership work in one-on-one individual events with followers as well as for groups of people, to support their well-being and to develop them professionally. Correspondingly, the servant leadership research (Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011) informs the research on mindfulness in the context of leader-follower relations (e.g., Reb et al., 2015). The servant leadership literature acknowledges that servant leadership exists both dyadically and across

the team (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014a). While it has been theorized that mindfulness training could affect not only intra-individual functioning, but also interpersonal behavior, dyadic and workgroup relationships, and team functioning (e.g., Good et al., 2016; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016), empirical research on mindfulness has focused mainly on the *intra*-individual influences and only recently seen an application to *inter*-individual processes (Skoranski et al., 2019). This study provides evidence of how mindfulness training for leaders materializes at both the intra-individual and the inter-individual levels in daily work. By examining the application of mindfulness at an inter-individual level through a servant leadership lens, the caring attitude (Shapiro & Carlson, 2017) and mindful way of being and seeing associated with mindfulness are manifested as leadership behaviors (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Karssiens et al., 2014). This was demonstrated throughout the findings, as the leaders' mindfulness practice at work tended to take the informal, 'off-the-meditation-seat' form, being embedded in the leaders' perceptions, motivations, intentions and actions, as leaders applied mindfulness to support and develop their followers.

The findings add to the limited understanding of the potential of mindfulness to support leadership development, i.e., the capacity of leaders to influence the collective leadership development through their practices and social interactions (e.g., Day et al., 2021). Scholars tend to agree that leaders influence employees and organizational outcomes on multiple levels (Good et al., 2016; Hülsheger, 2015; Leroy et al., 2018). However, how leader mindfulness training could potentially lead to the supportive, servant form of leadership on multiple organizational levels has not been closely examined by prior research. This research offers new knowledge by analyzing the multi-level leadership practices of mindfulness-trained leaders in the context of leading a team of followers. When examining the results from a *leader* development lens (Day, 2000), a key insight for most of the interviewed leaders was that to take care of others' needs, they first needed to meet their own (i.e., they could not give from an empty cup). It was evident from the pre-intervention challenges that it was difficult for the leaders to engage in follower-focused leadership behaviors because of demanding workloads, difficult relationships, and problems with team functioning. This research demonstrates that mindfulness training may allow leaders to reconceptualize their relationship with themselves, their workday, and their relationships with followers, in order to create a better balance to give them that space to engage in servant leadership. By reflecting on their work practices, the leaders were able to foster the self-care and growth needed to develop more holistically as a leader in order to serve others (Sendjaya, 2015). From a *leadership* development lens (Day & Dragoni, 2015), Paper 3 demonstrates that mindfulness gives leaders tools to focus on the development and well-being of their followers (Liden et al., 2008). At the collective

level, the focus of development shifts from individual to organizational (Badham & King, 2021; Eva et al., 2021), and for instance, sharing vulnerabilities in the team context could cultivate trust and interconnectedness in leader-follower relations, and also improve the team members' capacities.

5.1.4 Mindfulness helps leaders build their capacity for leading others holistically and through a combination of a formal program and leader self-development

Taken together, all three papers in this dissertation provide an understanding of how mindfulness helps leaders build their capacity for other-oriented leadership holistically across multiple domains of human experience, and through a combination of a formal program and leader self-development.

The conceptual Paper 1 first highlights the importance of understanding the leadership development processes or mechanisms that take place during a mindfulness intervention, in and beyond the formal intervention context, in order to gain insight regarding what it is that enables leaders to develop with mindfulness training. Even though leadership development inherently involves developmental outcomes and processes (Day et al., 2021), prior studies on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices have mostly focused on the outcomes (see Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019), and made few references to the processual aspects determining the developmental pathways like the antecedents and mechanisms involved. Such antecedents might be the employer commissioning formal mindfulness training for leaders and teams, and the format and delivery of the training program; while the mechanisms could be active participation in the training program, developing a personal way of practicing mindfulness, taking a reflective stance, and ultimately applying learning in the relational and organizational context.

Leader and leadership development literature acknowledges that to support individual leader development, there is a need for formalized efforts that promote self-development behaviors, such as self-reflection (Heslin & Keating, 2017; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). Proven leader development interventions are practice-based (Laccrenza et al., 2017), aligned with ongoing adult development (Day et al., 2014), and focused on the enhancement of holistic functioning (Day et al., 2014). Prior research on mindfulness for leaders indicates that while it is challenging for leaders to practice mindfulness regularly to maintain the positive outcomes, independent mindfulness practice should be regularly reinforced (e.g., Ceravolo & Raines, 2018; Wasylkiw et al., 2015). Both Kabat-Zinn (2003) and Davidson and

Kazniak (2015) emphasize the importance of engaging in practice voluntarily. To stress the importance of volution, Kabat-Zinn (2003, p. 147) eloquently describes formal programs as "launching platforms or particular kinds of scaffolding to invite cultivation and sustaining of attention in particular ways": "They are the menu, so to speak, not the meal; the map, rather than the territory, the traditional admonition being not to mistake the finger pointing at the moon for the moon." These notions imply that mindfulness-based leader development could partly occur outside the formal class-room context and evolve over time, and that the effectiveness of mindfulness training may depend on both the engagement of the individual participant and the organizational support they receive.

The empirical part of the dissertation substantiates the remarks made in Paper 1 about the role and nature of leader mindfulness interventions and practices as part of organizational leader and leadership development efforts. This research demonstrates that instead of providing training in specific skills through competency-based frameworks (a common practice within leadership development: Day et al., 2021), mindfulness knowledge and learning can be integrated into leader and leadership development to grow the leader holistically. Especially, the holistic development of one's attitudes and thinking, emotional skills, and purposeful action concerning oneself (internally, with a focus on leader development) and in the context of others (externally, with a focus on leadership development) assumes that the leader is willing to look inside and develop their self-views, which is corroborated by Papers 2 and 3. Prior research on leader mindfulness suggests that training specific leadership skills may not be the only way to influence leadership behavior in the context of formal programs (Lange & Rowold, 2019). As the findings of Paper 3 illustrate, mindfulness can strengthen qualities attached to a servant leader, such as operating from genuine motivation and a deep self-awareness to actualize one's desire to prioritize follower well-being and development (e.g., Eva et al., 2019), even when the mindfulness program does not contain any training on servant leadership, as is the case with the current research intervention.

Adding an important layer of insight, this research explicates how mindfulness supports the development of leaders' other-orientation through a combination of a formal program and leader self-development. As prior leadership development literature indicates, organizational support and resources are needed, but to develop and mature as a leader, it is imperative that the individual leader proactively engages in self-development behavior such as self-reflection on leadership experiences (Reichard & Johnson, 2011). In regard to organizational support, the current research intervention was offered to organizational leaders by their organizations on a voluntary basis, and the intervention itself was designed

to support independent engagement in mindfulness practices. Guidance and reminders were given throughout the intervention duration, and participants were provided infinite access to a mindfulness app which was perceived as an important maintaining factor by many participants. In regard to self-development, the findings of this research indicate that leaders who voluntarily attend mindfulness training are eager to practice mindfulness (both formally and informally) outside of the training setting, to reflect on their learning, and to apply the learning in their day-to-day leadership work involving followers. Leader (self-) development is a characteristically continuous process that can occur experientially in on-the-job leadership situations (e.g., Day et al., 2021; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). Svalgaard (2018) further argues that (voluntary) mindful awareness of the actual situations that individuals must face at work outside of the formal training is a key to sustained self- and social awareness, and recognized to evolve and develop through complex developmental processes (e.g., Carden et al., 2021). Extending the findings of Svalgaard (2018), the findings of Paper 2 suggest that active participation in a formal eight-week-long mindfulness training program can be an important developmental stepping-stone (or a 'launching platform': Kabat-Zinn, 2003) to improved and sustained self- and social awareness, as it offers knowledge, expert guidance, and support for independent practice which often takes an informal ('off-the-meditation-seat') form amidst dynamic day-to-day social interactions. As a key insight from the current research —which departs greatly from the outcome-focused quick fix thinking attached to organizational mindfulness by many critical voices (e.g., Karjalainen et al., 2021)— this research indicates that engaging in the practice can guide leaders to understand that an eight-week-long training program may be only the beginning of a continuous developmental process toward improved (work) life, enhanced self-awareness, and becoming a more other-oriented leader.

In sum, while prior research has examined leader mindfulness interventions with much focus placed on outcomes but few references to the processes, this research highlights developmental pathways with the potential to build leaders' capacity for other-oriented leadership. Figure 10 illustrates that the application of mindfulness for leaders may be approached as being embedded in the leadership development process which entails formalized development efforts (a practice-based mindfulness program) and leader self-development (rooted in motivation of the leader to develop themselves), and a focus on leader development (intra-individual processes) and leadership development (inter-individual and social processes). This research suggests that mindfulness-based leader and leadership development necessitates both organizational support and formal programs, and that the leader actively attends the provided class-room sessions, takes a reflective stance, and voluntarily engages in regular independent mindfulness practice. Overall, this

research integrates novel empirical knowledge into a coherent whole, and shapes how mindfulness training is understood and defined as a method for holistic leader and leadership development that can enhance leaders' genuine other-orientation when leaders willingly extend personal learning to benefit their followers.
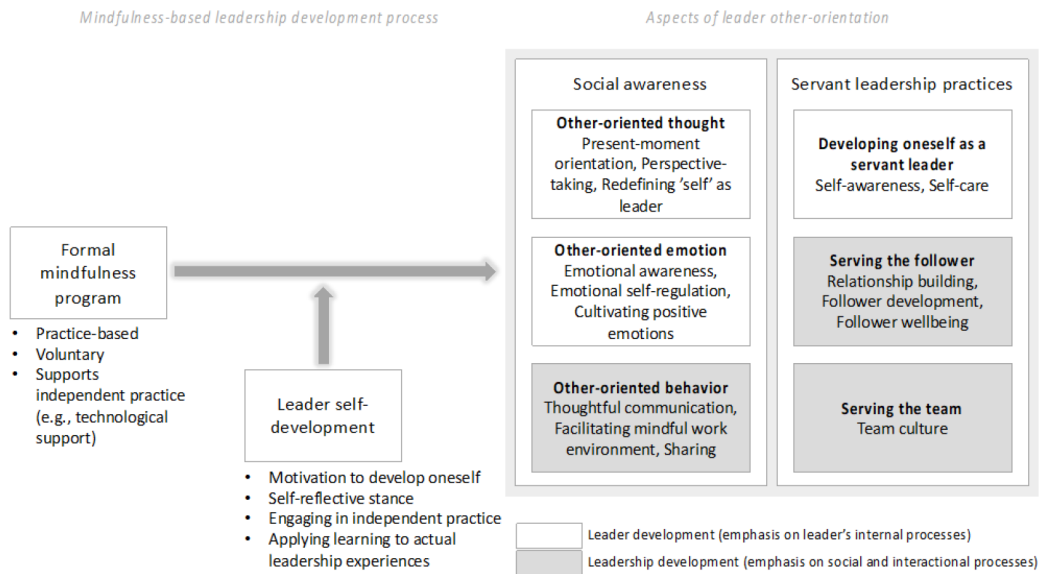
Figure 10. Mindfulness-based leadership development process and aspects of leader other-orientation

5.2   Limitations and future research recommendations

Despite the many strengths of this research (such as its pre- and post-intervention design, rich, multi-channel qualitative material, and large number of participants), there are some limitations. First, the main limitation —but also strength— concerns the analytical focus of the current empirical research (Papers 2 and 3) guided by research questions which investigate how leaders integrated mindfulness into their day-to-day leadership work, essentially involving the leadership of a team of followers. It should be highlighted that even though it became clear during the analytical process that leaders viewed personal well-being to be a key aspect in supporting the leadership of others, personal well-being and task productivity related findings (such as perceived reduced work stress, improved sleep quality, and reduced multi-tasking) were not the focus of analysis and not reported separately.

Second, this study did not measure changes in pre-defined qualities or behaviors, as there was no pre-determined leadership development intended. Moreover, it is likely that mindfulness and mindfulness practice involve impacts and processes

taking various shapes and forms which cannot be captured by statistical survey studies (Choi & Leroy, 2015; Reb et al., 2015). Thus, leaders' descriptions of their practices of applying mindfulness were analyzed. Themes were allowed to emerge from the data, and the qualitative intervention research approach allowed for an open exploration of the experienced impacts and potential mechanisms of mindfulness training. Mechanisms are tendencies and can be seen as "the consequences of people engaging with the resources of a program or intervention in a certain context", which could potentially bring about outcomes (Warren et al., 2020, p. 3). Therefore, it was meaningful to explore how the leaders described the relevance of mindfulness training for them in their leader role, how they applied the learning, and how they perceived that the application of mindfulness might generate beneficial, subjectively experienced outcomes. Even though causality is not claimed in the current research or in qualitative research in general (Patton, 2014), the longitudinal pre-post design offered a way to qualitatively analyze the baseline situation and follow up the intervention participants' perceived development. Especially, it was valuable to gain an understanding of the organizational context in which the leaders were situated, in relation to their experience of mindfulness, their work-related challenges, and their expectations prior to mindfulness training.

Third, this dissertation did not focus on second-person views such as those of followers, on how they perceived the leader to have changed or display mindfulness or leadership. Instead, the aim was to capture the lived experience of a human who experiences it as subjectively relevant, and for which the subjective self, the first person, can provide an account (Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Varela & Shear, 1999). The focus was on the first-person experience to understand the ongoing, conscious experiences of leaders' mental events, principally the motivations and intentions directing their behavior (Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Varela & Shear, 1999). Personal interviews focusing on individuals' perceptions of themselves in relation to others could be subject to so-called halo effects, meaning that the enhanced social behaviors of the interviewees may, for instance, be over-emphasized when the behavior is self-reported, as opposed to when being assessed by another person (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). However, the information from leaders on their mental and behavioral processes presented by the current analysis could be obtained only by studying the leaders' first-person accounts. Future research might investigate how mindfulness practice affects the quality of dyadic and workgroup relationships at multiple levels (Good et al., 2016; Hülsheger, 2015). This might be achieved by qualitatively examining followers' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (a considerable time) after they and/or their leaders attend mindfulness training. Future research could also

explore how team mindfulness (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018) develops as a result of leader mindfulness training.

Fourth, the focus of this dissertation was on the leaders' experiences described by them before the mindfulness training took place and immediately after. Investigations of the longer-term relational impacts of mindfulness training on leadership is encouraged (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015), and follow-up interviews or surveys could be conducted after six or twelve months, or even several years after the intervention.

Fifth, it should be noted that servant leadership offers just one possible theoretical lens through which to study mindfulness-trained leaders' other-orientation, rooted in their intentions and practices of prioritizing their followers' well-being and growth. The study reported in Paper 3 was framed with servant leadership, as servant leadership themes emerged more naturally from the data than alternate leadership theories. Specifically, "servant leadership is distinct from other value-based leadership approaches in terms of its overarching motive and objective" to serve followers (Eva et al., 2019, p. 114). Transformative leadership theory was seen as too performance-oriented to help sufficiently explain the leaders' experiences with followers. Ethical leadership theory was too narrowly focused on leadership ethics and following rules, which were not emphasized in the interviewees' experiences. Authentic leadership theory would not have captured the follower-perspective that emerged so significantly in many of the interviewed leaders' experiences (see Lemoine et al., 2019 for differences between these theories).

Sixth, the potential limitations of the research setting should be considered. Participation in the current research intervention was, as is typical of mindfulness programs, voluntary (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). Self-selection may have led to the participants being more pro-mindfulness than a randomly selected leader population (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015), and participants in mindfulness interventions who perceive the experience positively may be more enthusiastic about taking part in research than those who had a negative experience (Rupprecht et al., 2019). Interviewees may also provide answers they think the interviewer wants to hear (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). Furthermore, female participants dominated the population of the current study, which is perhaps telling of the popularity of workplace mindfulness among women. Future studies might balance these potential biases by seeking the views of individuals who did not agree to be interviewed or who dropped out from the program, constructing samples with equal numbers of female and male informants, and exploring the obstacles to imparting the value of mindfulness.

Finally, workplace mindfulness interventions are heterogenous in terms of length and intensity, and often tailored according to the requirements of the purchasing organization. Both the content and context of the intervention may influence the results (Bartlett et al., 2019). The current research intervention did not have a particular emphasis, for instance on stress-reduction or spirituality (King & Badham, 2018; Shonin and Van Gordon, 2015). The heterogeneity of the different mindfulness programs available and not being able to control how individuals practice what they learn complicate comparison (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015), but supports the assessment of their effectiveness in ways that can accommodate accounts of subjective experiences as has been done in this research. In the current research intervention, regular home practice was encouraged, which is an important element of mindfulness interventions (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). The participants' experiences may have been different had the participants not been provided support and a mobile application to encourage independent practice. Practicing mindfulness is a personal and contextual choice that practitioners independently make (Vu & Gill, 2018, p. 155), as described by our interviewees. Because the results of organizational interventions are "products of multiple intervention mechanisms interacting with the specific organizational contexts" (Simonsen Abildgaard et al., 2020, p. 1340), future studies might also address the context of the intervention.

5.3   Practical and societal implications

Understanding mindfulness as an inter-individual phenomenon is significant for the practice of leadership, as leadership is relational and takes place in leader-follower interactions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Good et al., 2015). The findings of this dissertation confirm that mindfulness knowledge and practice can strengthen leaders' prosocial intentions and behavior in relation to followers.

The findings of this dissertation are particularly useful for HR managers and development professionals evaluating and selecting leader and leadership development interventions. By investing in mindfulness training for leaders, they invest in their entire organization. Leader development programs with a strong mindfulness component can effectively develop the transformative capabilities of individual leaders because the programs are practice-based (Laccrenza et al., 2017), encourage self-reflection of leadership experiences (Reichard & Johnson, 2011), are intertwined in the continuous processes of human development and individual leader development (Day & Dragoni, 2015), and encourage an accumulation of self-awareness over time (e.g., Reichard & Johnson, 2011). As a voluntary personal practice embedded in the continuous leader self-development

process, mindfulness can be helpful for leaders who are interested in mindfulness and motivated to develop themselves and their teams. As demonstrated in the findings of this dissertation, mindfulness training creates a trickle-down effect, where leaders actively engage their followers in mindfulness practice. However, while training leaders in mindfulness appears as a viable method to strengthen leaders' other-orientation, it remains at the leaders' discretion to decide how to integrate the teachings into their lives, in order to support their personal development and professional relationships. To make the most of what mindfulness has to offer for leadership, awareness should be raised in organizations. Employers should provide leaders and employees with information on the individual and interpersonal benefits of the practice. Specifically, HR managers need to communicate the empirical research on mindfulness as an impactful, holistic, and accessible leader self-development approach that can develop leadership by influencing how leaders think and feel about themselves as leaders in the context of their followers, as well as change behaviors and potentially positively affect the quality of leadership. However, it is always worthwhile remembering that participatory organizational interventions are complex and contextual processes, and therefore outcomes can vary in different organizations and situations (Simonsen Abildgaard et al., 2020).

This dissertation also has implications for mindfulness and leadership coaches. It confirms the need for formalized leader development approaches that address the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of leaders' holistic functioning. Furthermore, there is a need for mindfulness training tailored for leader audiences to strengthen leaders' abilities to support and develop their followers. Such training should contain leader-specific content, engage them in self- and social awareness through self-reflection practices that strengthen the capacity for introspection, develop personal and relational skills overlooked by traditional leadership training, and help cultivate workplace attitudes such as acceptance and kindness. Technological tools that help practitioners engage despite tight schedules should be built into the design and delivery of mindfulness interventions for leaders. Moreover, this kind of training should be a forum to discuss leadership intentions, personal leadership philosophies, and be an incubator for positive leadership practices. In addition, leadership coaches need to integrate mindfulness into their coaching training and practice (Hall, 2015). The learnings might be applied in one-on-one or group settings through formal practices, listening and inquiry, and embodying mindfulness. Overall, the findings of this dissertation can serve as a useful resource for practitioners involved in mindfulness who wish to apply new knowledge on this important topic.

This dissertation has implications for the individual leader. Importantly, the identified enhancements to leadership ability are connected to human psychological processes that evolve over time. Therefore, to reap sustained benefits capable of spanning various areas of life (i.e., well-being, work productivity, inner growth, and relationships), practitioners should see a formal mindfulness training program as a starting point, and establish regular, independent mindfulness practice beyond the formal intervention context (Urrila, 2022). For leaders, it is important to engage in mindful practices. There is now an abundance of apps (e.g., Insight Timer, UCLA Mindful) and websites (e.g., mindful.org) to assist with the process., but the main thing to remember is not to set expectations for a specific outcome but instead intend to connect with yourself and others with an attitude of open, caring attention (Shapiro et al., 2018).

This dissertation also makes a societal impact by illustrating the development of a positive form of leadership that places top priority on the legitimate well-being and growth needs of the employees, and relies on thoughtful interaction and participation, as opposed to leadership that is based on external control. It underlines the value of leadership that builds on leader self- and social awareness and self-development, and which aims to provide employees with resources for autonomous and fulfilling work. It is a paradox that in times when the developing technology keeps on producing a limitless number of opportunities that change the environment, work life, and ways to communicate, what people most need to develop as human beings are meaningful ways to connect with other people and find balance amidst change. As John Naisbitt (1982) stated: "The more high technology around us, the more need for human touch." Knowledge gained from this dissertation may be disseminated through channels that are suitable for science communication to a wider audience. These channels may include, for instance, public lectures, books, articles, and columns, and collaborating with organizations and HR(D) networks.

6 CONCLUSION

This dissertation has demonstrated how mindfulness training and practice can foster leaders' other-orientation. The findings of this work illustrate three interlinked aspects of leaders' enhanced social awareness —the cognitive, affective, and behavioral—, occurring as other-oriented thought, other-oriented emotion, and other-oriented behavior. This work also identifies how mindfulness-trained leaders engage in servant leadership behaviors by integrating mindfulness knowledge and learning into their leadership, intending to benefit themselves, their followers, and their teams. Overall, this research aligns with notions that engaging in mindfulness is a developmental process that involves a shift in perspective for leaders to "view his or her moment-by-moment experience with greater clarity and objectivity" and realize "an ever-increasing capacity to take the perspective of another" (Shapiro et al., 2006, pp. 377-378).

This research revealed that many leaders have a motivation to support their followers, but workable strategies and tools may not always be readily available. The findings show that leaders face several barriers that they need to circumvent to implement an other-oriented leadership approach. Importantly, raising deep awareness of the self and others through mindfulness appears to be a resource for leaders that helps them engage in supportive and caring behavior towards followers. Mindfulness training may offer tools to respond to (albeit not remove) the challenges of the modern leadership environment, and be applied to support followers, teams, and possibly even the entire organization. This research highlights that the examination of mindfulness in relation to others concerns not only an individual's personal gain like well-being and focus, but also their enhanced other-orientedness, seen in an intention to do well by others, to respond wisely, and act responsibly. It shows that mindfulness practice can help leaders make sense of their experience and express their other-oriented thoughts, emotions and behaviors in a thoughtful way that better meets the expectations for the value-based, ethical leadership norm (Ciulla & Forsyth, 2011; Guthey et al., 2022). One of the key messages of this dissertation for researchers and practitioners is that inter-individual mindfulness involves actively engaging in a mindful way of being (Kabat-Zinn, 2011) in the day-to-day known as informal practice, as someone's ability to be mindful in relationships (such as leader-follower) shows in how they act in varying, dynamic real-life situations (Skoranski et al., 2011).

Furthermore, this research demonstrates that instead of providing training in specific skills, mindfulness knowledge and learning can be integrated into leader and leadership development to grow the leader holistically across internal and

people-related competencies that could potentially affect leaders' behaviors and performance (Viitala, 2005). This research shows how mindfulness supports the development of leaders' other-orientation through a combination of a formal program and leader self-development. Organizational support is needed, but to develop and mature as a leader, it is imperative that the individual leader proactively engages in self-development behavior such as a self-reflection of leadership experiences, on a continuous basis (Reichard & Johnson, 2011). The findings of this research show that leaders who voluntarily attend mindfulness training are eager to practice mindfulness (both formally and informally) outside of the training setting, to reflect on their learning, and to apply the learning in their daily leadership work.

In conclusion, this research implies that practicing mindfulness could bring leaders beneficial relational value and help them to improve their capacity for leading others in a sustained way. Mindfulness-based interventions may offer solutions to the challenges posed by the modern leadership environment. To build on this research, I encourage management and organization scholars to continue the investigation of mindfulness-based interventions and practices and mindfulness as an interpersonal organizational phenomenon.

References

Aaltio, I. & Puusa, A. (2020). Mitä laadullisen tutkimuksen arvioinnissa tulisi ottaa huomioon? In A. Puusa & P. Juuti (Eds). *Laadullisen tutkimuksen näkökulmat ja menetelmät*. Gaudeamus. 177–188.

Alberts, H. J. E. M. & Hülsheger, U. R. (2015). Applying mindfulness in the context of work: Mindfulness-based interventions. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds). *Mindfulness in organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications*. Cambridge University Press. 100–132.

Alvesson, M. & Einola, K. (2019). Warning for excessive positivity: Authentic leadership and other traps in leadership studies. *The Leadership Quarterly* 30: 383–395.

Anderson, M. H. & Sun, P. Y. T. (2017). Reviewing leadership styles: Overlaps and the need for a new 'full-range' theory. *International Journal of Management Reviews* 19: 1, 76–96.

Antonakis, J. (2021). Leadership to defeat COVID-19. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 24: 2, 210–215.

Arendt, J. F. W., Pircher Verdorfer, A. & Kugler, K. G. (2019). Mindfulness and leadership: Communication as a behavioral correlate of leader mindfulness and its effect on follower satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00667

Auvinen, T., Aaltio, I. & Blomqvist, K.-M. (2013). Constructing leadership by storytelling – the meaning of trust and narratives. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 34:6, 496–514.

Avolio, B. J. & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly* 16: 3, 315–338.

Badham, R. & King, E. (2021). Mindfulness at work: A critical re-view. *Organization* 28:4, 531–554.

Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist* 37:2, 122–147.

Banks, G. C., Gooty, J., Ross, R. L., Williams, C. E. & Harrington, N. T. (2018). Construct redundancy in leader behaviors: A review and agenda for the future. *The Leadership Quarterly* 29: 1, 236-251.

Barnes, S., Brown, K. W., Krusemark, E., Campbell, W. K. & Rogge, R. D. (2007) The role of mindfulness in romantic relationship satisfaction and responses to relationship stress. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 33:4, 482–500.

Bartlett, L., Martin, A., Neil, A.L., Mamish, K., Otahal, P., Kilpatrick, M. & Sanderson, K. (2019). A systematic review and meta-analysis of workplace mindfulness training randomized controlled trials. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 24: 1, 108–126.

Booth, A., Papaioannou, D. & Sutton, A. (2012). *Systematic Approaches to a Successful Literature Review*. London: Sage Publications.

Boyce, L. A., Zaccaro, S. J. & Wisecarver, M. Z. (2010). Propensity for self-development of leadership attributes: Understanding, predicting, and supporting performance of leader self-development. *The Leadership Quarterly* 21: 1, 159–178.

Bragger, J. D., Alonso, N. A., D'Ambrosio, K. & Williams, N. (2021). Developing leaders to serve and servants to lead. *Human Resource Development Review* 20: 1, 9–45.

Brendel, W., Hankerson, S., Byun, S. & Cunningham, B. (2016). Cultivating leadership Dharma. Measuring the impact of regular mindfulness practice on creativity, resilience, tolerance for ambiguity, anxiety and stress. *Journal of Management Development* 35: 8, 1056–1078.

Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K. & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 97:2, 117–134.

Brown, K. W. & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84: 4, 822–848.

Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M. & Creswell, D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry* 18: 4, 211–237.

Brown, K. W., Creswell, D. & Ryan, R. M. (2016). Introduction: The evolution of mindfulness science. In K. W. Brown, J. D. Creswell & R. M. Ryan, R.M. (Eds). *Handbook of Mindfulness: Theory, Research and Practice*. New York: The Guilford Press. 1–6.

Burrell, G. & Morgan, G. (1979). Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis: Elements of the sociology of corporate life. London: Heineman.

Cameron, K. S. & Spreitzer, G. M. (2012). Introduction: What is positive about positive organizational scholarship? In G. M. Spreitzer & K. S. Cameron (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*. Oxford University Press.

Caporale-Berkowitz, N. A., Boyer, B. P., Lyddy, C. J., Good, D., J., Rochlen, A. B. & Parent, M. C. (2021). Search inside yourself: Investigating the effects of a widely adopted mindfulness-at-work development program. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management* 16: 6, 593–604.

Carden, J., Jones, R. J. & Passmore, J. (2021). Defining self-awareness in the context of adult development: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Management Education* 46: 1, 140–177.

Carson, J. W., Carson, K. M., Gil, K. M. & Baucom, D. H. (2004). Mindfulness-based relationship enhancement. *Behavior Therapy* 35: 3, 471–494.

Ceravolo, D. & Raines, A. (2019). The impact of a mindfulness intervention for nurse managers. *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 37: 1, 47–55.

Chen, Z., Zhu, J. & Zhou, M. (2015). How does a servant leader fuel the service fire? A multilevel model of servant leadership, individual self-identity, group competition climate, and customer service performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 100: 2, 511–521.

Choi, E. & Leroy, H. (2015). Methods of mindfulness: how mindfulness is studied in the workplace. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds). *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 67–99.

Ciulla, J. B. & Forsyth, D. R. (2011). Leadership ethics. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, R. Jackson & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds). *The Sage Handbook of Leadership*. Sage: Sage Publications Ltd. 227–241.

Condon, P., Desbordes, G., Miller, W. B. & DeSteno, D. (2013). Meditation increases compassionate responses to suffering. *Psychological Science* 24: 10, 2125–2127.

Crivelli, D., Fronda, G., Venturella, I. & Balconi, M. (2019). Stress and neurocognitive efficiency in managerial contexts: A study on technology-mediated mindfulness practice. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management* 12: 2, 42–56.

Dane, E. & Rockmann, K. W. (2020) Traveler's mind: A narrative-based account of working and living mindfully. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 29: 3, 330–337.

Davidson, R. J. & Kazniak, A. W. (2015). Conceptual and methodological issues in research on mindfulness and meditation. *American Psychologist* 70: 7, 581–592.

Day, D. V. (2000). Leadership development: A review in context. *The Leadership Quarterly* 11: 4, 581–613.

Day, D. V., Gronn, P. & Salas, E. (2004). Leadership capacity in teams. *The Leadership Quarterly* 15, 857–880.

Day, D. V. & Harrison, M. M. (2007). A multilevel, identity-based approach to leadership development. *Human Resource Management Review* 17, 360–373.

Day, D.V. (2011). Leadership Development. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, R. Jackson & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds). *The Sage Handbook of Leadership*. Sage: Sage Publications Ltd. 37–50.

Day, D. V., Fleenor, J. W., Atwater, L. E., Sturm, R. E. & McKee, R. A. (2014). Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory. *The Leadership Quarterly* 25, 63–82.

Day, D. & Dragoni, L. (2015). Leadership development: An outcome-oriented review based on time and levels of analyses. Annual Review of *Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 2, 133–156.

Day, D. V., Riggio, R. E., Tan, T. J. & Conger, A. J. (2021). Advancing the science of 21st-century leadership development: Theory, Research, and practice. *The Leadership Quarterly* 32, 101557.

Deloitte Insights (2022). Mental health goes mobile: The mental health app market will keep on growing. Deloitte's Technology, Media, and Telecommunications Predictions, 2022.

DeRue, D. S. & Ashford, S. J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. Academy of Management Review 35: 4, 627–647.

DeRue, D. S., Nahrgang, J.D., Hollenbeck, J.R. & Workman, K. (2012). A quasi-experimental study of after-event reviews and leadership development. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 97, 997–1015.

Dietl, E. & Reb, J. (2021). A self-regulation model of leader authenticity based on mindful self-regulated attention and political skill. *Human Relations* 74: 4, 473–501.

Donald J. N., Sahdra, B. K., Van Zanden, B., Duineveld, J., Atkins, P. W. B., Marshall, S. L. & Ciarrochi, J. (2019). Does your mindfulness benefit others? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the link between mindfulness and prosocial behaviour. *British Journal of Psychology* 110: 1, 101–125.

Donaldson-Feilder, E., Lewis, R. & Yarker, J. (2019). What outcomes have mindfulness and meditation interventions for managers and leaders achieved? A systematic review. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 28: 1, 11–29.

Donaldson, S. I. & Grant-Vallone, E. J. (2002). Understanding self-report bias in organizational behavior research. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 17: 2, 245–262.

Drucker, P. F. (2001). *The Essential Drucker*. HarperCollins Publishers, New York.

duPlessis, E. M. & Just , S. N. (2021). Mindfulness—it's not what you think: Toward critical reconciliation with progressive self-development practices. *Organization* 29: 1, 209–221.

Eby L. T., Allen, T. D., Conley, K. M., Williamson, R. L., Henderson, T. G. & Mancini, V. S. (2019). Mindfulness-based training interventions for employees: A qualitative review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review* 29: 2, 156–178.

Eby, L. T., Robertson, M. M. & Facteau, D. B. (2020). Mindfulness and relationships: An organizational perspective. In M. R. Buckley, A. R. Wheeler, J. E. Baur & J. R. B. Halbesleben (Eds). *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited. 57–102.

Eisenbess, S. A. (2012). Re-thinking ethical leadership: An interdisciplinary integrative approach. *The Leadership Quarterly* 23: 5, 791–808.

Elkjaer, B. (2022). Taking stock of "Organizational Learning": Looking back and moving forward. *Management Learning* 53: 3, 582–604.

Eriksson, P. & Kovalainen, A. (2015). Qualitative Methods in Business Research: A Practical Guide to Social Research. Sage: London.

Eva, N. & Sendjaya, S. (2013). Creating future leaders: An examination of youth leadership development in Australia. *Education + Training* 55: 6, 584–598.

Eva, N., Robin, M., Sendjaya, S., van Dierendonck, D. & Liden, R. C. (2019). Servant Leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly* 30: 111–132.

Fazia, T., Bubbico, F., Salvato, G., Berzuini, G., Bruno, S., Bottini, G. & Bernardinelli, L. (2020). Boosting psychological well-being through a social mindfulness-based intervention in the general population. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, 8404.

Fidelity Investments and Business Group on Health (2020). Health and Well-Being Survey. Business Group on Health, 2020.

Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J. & Finkel, S. M. (2008). Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95: 5, 1045–1062.

Fry, L. & Kriger, M. (2009). Towards a theory of being-centered leadership: Multiple levels of being as context for effective leadership. *Human Relations* 62: 11, 1667–1696.

Fyke, J. P. & Buzzanell, P. M. (2013). The ethics of conscious capitalism: Wicked problems in leading change and changing leaders. *Human Relations* 66: 2, 1619–1643.

Galante, J., Galante, I., Bekkers, M.-J. & Gallacher, J. (2014). Effect of kindness-based meditation on health and well-being: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 82: 6, 1101–1114.

Gill, R. (2011). Theory and Practice of Leadership. Sage: London.

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G. & Hamilton, A. L. (2012). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods* 16: 1, 15–31.

Glomb, T. M., Duffy, M. K., Bono, J. E. & Yang, Y. T. (2011) Mindfulness at work. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* 30, 115–157.

Gerpott, F. H., Fasbender, U. & Burmeister, A. (2020). Respectful leadership and followers' knowledge sharing: A social mindfulness lens. *Human Relations* 73: 6, 789–810.

Gethin, R. (2011). On some definitions of mindfulness. *Contemporary Buddhism* 12: 1, 263–279.

Gethin, R. (2015). Buddhist conceptualizations of mindfulness. In K. W. Brown, J. D. Creswell & R. M. Ryan (Eds). *Handbook of Mindfulness: Theory, Research, and Practice*. The Guilford Press. 9–41.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam: New York.

Goldman-Schuyler, K., Skjei, S., Sanzgiri, J. & Koskela, V. (2017). "Moments of waking up": A doorway to mindfulness and presence. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 26: 1, 86–100.

Gonzales-Morales, M. G., Kernan, M. C., Becker, T. E. & Eisenberger, R. (2018). Defeating Abusive Supervision: Training Supervisors to Support Subordinates. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 23: 2, 151–162.

Good, D. J., Lyddy, C. J., Glomb, T. M., Bono, J. E., Brown, K. W., Duffy, M. K., Baer, R. A., Brewer, J. A. & Lazar, S. W. (2016). Contemplating mindfulness at work: An integrative review. *Journal of Management* 42: 1, 114–142.

Grint, K. (2011). A history of leadership. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, R. Jackson & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds). *The Sage Handbook of Leadership*. Sage: Sage Publications Ltd. 3–14.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1970). The servant as leader. The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness. New York: Paulist Press.

Guthey, E., Ferry, N. C. & Remke, R. (2022). Taking leadership fashions seriously as a vehicle for leadership learning. *Management Learning* 53: 55, 397–416.

Hafenbrack, A. C. (2017). Mindfulness meditation as an on-the-spot workplace intervention. *Journal of Business Research* 75, 118–129.

Hall, L. (2015). Mindfulness in coaching. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds). *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 283–408.

Hassed, C., de Lisle, S., Sullivan, G. & Pier, C. (2009). Enhancing the health of medical students: outcomes of an integrated mindfulness and lifestyle program. *Advances in Health Sciences Education* 14: 387–398.

Hersey, P., Blanchard, K. & Natemeyer, W. (1979). Situational leadership, perception, and the impact of power. *Group & Organization Studies* 4: 4, 418–428.

Heslin, P. A. & Keating, L. A. (2017). In learning mode? The role of mindsets in derailing and enabling experiential leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly* 28: 367–384.

Hoch, J. E., Bommer, W. H., Dulebohn, J. H. & Wu, D. (2018). Do ethical, authentic, and servant leadership explain variance above and beyond transformational leadership? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management* 44: 2, 501–529.

Hu, J., Zheng, X., Tepper, B. J., Li, N., Liu, X. & Yu, J. (2022). The dark side of leader–member exchange: Observers' reactions when leaders target their teammates for abuse. *Human Resource Management* 61: 2, 199–213.

Humphrey, R. H., Pollack, J. M. & Hawver, T. (2008). Leading with emotional labor. *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 23: 2, 151–168.

Hunter, J. (2015). Teaching managers to manage themselves: mindfulness and the inside work of management. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds). *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 355–382.

Hunter, E. M., Neubert, M. J., Perry, S. J., Witt, L., Penney, L. M. & Weinberger, E. (2013). Servant leaders inspire servant followers: Antecedents and outcomes for employees and the organization. *The Leadership Quarterly* 24: 2, 316–331.

Hyland, P. K., Lee, R. A. & Mills, M. J. (2015). Mindfulness at work: A new approach to improving individual and organizational performance. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 8: 4, 576–602.

Hülsheger, U. R., Alberts, H. J. E. M., Feinholdt, A. & Lang, J. W. B. (2013). Benefits of mindfulness at work: The role of mindfulness in emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 98: 2, 310–325.

Hülsheger, U. R. (2015). Making sure that mindfulness is promoted in organizations in the right way and for the right goals. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 8: 4, 674–679.

Hülsheger, U. R., Feinholdt, A. & Nübold, A. (2015). A low-dose mindfulness intervention and recovery from work: Effects on psychological detachment, sleep quality, and sleep duration. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 88: 3, 464–489.

Ihl, A., Strunk, K. & Fiedler, M. (2020). Interpretations of mindfulness practices in organizations: A multi-level analysis of interpretations on an organizational, group, and individual level. *Organization* 29: 6, 1099–1132.

Inceoglu, I., Thomas, G., Chu, C., Plans, D. & Gerbasi, A. (2018). Leadership behavior and employee well-being: An integrated review and future research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly* 29: 1, 179–202.

Islam, G., Holm, M. & Karjalainen, M. (2017). Sign of the times: Workplace mindfulness as an empty signifier. *Organization* 29: 1, 3–29.

James, W. (1902). The Varieties of Religious Experience. Seven Treasures Publications.

Jamieson, S. D. & Tuckey, M. R. (2017). Mindfulness interventions in the workplace: A critique of the current state of the literature. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 22: 2, 180–193.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1982). An outpatient program in behavioral medicine for chronic pain patients based on the practice of mindfulness meditation: theoretical considerations and preliminary results. *General Hospital Psychiatry* 4: 1, 33–47.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 10: 2, 144–156.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2011). Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps. *Contemporary Buddhism* 12: 1, 281–306.

Karjalainen, M., Islam, G. & Holm, M. (2021). Scientization, instrumentalization, and commodification of mindfulness in a professional services firm. *Organization* 28: 3, 483–509.

Karremans, J. C., Van Schie, H. T., Van Dongen, I., Kappen, G., Mori, G., Van As, S., Ten Bokkel, I. M. & Van der Wal, R. C. (2020). Is mindfulness associated with interpersonal forgiveness? *Emotion 20*: 2, 296–310.

Karssiens, A. E. A., Van der Linden, C., Wilderom, C. P. M. & Furtmueller, E. (2014). Embodied mind knowledge in leadership practice: Creating space in patterned thoughts and behaviors. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 23: 3, 231–241.

Keng, S., Smoski, M. J. & Robins, C. J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical Psychology Review* 31, 1041–1056.

Kiburz, K. M., Allen, T. & French, K. A. Work-family conflict and mindfulness: Investigating the effectiveness of a brief training intervention. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 38: 7, 1016–1037.

King, E. & Badham, R. (2018). The wheel of mindfulness: A generative framework for second-generation mindful leadership. *Mindfulness* 11: 1, 166–176.

King, E. & Badham, R. (2019). Leadership in uncertainty: The mindfulness solution. *Organizational Dynamics* 48: 4, 100674.

Kristeller, J. (2004). Meditation: Multiple effects, a unitary process? In M. Blows, S. Srinivasan, J. Blows, C. P. Bankart, M. M. Delmonte & Y. Haruki (Eds). *The relevance of wisdom traditions in contemporary society: The challenge to psychology*. Delft: Eburon. 21–37.

Kuyken, W., Weare, K., Ukoumunne, O., Vicary, R., Motton, N., Burnett, R. & Huppert, F. (2013). Effectiveness of the mindfulness in schools programme: non-randomised controlled feasibility study. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 203: 126e131.

Laccrenza, C. N., Reyes, D. L., Marlow, S. L., Joseph, D. L. & Salas, E. (2017). Leadership training design, delivery, and implementation: A meta-analysis. *The Journal of Applied Psychology* 102: 12, 1686–1718.

Lange, S. & Rowold, J. (2019). Mindful leadership: Evaluation of a mindfulness-based leader intervention. Gruppe. *Interaktion. Organisation* 50, 319–335.

Lee, A., Lyubovnikova, J., Tian, A. W. & Knight, C. (2020). Servant leadership: A meta-analytic examination of incremental contribution, moderation, and mediation. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 93: 1, 1–44.

Lemoine, G. J., Hartnell, C. A. & Leroy, H. (2019). Taking stock of moral approaches to leadership: An integrative review of ethical, authentic, and servant leadership. *Academy of Management Annals* 13: 1, 148–187.

Lemoine, G. J., Eva, N., Meuser, J. D. & Falotico, P. (2021). Organizational performance with a broader focus: The case for a stakeholder approach to leadership. *Business Horizons* 64: 4, 401–413.

Leroy H., Segers J., van Dierendonck, D. & den Hartog, D. (2018). Managing people in organizations: Integrating the study of HRM and leadership. *Human Resource Management Review* 28: 249–257.

Levy, D. M., Wobbrock, J. O., Kazniak, A. W. & Ostergren, M. (2012). The effects of mindfulness meditation training on multitasking in a high-stress information environment. *Proceedings – Graphics Interface,* 45–52.

Liang, L. H., Lian, H., Brown, D. J., Ferris, D. L., Hanig, S. & Keeping, L. M. (2016). Why are abusive supervisors abusive? A dual-system self-control model. *Academy of Management Journal* 59: 4, 1385–1406.

Liao, C., Lee, H. W., Johnson, R. E. & Lin, S-H. (2020). Serving you depletes me? A leader-centric examination of servant leadership behaviors. *Journal of Management* 47: 5, 1185–1218.

Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Zhao, H. & Henderson, D. (2008). Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment. *Leadership Quarterly* 19: 161–177.

Liden, R. C., Panaccio, A., Meuser, J. D., Hu, J. & Wayne, S. J. (2014a). *Servant leadership: Antecedents, processes, and outcomes*. Oxford Handbooks Online.

Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Liao, C. & Meuser, J. D. (2014b). Servant leadership and serving culture: Influence on individual and unit performance. *Academy of Management Journal* 57: 5, 1434–145.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Liu, Z., Venkatesh, S., Murphy, S. E. & Riggio, R. E. (2021). Leader development across the lifespan: A dynamic experiences-grounded approach. *The Leadership Quarterly* 32: 5, 101382.

Long, E. C. & Christian, M. S. (2015). Mindfulness buffers retaliatory responses to injustice: A regulatory approach. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 100: 5, 1409–1422.

Lundqvist, C., Ståhl, L., Kenttä, G. & Thulin, U. (2018). Evaluation of a mindfulness intervention for Paralympic leaders prior to the Paralympic games. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching* 13: 1, 62–71.

Madison, K. & Eva, N. (2019). Social exchange or social learning: A theoretical fork in road for servant leadership researchers. In S. Sendjaya (Ed). *Leading for High Performance in Asia: Contemporary Research and Evidence-Based Practices*. Singapore: Springer. 133–158.

Michel, A., Bosch, C. & Rexroth, M. (2014). Mindfulness as a cognitive-emotional segmentation strategy: An intervention promoting work-life balance. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 87: 4, 733–754.

Mumford, M. D., Zaccaro, S. J., Harding, F. D., Jacobs, T. O. & Fleishman, E. A. (2000). Leadership skills for a changing world: Solving complex social problems. *Leadership Quarterly* 11: 1, 11– 35.

Mäkelä. L., Tanskanen, J. & De Cieri, H. (2021). Do relationships matter? Investigating the link between supervisor and subordinate dedication and cynicism via the quality of leader-member exchange. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 28:1, 76–90.

Naisbitt, J. (1982). Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives. New York: Warner Books.

Neal, J. (2018). An overview of the field of transformation. In J. Neal (Ed). *Handbook of Personal and Organizational Transformation*. Cham: Springer. 3–46.

Neubert, M. J., de Luque, M. S., Quade, M. J. & Hunter, E. M. (2021). Servant leadership across the globe: Assessing universal and culturally contingent relevance in organizational contexts. *Journal of World Business*, 101268. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2021.101268

Nilsson, H. & Kazemi, A. (2016). Reconciling and thematizing definitions of mindfulness: The big five of mindfulness. *Review of General Psychology* 20: 2, 183–193.

Nübold, A., Van Quaquebeke, N. & Hülsheger, U. R. (2019). Be(com)ing real: a multi-source and an intervention study on mindfulness and authentic leadership. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 35: 469–488.

Newstead, T., Dawkins, S., Macklin, R. & Martin, A. (2021). We don't need more leaders – We need more good leaders. Advancing a virtues-based approach to leader(ship) development. *The Leadership Quarterly* 32, 101312.

Orvis, K. A. & Ratwani, L. K. (2010). Leader self-development: A contemporary context for leader development evaluation. *The Leadership Quarterly* 21: 657–674.

Parker, S. C., Nelson, B. W., Epel, E. S. & Siegel, D. J. (2015). The science of presence: A central mediator of the interpersonal benefits of mindfulness. In K. W. Brown, J. D. Creswell & R. M. Ryan (Eds). *Handbook of Mindfulness: Theory, Research, and Practice*. The Guilford Press. 225–244.

Patton, M. Q. (2014). Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice. Los Angeles: Sage.

Phipps, K. (2010). Servant leadership and constructive development theory: How servant leaders make meaning of service. *Journal of Leadership Education* 9: 2, 151–170.

Pinck, A. S. & Sonnentag, A. (2018). Leader mindfulness and employee well-being: The mediating role of transformational leadership. *Mindfulness* 9: 884–896.

Pipe, T. B., Bortz, J. J., Dueck, A., Pendergast, D., Buchda, V. & Summers, J. (2009). Nurse leader mindfulness meditation program for stress management: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Nursing Administration* 39: 3, 130–137.

Pircher Verdorfer, A. (2016). Examining mindfulness and its relations to humility, motivation to lead, and actual servant leadership behaviors. *Mindfulness* 7: 4, 950–961.

Pircher Verdorfer, A. (2019). The paradox of serving: Can genuine servant leadership gain followers' respect for the leader? Evidence from Germany and Lithuania. *German Journal of Human Resource Management* 33: 2, 113–136.

Purser, R. E. & Loy, D. (2013). *Beyond McMindfulness*. Huffington Post. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.

Purser, R. E. & Milillo, J. (2015). Mindfulness revisited: A Buddhist-based conceptualization. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 24: 1, 3–24.

Purser, R. E. (2018) Critical perspectives on corporate mindfulness. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 15: 2, 105–108.

Querstret, D., Cropley, M. & Fife-Schaw, C. (2017). Internet-based instructor-led mindfulness for work-related rumination, fatigue, and sleep: Assessing facets of mindfulness as mechanisms of change. A randomized waitlist control trial. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 22: 2, 153–169.

Reb J., Narayanan, J. & Chaturvedi, S. (2014). Leading mindfully: Two studies on the influence of supervisor trait mindfulness on employee well-being and performance. *Mindfulness* 5: 36–45.

Reb, J. & Atkins, P. W. B. (2015). Introduction. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds). *Mindfulness in organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications*. Cambridge University Press. 1–16.

Reb, J., Sim, S., Chintakanda, K. & Bhave, D. P. (2015). Leading with mindfulness: Exploring the relation of mindfulness with leadership behaviors, styles, and development. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds). *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 256–284.

Reb, J., Chaturvedi, S., Narayanan, J. & Kudesia, R. S. (2019). Leader mindfulness and employee performance: A sequential mediation model of LMX quality, interpersonal justice, and employee stress. *Journal of Business Ethics* 160: 3, 745–763.

Reichard, R. J. & Johnson, S. K. (2011). Leader self-development as organizational strategy. *The Leadership Quarterly* 22: 33–42.

Reina, C. S., Kreiner, G. E., Rheinhardt, A. & Mihelcic, C. A. (2022). Your presence is requested: Mindfulness infusion in workplace interactions and relationships. Organization Science. Published online 29 April 2022. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2022.1596.

Reitz, M., Waller, L., Chaskalson, M., Olivier, S. & Rupprecht, S. (2020). Developing leaders through mindfulness practice. *Journal of Management Development*. Available online March 2020. doi:10.1108/JMD-09-2018-0264.

Riggio, R. E. & Mumford, M. D. (2011). Introduction to the special issue: Longitudinal studies of leadership development. The Leadership Quarterly 22: 453–456.

Roche, M., Good, D., Lyddy, C., Tuckey, M. R., Grazier, M., Leroy, H., Hülsheger, U. R. (2020). A Swiss army knife? How science challenges our understanding of mindfulness in the workplace. *Organizational Dynamics* 49: 1–9

Rosch, D. M. & Villanueva, J. C. (2016). Motivation to develop as leader. In R. J. Reichard & S. E. Thompson (Eds). Leader Developmental Readiness: Pursuit of Leadership Excellence. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. 49–60.

Rost, J. C. (1993). Leadership for the twenty-first century. Wesport: Praeger Publishers.

Rostron, A. (2022). How to be a hero: How managers determine what makes a good manager through narrative identity work. *Management Learning* 53: 5, 417–438.

Rudolph, C. W., Allan, B., Clark, M., Hertel, G., Hirschi, A., Kunze, F., Shockley, K., Shoss, M., Sonnentag, S. & Zacher, H. (2021). Pandemics: Implications for research and practice in industrial and organizational psychology. Industrial and Organizational Psychology 14, 1–35.

Ruedy, N. E. & Schweitzer, M. E. (2010). In the moment: The effect of mindfulness on ethical decision-making. *Journal of Business Ethics* 95, 73–87.

Rupprecht, S., Falke, P., Kohls, N., Tamdjidi, C., Wittman, M. & Kersemaekers, W. (2019) Mindful leader development: How leaders experience the effects of mindfulness training on leader capabilities. *Frontiers in Psychology*. DOI:10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01081.

Salovey, P. & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional Intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 9: 3, 185–211.

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A. & Bristow, A. (2015). Understanding research philosophy and approaches to theory development. In M. N. Saunders, P. Lewis & A. Thornhill (Eds). *Research Methods for Business Students*. Harlow: Pearson Education. 122–161.

Schuh, S. C., Zheng, M. X., Xin, K. R. & Fernandez, J. A. (2019). The interpersonal benefits of leader mindfulness: A serial mediation model linking leader mindfulness, leader procedural justice enactment, and employee exhaustion and performance. *Journal of Business Ethics* 156: 4, 1007–1025.

Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G. & Teasdale, J. D. (2002). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression: A new approach to preventing relapse. New York, London: Guilford Press.

Sendjaya, S. (2015). Personal and organizational excellence through servant leadership: Learning to serve, serving to lead, leading to transform. Springer.

Sendjaya, S. & Sarros, J. C. (2002). Servant leadership: It's origin, development, and application in organizations. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 9: 2, 57–64.

Sendjaya, S., Sarros, J. C. & Santora, J. C. (2008). Defining and measuring servant leadership behaviour in organizations. *Journal of Management Studies* 45: 2, 402–424.

Shapiro, S. L., Carlson, L. E., Astin, J. A. & Freedman, B. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 62: 373–386.

Shapiro, S. L., Wang, M. C. & Peltason, E. H. (2015). What is mindfulness, and why should organizations care about it? In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds). *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 17–41.

Shapiro, S. L. & Carlson, L. E. (2017). The art and science of mindfulness: Integrating mindfulness into psychology and the helping professions. Washington, DC: American Psychology Press.

Shapiro, S. L., Siegel, R. & Neff, K.D. (2018). Paradoxes of mindfulness. *Mindfulness* 9: 6, 1693–1701.

Shonin, E. & Van Gordon, W. (2015). Managers' experiences of Meditation Awareness Training. *Mindfulness* 6, 899–909.

Simonsen Abildgaard, J., Nielsen, K., Dyrlund Wåhlin-Jacobsen, C., Maltesen, T., Bang Christensen, K. & Holterman, A. (2020). 'Same, but different': A mixed-methods realist evaluation of a cluster-randomized controlled participatory organizational intervention. *Human Relations* 73: 10, 1339–1365.

Skoranski A., Coatsworth, J. D. & Lunkenheimer, E. (2019). A dynamic systems approach to understanding mindfulness in interpersonal relationships. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 28: 2659–2672.

Stedham, Y. & Skaar, T. B. (2019). Mindfulness, trust, and leader effectiveness: A conceptual framework. *Frontiers in Psychology*. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01588.

Sutton A., Williams, H. M. & Allinson, C. W. (2015). A longitudinal, mixed method of self-awareness training in the workplace. *Journal of Training and Development* 39: 7, 610–627.

Svalgaard, L. (2018). The critical moment of transition: Staying with and acting on newly gained self-and social awareness. *Management Learning* 49: 3, 278–294.

Tranfield, D., Denyer, D. & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management* 14: 3, 207–222.

Thomas, J. & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 8, 45.

Thorndike, E. L. (1920). Intelligence and its use. Harper's Magazine 140: 227–235.

Uhl-Bien, M (2006). Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *The Leadership Quarterly* 17: 6, 654–667.

Urrila, L. (2022). From personal well-being to relationships: A systematic review on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders. *Human Resource Management Review* 32(3): 100837.

van Dierendonck, D. (2011). Servant Leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management* 37: 1228–1261.

Varela, F. J. & Shear, J. (1999). First-person methodologies: What, Why, How? *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6: 2-3, 1–14.

Vich, M., Lukeš, M. & Burian, J. (2020). Out of sight, out of mind? Exploring the long-term effects of Relational Mindfulness Training (RMT). *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science* 16, 162–171.

Viitala, R. (2005). Perceived development needs of managers compared to an integrated management competency model. *Journal of Workplace Learning* 17: 7, 436–451.

Vu, M. C. & Burton, N. (2020). Mindful reflexivity: Unpacking the process of transformative learning in mindfulness and discernment. *Management Learning* 51: 2, 207–226.

Vu, M. C. & Gill, R. (2018). Is there corporate mindfulness? An exploratory study of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leaders' perspectives and practices. *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* 15: 2, 155–177.

Walach, H., Nord, E., Zier, C., Dietz-Waschkowski, B., Kersig, S. & Schüpbach, H. (2007). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction as a Method for Personnel Development: A Pilot Evaluation. *International Journal of Stress Management* 14: 2, 188–198.

Wallace, D. M., Torres, E. M. & Zaccaro, S. J. (2021). Just what do we think we are doing? Learning outcomes of leader and leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly* 32: 101494.

Walsh, Z. (2018). Mindfulness under neoliberal governmentality: critiquing the operation of biopower in corporate mindfulness and constructing queer alternatives. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 15: 2, 109–122.

Warren, E., Melendez-Torres, G. J., Viner, R. & Bonell, C. (2020). Using qualitative research to explore intervention mechanisms: findings from the trial of the Learning Together whole-school health intervention. *Trials* 21: 1, 774.

Wasylkiw, L., Holton, J., Azar, R. & Cook, W. (2015). The impact of mindfulness on leadership effectiveness in a health care setting: a pilot study. *Journal of Health Organization and Management* 29: 7, 893–911.

Weick, K. E. , Sutcliffe, K. M. & Obstfeld, D. (1999). Organizing for high reliability: Processes of collective mindfulness. In B. Staw & R. Sutton (Eds). *Research in Organizational Behavior* 21, 81–123.

White, D. E., Oelke, N. D. & Friesen, S. (2012). Management of a large qualitative data set: establishing trustworthiness of the data. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 11: 3, 244–258.

Yu, L. & Zellmer-Bruhn, M. (2018). Introducing team mindfulness and considering its safeguard role against conflict transformation and social undermining. Academy of Management Journal 61: 1, 324–347.

Zołnierczyk-Zreda, D., Sanderson, M. & Bedyńska, S. (2016). Mindfulness-based stress reduction for managers: A randomized controlled study. *Occupational Medicine* 66, 630–635.

Appendices

Author contributions to Papers 1-3

Paper 1

Laura Urrila is the single author of this paper.

Paper 2

Laura Urrila is the first and corresponding author of the paper. Laura Urrila created the idea, defined the research design, collected and managed the research material, identified research resources, conducted the data analysis and visualization of results, and wrote the paper. In addition, Urrila was responsible for partnership, project management and acquisition of research funding. The second author, Liisa Mäkelä, provided guidance in the research process, identified research resources, commented and helped organize the findings, and edited the paper at different stages.

Paper 3

Laura Urrila is the first and corresponding author of the paper. Laura Urrila created the idea, defined the research design, collected and managed the research material, identified research resources, conducted the data analysis and visualization of results, and wrote the paper. In addition, Urrila was responsible for partnership, project management and acquisition of research funding. The second author, Nathan Eva, provided guidance in the research process, identified research resources, commented and helped organize the findings, and edited the paper at different stages.

Pre-task – *Mindfulness for Leaders* research project

As part of the *Mindfulness for Leaders* research project and to enhance your personal learning experience, you are invited to engage in some self-reflection before the mindfulness course start.

Please complete and submit your written response to the below pre-task to laura.urrila@uva.fi by (date), a few days before the mindfulness course start.

You can write in Finnish or English (preferably in typing – if you prefer handwriting, please scan the document before sending). The ideal length is 1-2 pages, while there is no maximum length. Just give yourself and this task a moment and see what comes out of it. Please attempt to answer all the questions.

Below you can find the instructions in English and in Finnish.

Pre-task: Writing a self-reflective text (approx. 1-2 pages in Finnish or English)

1. Reflect on and write about your *personal experience* during the last month. Think widely about many sides of it, for example:
   a) Different situations you have been in at work and in private life (the ups and downs).
   b) What kind of thoughts and feelings do you often tend to have?
   c) In relation to the work community and other people that you interact with.

2. Reflect on and write about how you *deal with* situations (at work and in private life) that you may find challenging, stressful, worrying or outside your comfort zone. How do you tend to respond or act?

3. Reflect on and write about your *key areas of development* as a person and as a professional, and in your role as a leader/manager/supervisor. Please also briefly describe your leadership/management responsibilities. In which ways do you foresee that a mindfulness course could support you and your own development as a leader?

Ennakkotehtävä: Kirjoita pohdiskeleva teksti (n. 1-2 sivua suomeksi tai englanniksi)

1. Pohdi ja kirjoita *henkilökohtaisesta kokemuksestasi* kuluneen kuukauden aikana. Ajattele laajasti asian useita puolia, esimerkiksi:
   a) Erilaiset tilanteet joissa olet ollut työssä ja vapaa-ajalla (hyvät ja ikävät).
   b) Minkälaisia ajatuksia ja tunteita sinulla on usein ollut?
   c) Suhteessa työyhteisön jäseniin ja muihin ihmisiin joiden kanssa olet tekemisissä.

2. Pohdi ja kirjoita siitä kuinka *käsittelet tilanteita* (työssä ja vapaa-ajalla), jotka ovat mielestäsi haastavia, stressaavia, huolestuttavia tai mukavuusalueesi ulkopuolella. Miten sinulla on tapana vastata tai toimia?

3. Pohdi ja kirjoita *keskeisimmistä kehittymisen alueistasi* ihmisenä ja ammattilaisena, sekä roolissasi johtajana/päällikkönä/esimiehenä. Kerro myös hieman johtamiseen/esimiestyöhön kuuluvista vastuistasi. Millä tavoin odotat mindfulness-kurssin mahdollisesti tukevan sinua ja johtajuutesi kehittymistä?

Interview   Name: Date:

Introductory questions
- How was writing the reflective text?

Mindfulness understanding
- How many of the course meetings did you participate) (X/6)
- After participating the 8-week mindfulness course, what does mindfulness mean in your terms?
- How would you describe your own mindfulness practice? (What kind of practice is it? How regularly do you do it? Do you have a routine of some kind? What exercises do you like most?)

Leader development
- How long experience do you have as a leader or supervisor? (nro of years)
- Thinking of your current leader position, what do you think is most important in the area of leadership, that you also want to put effort into in the future? (What value do you want to bring in that role?)
  - What qualities in yourself as a leader you think you should have, that you also want to develop?
  - How do you see these qualities could develop?

Intervention *(impacts/outcomes, processes – what and how – Has something changed, how has the change happened?)*

- What do you think of mindfulness training as a learning experience? (What did you get out of it? What about from the organization's perspective?)
- If you think about different areas of life, do you think that mindfulness knowledge and practice has benefited you? (work, private life) Examples?
- Having participated in a mindfulness course especially targeted at leaders, do you see that mindfulness could somehow support your leadership? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- If you think about the mindfulness course as learning process with a beginning and an end, how would you describe it? (What must have happened in order for the benefits/impacts to occur?
- What motivated you? What was difficult / obstacles / challenging?
- How have you taken into practice the learnings from the course?

Ending questions
- Sum up: Thinking about yourself as a professional, is there something new that mindfulness has brought?
- Is there something you would like to share that is especially significant?

From personal wellbeing to relationships: A systematic review on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders

Laura Ilona Urrila

University of Vaasa, School of Management, Kaisaniemenkatu 4A (4. floor), 00100 Helsinki, Finland

A R T I C L E I N F O	A B S T R A C T
	This study provides a systematic review of prior empirical research on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders. The aim is to integrate existing knowledge and identify future research needs. Mindfulness as a *leader-specific practice* is defined and discussed to provide conceptual clarity and to highlight the importance of understanding the phenomenon and its value in the context of leadership and individual leader development. A conceptual framework is presented which synthesizes findings from prior works and shows that leaders' mindfulness practices affect various developmental outcomes viewed as important for leaders and leadership. A comprehensive future research agenda for theoretical and empirical advancement is proposed that recommends looking beyond the essential wellbeing and work productivity outcomes and exploring the transformative outcomes of mindfulness interventions and practices related to leaders' relationships and inner growth that involve enhanced self-awareness and social/contextual awareness.

1. Introduction

Leaders influence employees and outcomes on multiple levels (Leroy, Segers, van Dierendonck, & den Hartog, 2018), which is why organizations invest in leader development programs to improve the critical leadership capabilities of individual leaders. Effective leadership relies on the leader's self-awareness and social awareness that influence the ability to act with a sense of responsibility in the organizational environment (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005; Day, 2000; Eisenbess, 2012; Goldman-Schuyler, Skjei, Sanzgiri, & Koskela, 2017). A positive transformation of work teams, organizations, and societies requires systematic efforts to enhance individuals' higher-level awareness of their values, motivations, and goals (Neal, 2018). Leaders worldwide have become increasingly interested in mindfulness, the value-based contemplative practice (Gethin, 2011; Purser & Milillo, 2015) commonly defined as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145), which has become a standard element of leader development programs. Modern organizations use mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) and practices with their leaders to enhance individual, team, and organizational functionality. Accordingly, a stream of human resource management literature acknowledges the importance of MBIs that can be summarized as development-oriented activities built around the mindfulness concept that incorporate meditation and awareness practices, psychoeducational content, and self-reflection (Fyke & Buzzanell, 2013; Glomb, Duffy, Bono, & Yang, 2011; Good et al., 2016; Hyland, Lee, & Mills, 2015; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

Advancing current research on mindfulness in the leadership context necessitates a review that thoroughly discusses the value-add

---

of mindfulness training as a potentially effective method that can help leaders develop the core capabilities required to manage job responsibilities and people effectively. A prior review of the literature on the outcomes of mindfulness and meditation interventions for leaders exists (Donaldson-Feilder, Lewis, & Yarker, 2019) but is limited in terms of review material and scope. Of 19 studies reviewed, only 11 concern mindfulness. The same review also excludes several recent empirical studies that involve followers (e.g., Lange & Rowold, 2019; Nübold, Van Quaquebeke, & Hülsheger, 2019) and offer evidence of the relational outcomes of leaders' mindfulness practices on the leadership process (e.g., Rupprecht et al., 2019). Moreover, while the Donaldson-Feilder et al. review concludes that leaders' mindfulness and meditation interventions have the potential to enhance leadership capabilities, it emphasizes the occupational wellbeing perspective and overlooks the need for a more nuanced discussion on the leadership and leader development concepts that constitute the fundamental theoretical backdrop for the emergent research on leader-specific mindfulness.

While employee wellbeing and stress reduction have long been the primary driver of mindfulness education in organizations for employees in general (Eby et al., 2019), recent research reveals the discernible link between mindfulness and leader development. It does so by reaching beyond personal wellbeing and work productivity to address a variety of ways in which mindfulness interventions and practices could benefit leaders as a specific audience and improve leadership quality. A specific line of research focuses on the interpersonal influences of mindfulness and suggests that a leader's mindfulness can influence people other than the leader (e.g., Eby, Robertson, & Facteau, 2020; Schuh, Zheng, Xin, & Fernandez, 2019). Research also indicates that leaders view mindfulness-based practices as something that supports their growth as human beings and leaders (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Lychnell, 2017). Overall, research suggests that mindfulness is seen as a method to assist in managing change and transformation (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Hunter, 2015; Kuechler & Stedham, 2018). The steady growth in research on leaders' mindfulness practices has brought a versatile approach to the phenomenon that has included various mindfulness conceptualizations, theoretical concepts around leadership, and empirically tested research designs.

Unlike any other review to date, this systematic review of 30 empirical articles examines leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices from the leader development perspective. This review significantly extends the understanding of the field by looking beyond wellbeing to leadership criteria such as ethical decision-making, leadership relationships, and adapting to change, thus extending understanding of the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices when applied to the leadership context. The intended contribution of this study to the literature on mindfulness and leadership is threefold. First, it provides conceptual clarity by positioning mindfulness firmly in the theoretical context of leadership and leader development and offering a definition of mindfulness as a leader-specific practice. Second, this review offers a conceptual framework that not only consistently synthesizes the key themes and outcomes to inform researchers and practitioners alike of the implications of mindfulness for leader development but simultaneously provides a resource to aid in designing future studies and also outlines the implications of using mindfulness in leader development programs. Third, the current review identifies the theoretical and empirical shortcomings of prior research and recommends a detailed future research agenda to highlight the importance of understanding the unique relevance of mindfulness practice in the context of leadership and advance the application of mindfulness to enhance human resource management.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Individual leader development

Organizational leaders are "individuals who hold leadership positions" and who "are expected to facilitate the development of a direction given environmental considerations, align the effort of others in support of this direction and engage and motivate others to accomplish this direction" (Day & Dragoni, 2015, p. 134). Leadership effectiveness refers to the collective and individual capacity to set direction, align efforts, and motivate people to achieve goals (Day & Dragoni, 2015). The main concern of *leadership* development is to expand the collective capacity (i.e., leadership processes and social structures) to achieve effective leadership, while leader development aims to expand the individual leader's capacity to be effective in a leadership role (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014).

Expanding an individual's capacity for leadership entails fostering work-facilitation (e.g., thinking and acting strategically), self-management (e.g., self-awareness and ability to learn), and social (e.g., building relationships and work groups) capabilities (Van Velsor & MacCauley, 2004 in Day, 2011). Apart from knowledge, skills, and abilities, leaders need the ability to develop their self-view as a leader (i.e., leadership self-efficacy, self-awareness, and leader identity) that supports the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of holistic functioning and affects the development of the social and interpersonal competence at the core of leadership to enhance trust, respect, and organizational performance (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Fry & Kriger, 2009; Liu, Venkatesh, Murphy, & Riggio, 2020). Taking responsibility for other people and the environment, known as ethical leadership, is viewed as "normatively appropriate" behavior in organizations (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120) and is integrated into the individual leader's capacity to set a direction and influence others (Eisenbess, 2012).

Ideally, leader development efforts are based on understanding the individual development needs of leaders (Day et al., 2014), but determining the particular capabilities an individual needs in different phases of their career is difficult (Day & Harrison, 2007; Orvis & Ratwani, 2010) and accordingly leader development research and practice have shifted toward flexible and sustainable leader development initiatives (Boyce, Zaccaro, & Wisecarver, 2010). Instead of offering guidance on what to develop, such initiatives help leaders understand how to develop themselves (Reichard & Johnson, 2011). Effective leader (self-) development is thus an ongoing process that depends on the leader's internal motivation to actively develop themselves (DeRue, Nahrgang, Hollenbeck, & Workman, 2012; Heslin & Keating, 2017; Reichard & Johnson, 2011), stay "mentally alive" (Drucker, 2001, p. 185) and acquire "a deeper understanding of one's operating environment, and one's self [*sic*] as a leader" (Boyce et al., 2010, p. 161). In addition, Fry and Kriger

(2009) maintain that the development of organizations that are built on altruistic values of honesty, integrity, and kindness involves not only an individual leader's commitment to developing a greater awareness of their inner life but also a willingness to serve others. To contribute as a leader, individuals must continuously engage in self-development behaviors such as experiential on-the-job learning and active reflection on internal and external feedback that help them assess themselves, make sense of their experiences, and build self-awareness (Heslin & Keating, 2017; Reichard & Johnson, 2011).

To support individual leader development, there is a need for formalized efforts that promote self-development behaviors (Heslin & Keating, 2017; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). Proven leader development interventions are practice-based (Laccrenza, Reyes, Marlow, Joseph, & Salas, 2017), aligned with ongoing adult development (Day et al., 2014), and focused on the enhancement of holistic functioning (Day et al., 2014). In sum, "just as leaders need tools to manage external realities, they also need tools to manage the internal ones" (Hunter, 2015, p. 356) that may have transformative potential rather than merely addressing the acquisition of skills and knowledge (Day et al., 2014; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Neal, 2018).

2.2. Mindfulness as a leader-specific practice

The western medical and psychological domain has known of the mindfulness construct since the late 1970s and numerous well-known conceptualizations have been developed that operationalize mindfulness either as a mental trait, a relatively stable personality characteristic, or as a fluctuating, momentary mental state of "being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present" (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822), or an activity of "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 2011). Research has focused mainly on the investigation of the phenomenon as an individual psychological capacity of raising awareness where attention is focused on the internal (intrapsychic) and external (environmental) phenomena within one's moment-to-moment experience, and a form of clinical or therapeutic intervention (e.g., Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, MBSR) to enhance mindfulness and improve health and wellbeing (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 2011; Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011). However, there remains no scholastic consensus on the definition of mindfulness (Choi & Leroy, 2015). The conceptualizations of mindfulness originating from Buddhism and dating back over 2000 years portray mindfulness as aspects of attention *and* awakening, which is a perspective that has largely been neglected in psychological contexts (Gethin, 2011). Reducing mindfulness to a technique of attention enhancement ignores its capacity to tap into the deep wisdom and value-based evaluation of which humans are capable (Gethin, 2011). The narrow definition has been suggested to invite ethical misconduct such as focusing attention on harmful goals, which is an issue in the application of mindfulness in the organizational context (Purser & Milillo, 2015). Therefore, mindfulness should be assessed as a developmentally oriented, value-based contemplative practice that intrinsically involves meditation (i.e., contemplation directed toward internal and external phenomena), introspection (i.e., reflexive monitoring of the mental state and actions), and ethical conduct (i.e., making purposeful choices) (Purser & Milillo, 2015).

While mindfulness has an instrumental value of bringing a multitude of benefits to individuals and organizations, such as stress reduction and improved focusing, Kabat-Zinn (2011, p. 284) notes that mindfulness is "not one more cognitive-behavioral technique to be deployed in a behavior change paradigm, but a way of being and a way of seeing that has profound implications for understanding the nature of our own minds and bodies, and for living life as if it really mattered." A way of being is a human state, available at every moment of each day, where one's thoughts and emotions shape one's action, intention, and attitude (Karssiens, Van der Linden, Wilderom, & Furtmueller, 2014). Consequently, mindfulness practice may occur not only in the context of a formal mindfulness intervention, but as an independent practice, and may be a combination of formal practice (i.e., a dedicated time for mindfulness meditation or mindful awareness) and an informal one (i.e., a mindful *way of being* accessible at any moment) (Brendel, Hankerson, Byun, & Cunningham, 2016) practices.

Leadership is both relational and social and it is not therefore surprising that it is the focus of recent research on mindfulness in organizations (Good et al., 2016). Existing studies on leader mindfulness training typically propose stressful work environments as its antecedent (e.g., Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019). The different conceptualizations and emphases of mindfulness influence the available applications of mindfulness interventions and practices offered for leader audiences: Researchers distinguish between first- and second-generation mindfulness interventions (e.g., King & Badham, 2018; Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015). The former would include interventions such as the MBSR that conceptualize mindfulness as a stress-reduction and attention enhancement technique, while the latter second-generation mindfulness interventions embrace the spiritual and ethical conceptualization of mindfulness. According to current understanding, mindfulness encompasses and affects the human functional domains of physiology, cognition, emotion, behavior, spirituality, and the nature of self (e.g., Brown, Creswell, & Ryan, 2016; Good et al., 2016) through which it is reported to influence a variety of outcomes related to individual and organizational functioning, possibly including various facets of leadership such as the quality of dyadic and workgroup relationships between the leader and their followers for instance by improved attentional and emotional processes, improved listening, collaboration and respect, better conflict management and reduced emotional contagion (Good et al., 2016). In dealing with diverse people and information, developing oneself profoundly and holistically through curious and open awareness of experience—a novel concept in leader development—may help a leader achieve effectiveness and meaningfulness (Karssiens et al., 2014).

What makes the application of mindfulness particularly relevant in the leader development context is not adequately captured. To facilitate understanding of the viability of mindfulness as a method of improving the leadership capacity of leaders and to clarify which aspects make mindfulness practice particularly relevant for leaders, it is useful to look at leaders' mindfulness practice through the lens of leader self-development. A definition of *leader-specific mindfulness practice* is offered here:

> Leader-specific mindfulness practice is (1) a holistic **leader self-development** approach in which (2) a leader engages in raising present-moment awareness of **their experience as a leader** (3) with the intention to improve the lives of **themselves and others**.

First, leader-specific mindfulness practice is proposed to be embedded in the continuous leader self-development process that is characterized by an individual leader's voluntary intention and motivation to actively expand their internal capacity (Reichard & Johnson, 2011) relating to an individual's self-view as a leader that is known to be a critical factor in leadership effectiveness (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Second, mindfulness practice involves an active mind that is oriented toward connecting with oneself (Purser & Milillo, 2015). Mindfulness interventions aimed at leaders emphasize systematic development of their internal qualities—the perceptual, emotional, and embodied sensing capacities (Hunter, 2015)—that can raise self-awareness and social awareness, the key leadership capabilities to be developed through leader development (e.g., Day, 2000; Day & Dragoni, 2015). It has been suggested that those trained in contemplative practices would be best equipped to reflect on and describe their own experiences (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). Therefore, helping individuals to be aware of their behavior as a leader through mindfulness practices such as meditation and introspection may support leadership development behaviors such as reflection on leadership experiences and support a person's development to become a better leader. Third, mindfulness practice is expected to raise leaders' awareness of their own values, motivations, and direction, and increase the sense of interconnectedness, and therefore help leaders lead themselves to lead others well and make the right choices (Hunter, 2015). Interest has grown since the 2000s in ethical leadership in organizations (Brown et al., 2005). Increased awareness of oneself and one's context that can be cultivated through mindfulness interventions may foster ethical behavior among decision-makers (Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010), helping fulfill the leader's moral responsibility to improve the lives and functioning of not just their own but others' (Ciulla & Forsyth, 2011). This study now proceeds to review prior empirical studies on mindfulness interventions and practices of leaders.
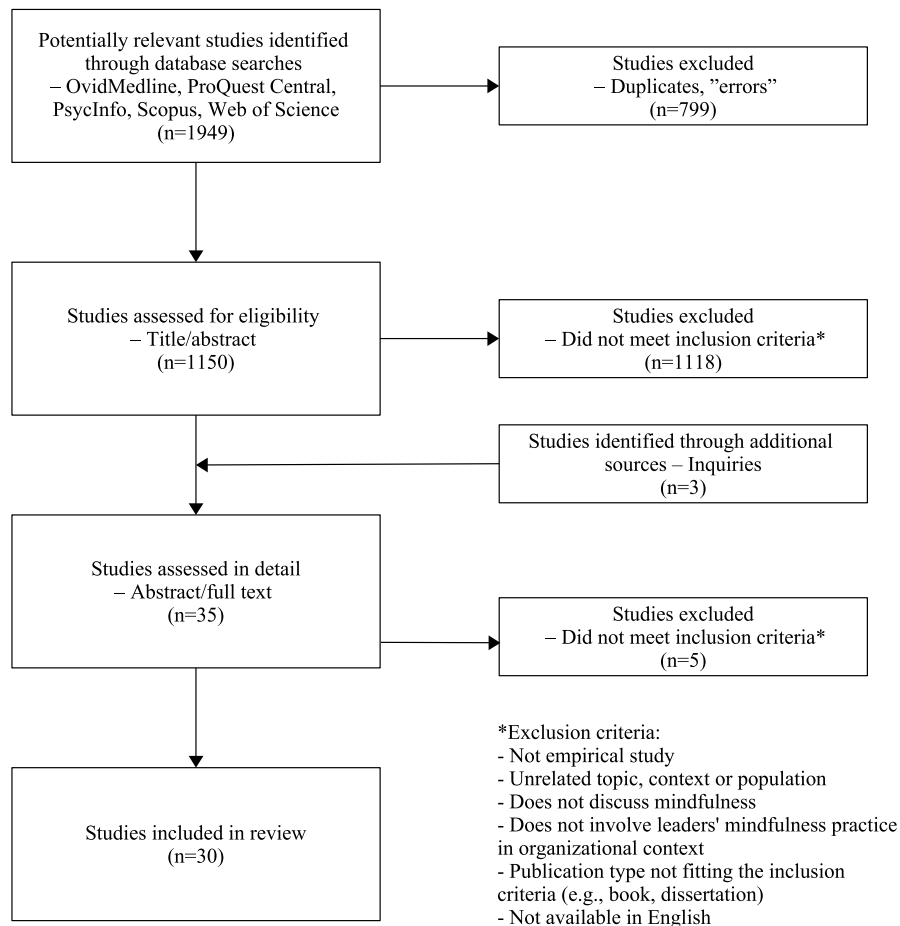

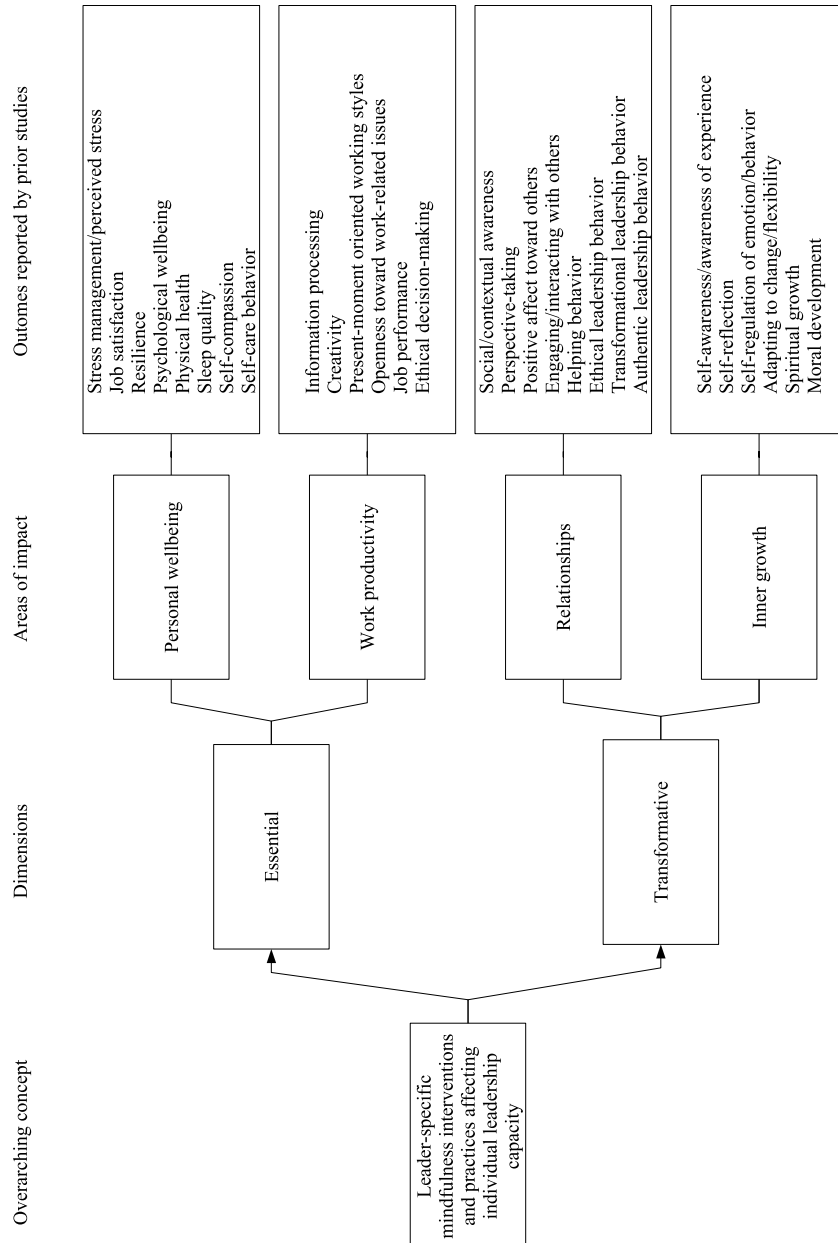**Fig. 1.** Flow diagram of systematic literature search.

Fig. 2. Impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders.

5

3. Review method

The research method followed the guidelines proposed by Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003) for a systematic literature review in terms of defining the search terms and the inclusion and exclusion criteria and developing a data extraction form. The search strategy was guided by the objective of providing full, up-to-date, cross-disciplinary coverage of the available literature. Database searches (in OvidMedline, ProQuest Central, PsycInfo, Scopus, and Web of Science) were conducted using the search string: mindfulness AND (leader OR leadership OR manager OR managerial OR supervisor OR supervisory) in the abstract, title, and keywords including all subject areas and years up until March 2020.

The searches identified 1949 titles. Additionally, three potentially relevant studies were identified through personal inquiries. After the removal of duplicates, 1150 studies were assessed for eligibility based on their titles or abstracts. Of those, 35 studies were scrutinized based on the full texts. For an article to be included in this systematic literature review, it had to present an empirical study on mindfulness practice among leaders (either a formal intervention or independent practice) in the organizational context. Studies that operationalized mindfulness solely as a trait or state were excluded as a distinct line of research (Eby et al., 2019). Theoretical and review articles were excluded, as were studies that focused on unrelated topics, contexts, or populations, such as coaching instead of mindfulness, parenting instead of organizations, or patients, students, or general employees instead of leaders. The focus of the review remained on the individual leader as a mindfulness practitioner, even though some of the reviewed studies included multilevel data. Publication types that did not fit the criteria for inclusion such as commentaries, letters, editorials, book chapters, and dissertations were discarded, so too were two studies unavailable in English.

A total of 30 empirical studies (28 journal articles and two unpublished conference papers expected to be published in peer-reviewed journals) were included in the review. A flow diagram of the review method presents the different phases of the systematic search, as recommended by Booth, Papaioannou, and Sutton (2012) (Fig. 1.).

The analysis of the review material was guided by a data extraction form that was created at the start of the review process and developed throughout to guide the meaningful synthesis of information. Publication characteristics (author/s, year of publication, source title, impact factor), study characteristics (methodological approach, study design, informants, country), mindfulness operationalization (definition, questionnaire, type of intervention/practice), and leadership-related focus were coded for each study. The reported outcomes of leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices were organized into a thematic data structure (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012).

4. Prior empirical research on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices

4.1. Overview of studies

The reviewed studies were published in 2009–2020, the majority of them in management and health publications. The studies focused on assessing the effects of leaders' mindfulness practice and displayed a variety of mindfulness interventions and practices that differed in terms of length, intensity, delivery method and content. Twelve of the reviewed studies were quantitative (Ahlvik et al., 2018; Baron, Baron, Grégoire, & Cayer, 2018; Brendel et al., 2016; Ceravolo & Raines, 2019; Crivelli, Fronda, Venturella, & Balconi, 2019; Lange & Rowold, 2019; Lundqvist, Ståhl, Kenttä, & Thulin, 2018; Nübold et al., 2019; Pipe et al., 2009; Schuh et al., 2019; Shonin, Van Gordon, Dunn, Singh, & Griffiths, 2014; Zołnierczyk-Zreda, Sanderson, & Bedyńska, 2016), 13 were qualitative (Burmansah et al., 2020; Chesley & Wylson, 2016; Frizzell, Hoon, & Banner, 2016; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Lewis & Ebbeck, 2014; Lippincott, 2018; Lychnell, 2017; Mahfouz, 2018; Rupprecht et al., 2019; Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015; Sutamchai, Rowlands, & Rees, 2019; Vreeling, Kersemaekers, Cillessen, Van Dierendonck, & Speckens, 2019; Vu & Gill, 2018) and five were mixed method studies (Kersemaekers, 2020; Kuechler & Stedham, 2018; Reitz, Waller, Chaskalson, Olivier, & Rupprecht, 2020; Shelton, Hein, & Phipps, 2020; Wasylkiw, Holton, Azar, & Cook, 2015). All of the reviewed quantitative-only studies (and four of the five mixed methods studies) involved a mindfulness-based intervention and a survey. Of the reviewed qualitative studies, half were intervention studies and half involved an independent mindfulness-based practice occurring outside a formal intervention context. Summaries of the details of the reviewed studies are available upon request to the author at the email address listed in the article.

4.2. Essential and transformative outcomes of leaders' mindfulness practices reported in the reviewed studies

The reviewed studies assessed if mindfulness interventions and practices could build individual leadership capacity, in particular, individual leadership capabilities related to leaders' personal resources (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019), leadership effectiveness, (e.g., Lange & Rowold, 2019), leadership qualities (e.g., Brendel et al., 2016) and behaviors (e.g., Lippincott, 2018), leadership relationships (e.g., Nübold et al., 2019), and leadership ethics (e.g., Sutamchai et al., 2019). Some of the reviewed studies had a narrow focus whereas it was quite common among the studies to measure multiple outcomes.

To provide a meaningful synthesis of the findings reported by prior empirical studies, I organized the leadership outcomes of mindfulness interventions and practices into a comprehensive framework (see Fig. 2.). The thematic data structure comprises 28 developmental outcomes (e.g., stress management, self-care behavior, information processing, job performance, social/contextual awareness, authentic leadership behavior, self-awareness, adapting to change) and four thematic clusters according to areas of impact (personal wellbeing, work productivity, relationships, and inner growth) across two dimensions (essential and transformative).

The review of prior research revealed outcomes that seemed to be equally important yet critically distinct, which persuaded me to present the findings of prior studies across two dimensions: essential and transformative. On one dimension, research participants'

experience of mindfulness practice was as a helpful, essential technique for stressful and demanding work situations affecting leader wellbeing and work productivity. It is known that on a basic human functional level, depleted psychological resources caused by stress and lack of sleep can adversely affect leadership quality (Lange & Rowold, 2019). The impact of mindfulness practice on wellbeing and work productivity was thus seen in the review to have essential value for any leader, and in developing the framework the related outcomes were labeled *essential* to improving the individual's leadership capacity.

The other dimension reflects the reviewed studies presenting mindfulness practice as having a more profound role in helping leaders to reflect on their inner life and facilitating their interaction with other people. Once something is changed in a transformative way it will never go back to what it was before (Neal, 2018), thus transformation is a sustaining change. A significant developmental outcome for a leader that may improve the individual leadership capacity and pave the way to improved leadership quality over time, is a transformative shift in the leader's way of being and leading that stems from the development of self-awareness and social/contextual awareness (Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017). The impact of mindfulness practice on leaders' relationships and inner growth was seen to have transformative value for leadership, therefore, the related developmental outcomes reported by prior studies due to mindfulness training were cataloged as *transformative*.

4.2.1. Findings on wellbeing outcomes

Roughly 40% of the reviewed studies focused primarily on evaluating the impact of mindfulness practice on leader wellbeing. Notably, research evidence shows that mindfulness practice can extend the personal resources of individuals in high-stress roles at the top and middle management levels and that mindfulness is suited for environments like healthcare (e.g., Ceravolo & Raines, 2019; Pipe et al., 2009; Wasylkiw et al., 2015) and the corporate world (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019; Lange & Rowold, 2019). Several of the reviewed quantitative studies found improvements in self-reported stress following a mindfulness program (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019; Lundqvist et al., 2018; Pipe et al., 2009; Shonin et al., 2014; Zołnierczyk-Zreda et al., 2016). The review also identified a multitude of other outcomes related to psychological wellbeing and health, including enhanced resilience (e.g., Reitz et al., 2020), improved physiological markers of equanimity and relaxation (Crivelli et al., 2019), increased psychological flexibility (Lundqvist et al., 2018), increased positive affect and self-esteem (Zołnierczyk-Zreda et al., 2016), reduced anxiety (e.g., Brendel et al., 2016), reduced negative affect (e.g., Zołnierczyk-Zreda et al., 2016), and reduced mental fatigue (Crivelli et al., 2019). One study (Lundqvist et al., 2018) reported mindfulness practice among leaders conferred sleep-related benefits. In addition, a few qualitative studies identified improved self-care behavior, such as making conscious lifestyle choices such as starting a new hobby or taking a rest, as a significant outcome of leaders' mindfulness practice. Improving self-care practices can help deliver a better work-life balance and support sustainable stress reduction (e.g., Mahfouz, 2018).

4.2.2. Findings on work productivity outcomes

Numerous reviewed studies assessed the impact of mindfulness practice on leaders' work productivity and performance. Mindfulness practice was reported to affect leaders' information processing and cognitive functioning in the behavioral and physiological domains (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019; Lippincott, 2018; Wasylkiw et al., 2015). Lippincott (2018) clarified that leaders' regular, independent mindfulness practice enhanced leadership performance on the aspects of attention focus, decision-making, observation and information gathering, and managing reactions, distractions, and judgmental thinking. Crivelli et al. (2019), who quantitatively tested the cognitive abilities and neurocognitive efficiency of leaders during challenging cognitive tasks, reported that following mindfulness training, results showed a significant improvement in information-processing efficiency during cognitive tasks, in the ability to focus, and in the reactivity of the mind-brain system (Crivelli et al., 2019). Some studies reported outcomes related to experiences of creativity (Brendel et al., 2016; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017). Brendel et al. (2016) quantitatively examined the impact of a weekly, 45-min mindfulness meditation session on critical leadership qualities, where the participants demonstrated a significant increase in promotional regulatory focus connected to the inherent motivation to be creative and act creatively, compared to the active control group participants who attended a graduate-level leadership theory and development course. Some of the reviewed qualitative studies identified outcomes related to present-oriented working styles and personal effectiveness (Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Rupprecht et al., 2019; Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015). For instance, Rupprecht et al. (2019) found mindfulness influenced leaders' mindful task management capabilities, particularly in terms of reducing multitasking, improving the ability to manage distractions, and making more conscious transitions between events during the working day.

Mindfulness practice was also found to change leaders' attitudes to work. A study by Shonin and Van Gordon (2015) reported that the intervention improved engagement and feeling a connection to the task and situation at hand, helping participants see work as an integral part of their lives, and as a deeper-level learning opportunity. As a result of the shift in attitude toward work, the participants reported that life started to become whole again; work, rest, play, and family all became equally meaningful (Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015). Sutamchai et al. (2019) confirmed that mindfulness practice was an effective aid to promoting leaders' ethical decision-making and behavior through, for instance, raising awareness of the consequences of one's actions and the sense of responsibility to the self and others.

4.2.3. Findings on relationships outcomes

The review revealed various findings related to leaders' interpersonal relationships and illustrated that changes in how leaders think, feel, and act around other people as a result of practicing mindfulness contribute to maintaining high-quality professional relationships. Several studies reported on the results of mindfulness practice on social/contextual awareness and engaging with others (e.g., Lippincott, 2018; Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015; Vu & Gill, 2018). Shonin and Van Gordon (2015) reported that leaders who had participated in interventions experienced a reduced focus on themselves in the work context, which improved the quality of

transaction and communication with their surroundings, for example, tuning into feedback. Wasylkiw et al. (2015) found that after a mindfulness intervention, leaders demonstrated significant increases in the extent to which they considered others' opinions and viewpoints when making important decisions. Exploring a similar line, Rupprecht et al. (2019) notes how leaders report an improved ability to listen more attentively and openly to what others have to say. The same study also found that leaders who participated in a mindfulness intervention reported having engaged in self-reflection which offered them insights into their own reactions and beliefs, and consequently raised their awareness of how those personal reactions and beliefs influenced other people.

The reviewed research addressing other-oriented emotional outcomes of leader mindfulness practices reported increased prosocial and positive emotions to others (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Wasylkiw et al., 2015) and greater respect for other people's opinions and contributions, which Lippincott (2018) linked to changes in leaders' social awareness due to mindfulness practice. In

Table 1

Summary of findings: Essential and transformative outcomes of leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices.

Outcome	Area of impact	Authors
Essential outcomes		
Stress management/perceived stress	Personal wellbeing	Ahlvik et al. (2018); Brendel et al. (2016); Ceravolo and Raines (2019); Crivelli et al. (2019); Kersemaekers (2020); Lange and Rowold (2019); Lundqvist et al. (2018); Pipe et al. (2009); Shelton, Hein, and Phipps (2020); Shonin et al. (2014); Shonin and Van Gordon (2015); Wasylkiw et al. (2015); Zołnierczyk-Zreda et al. (2016)
Job satisfaction	Personal wellbeing	Shonin et al. (2014)
Resilience	Personal wellbeing	Reitz et al. (2020); Shelton et al. (2020)
Psychological wellbeing	Personal wellbeing	Ahlvik et al. (2018); Ceravolo and Raines (2019); Crivelli et al. (2019); Kersemaekers (2020); Lundqvist et al. (2018); Reitz et al. (2020); Shelton et al. (2020); Shonin et al. (2014); Shonin and Van Gordon (2015); Vu and Gill (2018); Wasylkiw et al. (2015); Zołnierczyk-Zreda et al. (2016)
Physical health	Personal wellbeing	Vu and Gill (2018)
Sleep quality	Personal wellbeing	Lundqvist et al. (2018)
Self-compassion	Personal wellbeing	Mahfouz (2018); Wasylkiw et al. (2015)
Self-care behavior	Personal wellbeing	Lychnell (2017); Mahfouz (2018); Rupprecht et al. (2019)
Information processing	Work productivity	Crivelli et al. (2019); Lippincott (2018); Wasylkiw et al. (2015)
Creativity	Work productivity	Brendel et al. (2016); Goldman-Schuyler et al. (2017)
Present-moment oriented working styles	Work productivity	Rupprecht et al. (2019); Shonin and Van Gordon (2015)
Openness toward work-related issues	Work productivity	Burmansah et al. (2020); Lychnell (2017); Shonin and Van Gordon (2015)
Job performance	Work productivity	Shonin et al. (2014); Shonin and Van Gordon (2015)
Ethical decision-making	Work productivity	Sutamchai et al. (2019)
Transformative outcomes		
Social/contextual awareness	Relationships	Kuechler and Stedham (2018); Vreeling et al. (2019)
Perspective-taking	Relationships	Chesley and Wylson (2016); Kuechler and Stedham (2018); Lewis and Ebbeck (2014); Shonin and Van Gordon (2015); Vu and Gill (2018)
Positive affect toward others	Relationships	Burmansah et al. (2020); Goldman-Schuyler et al. (2017); Sutamchai et al. (2019); Vreeling et al. (2019); Vu and Gill (2018); Wasylkiw et al. (2015)
Engaging/interacting with others	Relationships	Chesley and Wylson (2016); Frizzell et al. (2016); Goldman-Schuyler et al. (2017); Lewis and Ebbeck (2014); Lippincott (2018); Mahfouz (2018); Rupprecht et al. (2019)
Helping behavior/collaboration	Relationships	Reitz et al. (2020); Vreeling et al. (2019)
Ethical leadership behavior	Relationships	Kersemaekers (2020); Schuh et al. (2019); Sutamchai et al. (2019); Vu and Gill (2018)
Transformational leadership behavior	Relationships	Lange and Rowold (2019)
Authentic leadership behavior	Relationships	Nübold et al. (2019)
Self-awareness/awareness of experience	Inner growth	Baron et al. (2018); Frizzell et al. (2016); Goldman-Schuyler et al. (2017); Lewis and Ebbeck (2014); Kuechler and Stedham (2018); Lippincott (2018); Mahfouz (2018); Vreeling et al. (2019); Vu and Gill (2018)
Self-reflection	Inner growth	Lewis and Ebbeck (2014); Mahfouz (2018); Rupprecht et al. (2019)
Self-regulation of emotion/behavior	Inner growth	Frizzell et al. (2016); Lippincott (2018); Mahfouz (2018); Vreeling et al. (2019); Vu and Gill (2018)
Adapting to change/flexibility	Inner growth	Chesley and Wylson (2016); Lychnell (2017); Goldman-Schuyler et al. (2017); Reitz et al. (2020); Rupprecht et al. (2019)
Spiritual growth	Inner growth	Shonin and Van Gordon (2015)
Moral development	Inner growth	Sutamchai et al. (2019)

support, Goldman-Schuyler et al. (2017) found that leaders who focused on being present exhibited empathy and heightened awareness of pain within organizations, which made their relationships with other people feel more workable and meaningful.

With regard to other-oriented behavioral changes, the review revealed outcomes relating to respectful and ethical leadership practices (Mahfouz, 2018; Schuh et al., 2019; Sutamchai et al., 2019; Vu & Gill, 2018; Wasylkiw et al., 2015), which according to Vu and Gill (2018) may be associated with heightened social and contextual awareness. According to Mahfouz (2018) who studied the impact of a mindfulness-based professional development program on school leaders, as leaders became more aware and reflective of their reactions and emotions, they were able to respond in a more constructive way during challenging interactions. In addition, recent quantitative dyad studies examined the interpersonal influences of mindfulness practice on leadership styles where leadership quality depends on a trustful interpersonal process between leader and follower and where the leader takes an interest in the needs of the follower. Lange and Rowold (2019) found that leaders who participated in a mindfulness intervention showed stronger trans-formational and lower destructive leadership behaviors as assessed by subordinates than the control group participants, while Nübold et al. (2019) reported that mindfulness intervention increased authentic leadership as perceived by both leaders and followers.

4.2.4. Findings on inner growth outcomes

The impact of mindfulness practice on leaders' inner growth was addressed by several of the reviewed qualitative studies. Gold-man-Schuyler et al. (2017) discovered that open awareness practice enhanced leaders' awareness of their personal experience in several ways: it heightened experiences of bodily sensations, feelings, and thoughts, and brought a sense of connectedness, safety, appreciation, and gratitude. Lippincott (2018) reported that leaders linked enhanced awareness with perceived leadership effec-tiveness, which became evident in descriptions of emotional self-awareness and personal transformation, such as realizations about one's ineffectiveness. As for findings related to self-regulation of emotions and behavior, leaders reported improved emotional self-control (Lippincott, 2018), reductions in emotional reactivity, and a willingness to use practices that helped to regulate and neutralize difficult feelings, making difficult experiences more bearable (Mahfouz, 2018). Shonin and Van Gordon (2015) reported their respondents having an increased appreciation of their work, which brought more balance and meaning to their lives as a whole and empowered the participants to take control of their personal and spiritual development. Sutamchai et al. (2019) reported that mindfulness affected leaders' moral development, as exemplified in an increased awareness of the right things to do, of personal desires and cravings, and in the rejection of greed.

Finally, the reviewed studies reported generally positive results immediately after mindfulness intervention or practice period (post-assessment), which indicates they were effective in achieving the targeted outcomes. A few studies reported not having achieved all of the measured outcomes, indicating that a particular form of mindfulness practice was more effective for some of the targeted outcomes than some others in that particular study. For instance, Brendel et al. (2016) did not find effects for resilience or tolerance for ambiguity, and Ahlvik et al. (2018) did not find significant effects for engagement. Some of the reviewed studies that measured longitudinal effects using follow-up procedures reported varying results on how those outcomes were sustained. Wasylkiw et al. (2015) found that attendees on a weekend retreat showed significant increases in mindfulness and corresponding reductions in stress which were sustained across eight weeks post-retreat, while Ceravolo and Raines (2019) reported that at a three-month follow-up of an eight-week mindfulness intervention none of the score changes were statistically significant. Lundqvist et al. (2018) found improvements in sleep quality immediately after an eight-week intervention compared to a passive control group but could not detect the same effect in a six-week follow-up assessment. It seems that, even among studies with a similar focus, comparing the effects of mindfulness in-terventions of different length, intensity, and content is a significant challenge.

A summary of the reported outcomes is presented in Table 1. The implications of the review findings for future research are discussed next.

5. Discussion and agenda for future research

The review of prior research findings provided a framework looking beyond wellbeing to other leadership issues more broadly, and increased understanding of the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices when applied to the leadership context. The findings of the review have various implications for future research. Given the increasing worldwide popularity of mindfulness among leaders, the number of studies published in high-quality leadership/management journals, organizational/applied psychology journals, and educational journals can be expected to continue to rise. Advancing the relatively new and growing research on mindfulness in the context of leadership requires rigorous theoretical and empirical research efforts to gain a better understanding of the concept of mindfulness as a leader-specific practice, when and in what forms leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices may be most effective, what the essential and transformative outcomes of these practices are for leaders and their sphere of influence, and how and through which processes mindfulness can support individual and collective-level leadership development.

5.1. Opportunities for theoretical advancement

5.1.1. Mindfulness as a leader-specific practice

Revealing the complexity of the construct and the lacking consensus around its components (Choi & Leroy, 2015; Davidson & Kazniak, 2015; Gethin, 2011), there was considerable variety among the reviewed studies in how they presented and discussed the extant definitions and conceptualizations of mindfulness. The definitions of mindfulness operationalized as leader-specific provided by the studies were often not concise. In principle, definitions should be precise and concise and also facilitate the development of theory (MacKenzie, 2003). Instead of being content with diverse and often conflicting definitions (MacKenzie, 2003), it is recommended that

future studies provide a synthesized conceptualization that reflects what is being assessed in the study. In addition, future studies should inform readers of how the different operationalizations (mindfulness as a trait, state, or intervention) are understood (Eby et al., 2019) and interrelated in the study of mindfulness as a leader-specific practice. Studies on mindfulness in the context of leadership, as a method to improve the leadership process or individual leader capabilities, should expressly set out the understanding and rationale behind assessing mindfulness either as a trainable skill or practice, or a quality that can be developed as a result of either an intervention or independent practice, rather than a stable personality trait or a momentary state of mind.

Future studies on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices should aim to provide better conceptual clarity not only on mindfulness but also on leadership. Despite contextualizing mindfulness within leadership, the extent to which the leadership context and the leadership-related concepts were discussed in the reviewed studies varied a great deal and often lacked depth and precision. In the reviewed studies, a strong theoretical positioning in leadership or leader development research was seldom evident, as could be seen in the general scarcity of references to some of the most prominent researchers within the field (e.g., Day, 2000; Day et al., 2014). Organizational leaders are formally responsible for the efforts of others (Day & Dragoni, 2015), therefore future studies are strongly encouraged to consistently define a leader as someone who holds a managerial or leadership position in an organization *and* who has followers. They should also accurately define what they mean by terms such as *leadership effectiveness*, *leadership performance*, *leadership capabilities*, and *leadership capacity*. Furthermore, as mindfulness training offered for leaders in organizational settings is primarily an effort to improve the individual leader capabilities deemed critical for effective leadership, future research should be expected to address the leader(ship) development literature, and explicate and distinguish the means of facilitating effective leadership and expanding leadership capacities through leadership development (a collective capacity) and leader development (an individual capacity) (Day, 2000) and synthesizing knowledge of what might be done for leadership to be effective.

5.1.2. Leader mindfulness interventions and practices

As the reviewed studies confirm, there are many different kinds of mindfulness interventions on offer for different leader audiences. There seems to be no one type of mindfulness intervention nor one right way to practice mindfulness. How an individual practices mindfulness may be viewed as a "personal and contextual choice" (Vu & Gill, 2018, p. 155). It is usual that mindfulness interventions are tailored according to the needs of the audience and targeted outcome measures because it is expected that the content of the intervention or practice approach will affect the expected outcome (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). In the reviewed studies, three types of specific focus of the intervention could be identified: a wellbeing focus, a leadership focus, and a spiritual focus. The review detected the dominance of studies with a primary focus on stress management and other wellbeing outcomes that commonly used mindfulness-based stress-reduction interventions (e.g., Zołnierczyk-Zreda et al., 2016). Studies which from the outset approached mindfulness from the leadership angle commonly deployed interventions tailored specifically for leader audiences (e.g., Lange & Rowold, 2019). Some studies approached mindfulness as a spiritual practice (e.g., Vu & Gill, 2018). The richness of mindfulness programs offered for leaders offers future studies an opportunity to investigate the implications of the likely dependence of outcomes on their particular approach and content, as suggested by Shonin and Van Gordon (2015). Importantly, future research may explore how leaders perceive these differences, and on what basis selections are made by organizations.

The review also shows that mindfulness training programs offered in workplace settings — even those apparently similar in content — are heterogenous in terms of length and intensity, because they need to meet the requirements of contemporary work environments in regard limited time commitment and flexible delivery methods (Bartlett et al., 2019). While the comparison of different kinds of interventions is difficult—unless the interventions and their matched comparison conditions are the same or the intervention descriptions provide the same details, unless enough studies use the same outcome measures and report the outcomes in a transparent way, and unless the studies apply the same longitudinal assessments beyond pre-post measures (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015)—it is in the interest of human resource management professionals and researchers alike to attempt to assess the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions and practices.

In regard to determining which kinds of mindfulness interventions and practices may be the most effective, some initial conclusions can be drawn—and some additional research questions derived—based on prior research. First, the reviewed studies emphasized the important role of a sustained regular independent practice and home practice occurring outside the formal program context to deliver the goal of lasting, long-term effectiveness (e.g., Ceravolo & Raines, 2019; Reitz et al., 2020). Independent or home practice that can sustain effects that persist beyond a period of formal meditation practice is an especially important element of formal mindfulness interventions and must be assessed using rigorous longitudinal follow-up procedures; that is because the purpose of any kind of meditation practice is to transform everyday life (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). The integration of insights into the leaders' daily lives prompted by mindfulness practice may be needed if work is to become an enabler of their inner growth rather than an obstacle to it (Lychnell, 2017). While the absence of formal program settings or instructor-led sessions may pose a challenge for assessing both the compliance and effectiveness of independent mindfulness practices, future research should expand the understanding of leaders' independent and informal mindfulness practices occurring outside the formal intervention contexts. Moreover, for the intervention to be effective, the individual has to be motivated and dedicate time for practice outside the formal intervention context, which raises the question of what would be a working strategy to motivate more leaders to practice mindfulness. Second, despite the dominance of longer, typically eight-week, interventions that are generally considered effective (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), several reviewed studies reported that shorter, "low-dose" mindfulness interventions can also bring positive results for leaders (e.g., Wasylkiw et al., 2015, Crivelli et al., 2019). The effectiveness of a shorter mindfulness intervention for working adults has been reported (Klatt, Buckworth, & Malarkey, 2009), and gaining insights into the short-term intervention designs offered for leaders would be a valuable future research area. Third, the reviewed studies displayed a trend toward self-administered, technology-supported mindfulness programs responding to the demand to provide mindfulness training for busy leaders in a cost-effective way. Such program forms have the potential to tackle

many of the constraints of traditional mindfulness training, including invested time and cost and evaluating the impact of practice (Crivelli et al., 2019; Nübold et al., 2019). Future studies should therefore investigate the effectiveness of the alternatives to the typical, eight-week instructor-led forms of intervention. Based on what is known from prior research, specific research questions and hypotheses should be explored and tested by future studies.

5.1.3. Essential and transformative outcomes of leaders' mindfulness practice

The review showed that prior research on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices is focused on measuring outcomes seen as relevant for leaders and leadership. With regard to *what* develops through leaders' mindfulness practices, this review outlined the four main areas of impact where mindfulness can support leader development—personal wellbeing, work productivity, relationships, and inner growth—that have an essential and transformative significance for leaders.

A considerable body of existing research supports the efficacy of leaders' mindfulness practice for essential wellbeing outcomes, most commonly those related to stress management. Given the importance of renewed energy to leaders' wellbeing, productivity, and leadership quality (Byrne et al., 2014), it is surprising that only one prior study (Lundqvist et al., 2018) assessed the sleep-related outcomes of leaders' mindfulness practice. With research supporting the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions in bringing about positive sleep outcomes in general populations (Shallcross, Visvanathan, Sperber, & Duberstein, 2019), future research on the efficacy of mindfulness practice on leaders' sleep quality and leadership would make a novel contribution. Additionally, future studies could explore the role of regular mindfulness practice in leaders' sustained health behavior over a longer time period. As for the essential productivity and performance outcomes, the reviewed research implied that improved wellbeing due to mindfulness practice can translate into improved cognitive functioning and productivity (Crivelli et al., 2019; Lippincott, 2018). Future research should further investigate how the behavioral mechanisms or processes that might be induced by mindfulness practices—such as reductions in multitasking, better prioritization, and acts of self-compassion—may affect the productivity of individual leaders.

The findings of the review confirm that mindfulness-based interventions and practices can affect benefits for leaders beyond personal wellbeing and work productivity. Prior research makes it possible to state that if a leader is to be an exceptional people leader and flourish both personally and professionally, that leader will require both essential leadership capabilities (related to wellbeing and work productivity) and transformative leadership capabilities (related to relationships and inner growth). A leader may be able to cope and perform without transformative capabilities such as self-awareness and contextual awareness but may not experience the sense of meaningfulness or flourish (Karssiens et al., 2014). Thereafter, in addition to studying the impact of mindfulness practice on such essential matters as the individual leader's wellbeing and productivity, future research should further explore the transformative impact of mindfulness from the leadership perspective related to relationship matters as well as leaders' inner growth on a personal level. First, the significance of social/contextual awareness and the quality of relationships in leadership has been repeatedly discussed in the theoretical research literature on mindfulness and leaders (e.g., Eby et al., 2020; Good et al., 2016; Hunter, 2015; Karssiens et al., 2014), but empirical research remains scarce. To advance research on the interpersonal and social impact of leaders' mindfulness practices, empirical research should examine the relational impact of leader mindfulness interventions on leader interaction with team members, taking a holistic view across the cognitive/attentional, emotional, and behavioral processes involved. The review showed that mindfulness interventions can increase transformational and authentic leadership behaviors as assessed by followers, and there is evidence that trait mindfulness (i.e., mindfulness assessed as a personality trait) could be an antecedent of transformational leadership (Carleton, 2018; Lange, Bormann, & Rowold, 2018; Nübold et al., 2019) and servant leadership (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). Therefore, to advance the theoretical integration of mindfulness interventions and leadership development, future research should further investigate whether, and how, training leaders in mindfulness could be integrated into and support the development of transformational, authentic, ethical, and servant leadership styles, which, according to Anderson and Sun (2017), form the basis of spiritual leadership encompassing many of the characteristics of mindfulness, including showing authentic care, gratitude and acceptance toward others, self-awareness, and self-regulation of behavior. Second, future research should address the potentially unique worth of mindfulness-based methods compared to traditional leadership training: its holistic view of the human being. Training specific leadership skills as part of traditional leadership education may not be the only way to influence leadership behavior (Lange & Rowold, 2019). Instead, the key to leadership development may be to develop self-awareness. As Davidson and Kazniak (2015), p. 582) put it: "A key target of contemplative practice is awareness itself." Therefore, the ultimate targeted outcome of mindfulness training has transformative value over any instrumental, directly measurable benefits. Indeed, this is an ongoing developmental process. Furthermore, as shown in the review, leaders reported their mindfulness practice had increased self-awareness, a sense of responsibility, and being present in the midst of ongoing situations and other people (e.g., Brendel et al., 2016; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017). The little empirical research currently available supports the argument that the development of mindfulness can have a transformative value that has the power to cause major shifts for the individual leader (Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017). Goldman-Schuyler et al., (2017, p. 86) capture the ultimate need behind people's enduring interest in present-moment-inspired approaches such as mindfulness in stating it means "to experience the fullness of life in a richly meaningful way." Thus, future studies should explore whether training leaders in mindfulness could help them to become more effective in the leadership role *and* experience more fulfillment at work through inner growth. Again, it would be especially valuable to understand the development of the informal, internalized mindfulness practice as *a way of being* available anytime. Importantly, as personal development is not always easy or fun, and personal transformation is a life-long endeavor, it is important that research does not only concentrate on the positive outcomes of mindfulness practice but also considers the downsides of the development process as it unfolds. The literature illustrates that sustaining a regular mindfulness practice is a challenge for leaders. Furthermore, maintaining a being-based mindfulness practice in the work context may require a radical shift, or indeed feel too uncomfortable for some busy professionals (Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017). This hypothesis may be tested by future studies; for example, by inquiring into the obstacles to attendance and practice that hinder the long-

term development process.

5.1.4. Processes of mindfulness-based leader development

Prior studies on leaders' mindfulness practices have focused on the outcomes and aimed to measure the change occurring before and after mindfulness practice. The research reviewed shows we have a relatively good understanding of the scope of outcomes across the four main areas of impact—personal wellbeing, work productivity, relationships, and inner growth—that leaders' mindfulness practice can be expected to affect. After offering suggestions for future research in each of the thematic categories in Fig. 2, the focus will now be on the arrows from that figure that represent the processes of leader-specific mindfulness practices and can illuminate entirely unexplored research avenues. When studying the impact of leaders' mindfulness practices, the focus should not be on outcomes alone, but on understanding the experiential processes induced by mindfulness through which leaders learn and develop to become better leaders. It would be worthwhile to investigate what internal and external events and experiences must occur for the reported beneficial outcomes to be realized, in the process between the start and end of a mindfulness intervention, the follow-ups, and over a longer period.

It is known from prior research that while it is challenging for leaders to practice mindfulness regularly to maintain the positive outcomes, mindfulness practice should be regularly reinforced (e.g., Ceravolo & Raines, 2019; Wasylkiw et al., 2015); a finding that indicates that development of mindfulness skills occurs over time. However, there is not enough information on the processes and processual outcomes involved in leaders' mindfulness practices that occur over time and beyond the formal intervention context. More should be known, for instance, about how mindfulness facilitates establishing beneficial leadership behaviors. Future research may reveal knowledge regarding personal transformation occurring over time, as well as leaders' independent and informal mindfulness practices that might take different shapes after the ending of formal programs. A mindfulness intervention might be only the starting point for a new, fruitful path of individual leader development. To further clarify how practicing mindfulness can support leader development, and to establish the theoretical foundations of mindfulness practice in the context of leadership, future research might seek to further explore the processual aspects of mindfulness as a leader self-development approach: the motivation and willingness to develop, experiential on-the-job learning, self-reflection of internal and external feedback, the cultivation of self-awareness and social awareness, and development of leadership ethics.

5.2. Opportunities for empirical advancement

To better understand mindfulness practice in the context of leadership will require rigorous empirical research efforts and hence, overall, stronger, novel, and creative research designs should be encouraged.

5.2.1. Samples

Small sample sizes have been an issue in prior studies. In quantitative studies, small sample size is a well-known liability to statistical conclusion validity and limits generalizability (Garavan et al., 2020). In qualitative studies, in turn, small sample size can also endanger empirical rigor. With the exception of a single case study, qualitative studies need to have a representative sample involving informants of each sub-segment of the total population and establish data saturation based on knowledge of the research context and paradigm (Boddy, 2016). In training studies, for instance, sample sizes are determined by population sizes and response rates (Garavan et al., 2020). Therefore, future mindfulness intervention studies should secure sufficiently large population sizes even in the intervention planning phase by setting up larger participant groups or multiple cohorts and maximizing response rates throughout the data collection process by engaging the intervention participants, so as to minimize the incidence of drop-out.

5.2.2. Quantitative research designs

The reviewed quantitative studies commonly utilized control groups, and in some cases also randomized the assignment of participant sub-populations into conditions and using partly blinding methods. However, not all the studies used randomization, which is not always possible in mindfulness intervention studies where participants are self-selecting (Choi & Leroy, 2015). As a weakness of the existing studies, use of a waitlist condition as a comparison treatment was often the practice, even though is likely to lead to demand bias (i.e., participants knowing which group they belong to and expecting certain outcomes) (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). Future quantitative intervention studies should deploy active comparison treatments and ideally blind participants and investigators to a specific research condition (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015). Furthermore, because in intervention studies the entire intervention (including length, delivery, teacher, sessions, materials, and group) determines its effectiveness, the control and comparison conditions used should match the research condition for the non-specific features to be able to assess the effects of mindfulness meditation or awareness practices alone (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015).

Among the reviewed studies, the interventions were not described in the same way, and not all studies provided the same details when reporting results (e.g., effect sizes). Given the wide variety of different mindfulness interventions for leaders offered, not describing the interventions accurately enough may hinder comparison of interventions to determine their effectiveness. Accordingly, future studies on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices with rigorous research designs should detail the type of practice being studied. As soon as there is sufficient data, a meta-analysis on leader-specific mindfulness practice should be conducted.

5.2.3. Qualitative research designs

More than half of the reviewed studies used qualitative research methods, which is considered a strength, as qualitative data collection and analysis methods such as phenomenological first-person investigation (e.g., Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015) can provide a

more comprehensive understanding of the perceived leadership outcomes than a cross-sectional point in time assessment with pre-defined measures. Inquiries into the patterns of mental and behavioral processes, and insights arising from them are closely related to human developmental processes of mindfulness and leader development and require an in-depth qualitative approach alongside the consistent measurement of outcomes (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017). Based on the review of the heterogenous qualitative research, the recommendation for the future entails consistent qualitative rigor in terms of more detailed and better-argued descriptions of the chosen data collection and analysis processes. Other recommendations in regard qualitative methods will be discussed in the following sections.

5.2.4. Longitudinal research designs

Longitudinal approaches and follow-up procedures enable the assessment of longitudinal effects of interventions (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015), which is a relevant consideration for all quantitative and qualitative research designs. The use of longitudinal approaches and follow-up procedures deployed in some of the reviewed quantitative and qualitative studies can be considered a strength. However, as the review showed, none of the follow-up assessments among the reviewed quantitative studies was conducted later than six months post-intervention, which demonstrates a lack of a longitudinal view across quantitative studies. None of the reviewed qualitative studies offered a view longer than one-year post-intervention on the effects of leaders' mindfulness practice. The current review revealed that a longer, several-year-long follow-up on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices for leaders is completely absent from the field. Owing to the ongoing nature of individual leader development (Day et al., 2014), understanding the long-term impact is essential. At the same time, the expectations for the longitudinal effects should mirror the length and intensity of the intervention or practice period. Davidson and Kazniak (2015) point out that a longer intervention is usually designed for longer practice periods including continuous independent practice, while a short induction may be designed to have only short-term effects. Nevertheless, rigorous longitudinal research designs are needed in both quantitative and qualitative research to gain an understanding of the long-term impact of leaders' mindfulness practice (Choi & Leroy, 2015). Systematic follow-up procedures should be integrated into the study designs, as they can provide valuable knowledge about how the beneficial impact of mindfulness can be most effectively sustained in the long-term. For example, the role of continuous technological support integrated into mindfulness programs as a reinforcement of regular practice should be clarified. Longitudinal research designs that follow leaders over a longer period (e.g., 1–5 years) would help understand the unfolding individual leader development process. Such longitudinal approaches are strongly recommended as they can provide information on leaders' informal mindfulness practices over time and undertaken outside the formal intervention context, which there is not yet good understanding on, and reveal knowledge regarding personal transformation happening over time.

5.2.5. Mixed methods research designs

Quantitative and qualitative research designs were equally utilized in studies on leaders' mindfulness practices, but mixed methods designs were not as common. In fact, the review indicated a lack of well-designed, innovative mixed methods research designs that would illuminate leader-specific mindfulness interventions and practices. The use of more mixed methods mindfulness intervention study designs is therefore encouraged, especially when exploring questions relating to its influences on leadership such as interpersonal workplace relationships (e.g., leader-follower relationships and team functioning), and individual leader development, which is a continuous human development process happening throughout the career and lifetime. These processes are often perceived as taking various shapes and forms that may not be captured by statistical survey methods alone (Choi & Leroy, 2015). In sum, qualitative and quantitative designs can complement each other in a mixed methods research setting and well-conceived research designs that combine multiple methods (e.g., survey, interview, narratives, written reflection, journaling, observation, and biometrics) and perspectives (first-, second-, and third-person) should be deployed more often where statistical survey methods alone cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of mindfulness practice in the leadership context.

5.2.6. Multi-perspective and multilevel approaches

The adoption of multi-perspective and multilevel approaches when studying mindfulness practices within the leadership context is encouraged. Today, there is a shortage of such studies. Combining first-, second-, and third-person perspectives in mindfulness intervention and practice studies (Davidson & Kazniak, 2015) could prove particularly informative, for example, first-person participant experiences (e.g., journal entries) and third-person measurements of behavioral activity (e.g., periods of sleep or being active). In terms of wellbeing, assessing the effects of mindfulness practice, for example, on individual leaders' health behavior, perceptions, and sleep quality through the combination of a subjective, first-person method (such as journaling) and an objective third-person method (such as biometric measurement with wearables) would provide multiple perspectives and thus richer knowledge on the influence of mindfulness practice on leaders' personal resources. In terms of the leadership process, as leadership and leader development happen in a dynamic interaction between leaders, followers, peers, partners, customers, HR professionals, and the situational context (Day et al., 2014), leader development research should seek a multilevel view of the individual (within- and between-person), the dyadic (relationship between followers, peers, and subordinates), and the team/organization (Day, 2011). Future research might therefore seek to understand the collective effects of leaders' mindfulness practice by exploring the perspectives of other relevant stakeholders. For example, combining first- and second-person research designs is especially important when exploring questions relating to the influence of mindfulness practice on interpersonal leadership relationships (e.g., dyadic leader-follower relationships and team functioning), as seen, for instance, in those reviewed studies that provided the follower's perspective for measures on transformational leadership behaviors (Lange & Rowold, 2019) and authentic leadership behavior (Nübold et al., 2019). However, in the future, more rigorous multi-level designs, especially ones that integrate the perspectives (for instance, pairing a

leader's *and* a follower's perspective) on leadership-related outcome measures and provide sufficient information on complex samples, are recommended to gain understanding on the effects of leaders' mindfulness practice on the mutual leadership relationship.

In sum, novel and creative future research efforts are strongly recommended to complement the backbone of well-designed and well-executed quantitative and qualitative intervention research on leaders' mindfulness practices. As reported above, some recently published studies include empirical research that utilizes multiple levels of units, longitudinal approaches, and qualitative/mixed methods designs that may be particularly suited to studying leadership and leader development which are developmental, processual, experiential, dynamic, and interactional (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Suggestions to guide future research efforts in the field are summarized in Table 2.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Theoretical contributions

In recognition of more leaders around the world becoming familiar with mindfulness as a way to enhance individual, team, and organizational functioning, the present study set out to explore the impact of a leader-specific mindfulness practice. This is the first systematic literature review with primary focus on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices from the leader development perspective. It makes several contributions to the literature on both mindfulness and leader development. First, this review sets the phenomenon in the practical and theoretical context of leadership and leader development and provides conceptual clarity on the key concepts. The current review discussed the developmental nature of mindfulness practice (e.g., Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Purser & Milillo, 2015), and the dependence of effective leadership on the subjects possessing an awareness of themselves and others (e.g., Day &

Table 2
Future research suggestions.

Suggestion for future research	Area of contribution
Theoretical advancement	
How to define, operationalize, and measure"mindfulness" in the context of organizations and leadership?	Operationalization of mindfulness as a leader-specific practice
How to define and measure leadership-related concepts in studies of mindfulness and leadership?	Operationalization of mindfulness as a leader-specific practice
How to position research on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices within leadership and leader development research?	Operationalization of mindfulness as a leader-specific practice
How do organizations select mindfulness interventions based on their content, length, intensity and deliver format?	Leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices
How do the outcomes of different types of mindfulness interventions depend on their approach/content?	Leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices
What kind of informal and/or independent mindfulness practices do leaders have, and what affects their motivation (antecedents)?	Leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices
How effective are 'alternative' types of mindfulness interventions (i.e., short-term, remotely delivered, self-administered, technology-supported)?	Leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices
What are the long-term impacts of leaders' mindfulness practice, and what can most effectively support (and hinder) reinforcement of a regular mindfulness practice?	Leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices
What is the impact of mindfulness practice on leaders' sleep and leadership performance?	Outcomes of leader-specific mindfulness practice
What is the role of regular mindfulness practice for leaders' sustained health behaviors?	Outcomes of leader-specific mindfulness practice
Which behavioral mechanisms/processes induced by mindfulness practice affect productivity of individual leaders?	Outcomes of leader-specific mindfulness practice
What are the relational impacts of leader mindfulness interventions on the cognitive/attentional, emotional, and behavioral processes involved in leader interaction with followers/team members?	Outcomes of leader-specific mindfulness practice
How can training leaders in mindfulness support development of leadership styles/behaviors (e.g., servant), and compared to traditional leadership training?	Outcomes of leader-specific mindfulness practice
What is the unique worth of mindfulness-based development efforts compared to other/traditional leadership/leader development interventions?	Outcomes of leader-specific mindfulness practice
What type of personal/inner growth do leaders experience over time as a result of attending a mindfulness intervention/practicing mindfulness independently?	Outcomes of leader-specific mindfulness practice
What are the downsides/obstacles of leader-specific mindfulness practice?	Outcomes of leader-specific mindfulness practice
What are the collective/multi-level impacts of leaders' mindfulness practice (individual/team/organization)?	Outcomes of leader-specific mindfulness practice
What experiential processes/internal and external events are involved/needed to have happened for the reported outcomes to realize, in the process between start and end of a mindfulness intervention, and between the end of the intervention and the follow-up(s)?	Processes of mindfulness-based leader development
Empirical advancement	
What is a sufficient sample size in quantitative/qualitative studies, and in individual/dyad/team studies of mindfulness and leadership, and how to avoid participant leakage throughout the data collection phases?	Empirical rigor
What kind of research designs could be integrated into viable longitudinal, mixed method, multi-level and multi-perspective designs?	Empirical rigor

Dragoni, 2015; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). A definition of mindfulness as a leader-specific practice was offered that captures its essence as a leader self-development approach that relies on leaders' motivation to develop through raising awareness of their experience to support not only themselves but other people. Second, the review identified various leadership-related developmental outcomes of leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices across the areas of personal wellbeing, work productivity, relationships, and inner growth, including self-care behavior, creativity, self-awareness, social/contextual awareness, ethical behavior, and adapting to change. Importantly, a conceptual framework based on prior findings was developed that not only synthesizes the key themes and outcomes in a consistent way to inform researchers and practitioners alike on the potential implications of mindfulness for leader development but also provides a resource for designing future studies and deriving implications for the application of mindfulness in leader development programs. Third, this review makes an important contribution by recommending a detailed future research agenda to advance theoretical and empirical knowledge of the growing, multidisciplinary field that highlights the importance of under-standing the unique relevance of mindfulness practice in the context of leadership. Strengths and limitations of prior research were reviewed. Recommendations for future research include that it looks beyond the essential wellbeing and work productivity outcomes and explores the transformative outcomes of mindfulness practices related to leaders' relationships and inner growth that involve enhanced self-awareness and social/contextual awareness and investigates the processual nature of a leader-specific mindfulness practice. Suggestions were made in regards empirical advancement of the research field, encouraging the use of creative mixed methods designs and adoption of longitudinal, multi-perspective and multilevel approaches. Overall, this review offers a thorough and future-oriented view of the current state of research.

6.2. Practical implications

This review has practical implications for those in human resource management, human resource development, and leadership positions. A key finding is the importance of mindfulness practice not only for the often-targeted essential benefits of personal wellbeing and work productivity but also for the desired development of transformative leadership capabilities such as self-awareness, social/contextual awareness, and ethical leadership behavior that can support leaders' relationships and their inner growth. Leader development programs with a strong mindfulness component can effectively develop the transformative capabilities of individual leaders because those programs encourage self-reflection of leadership experiences (Reichard & Johnson, 2011), are practice-based (Laccrenza et al., 2017), are intertwined in the continuous processes of human development and individual leader development (Day & Dragoni, 2015), and encourage an accumulation of self-awareness over time (e.g., Reichard & Johnson, 2011). As a voluntary personal practice embedded in the continuous leader self-development process, mindfulness can be helpful for leaders who are interested in mindfulness and motivated to develop themselves and their teams. Hopefully, future studies will shed light on the im-plications of mindfulness for the functioning of teams through leader-follower interactions, and how to encourage leaders to practice mindfulness.

7. Conclusion

This systematic review integrated current knowledge on leaders' mindfulness interventions and practices. The focus on the emerging field of research limited the number of studies that could be included in the review. There are many areas of interest to leaders that remain underexplored. This review encourages the continuing development of individual leaders through mindfulness training tailored for leader audiences.

Finally, the review found support for the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions and practices in building capabilities that leaders need to succeed when dealing with challenges, people, and change. The review confirmed that practicing mindfulness can beneficially influence leaders across many areas relevant to them including personal wellbeing, work productivity, relationships, and inner growth. To conclude, mindfulness is a leader self-development approach that has the potential to effectively improve an in-dividual's capacity for leadership.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Laura Ilona Urrila: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing.

Acknowledgements

References

Ahlvik, C., Lyddy, C., Reina, C., Good, D., Knappert, L., Reb, J., & Wincent, J. (2018). Overworked and under-resourced: A mindfulness intervention for middle manager well-being. In *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the academy of management, Chicago, IL – August 2018*.
Anderson, M. H., & Sun, P. Y. T. (2017). Reviewing leadership styles: Overlaps and the need for a new 'full-range' theory. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 19*(1), 76–96.

Baron, C., Baron, L., Grégoire, S., & Cayer, M. (2018). Fostering mindfulness and post-conventional consciousness in organizational leaders: An executive program. In *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the academy of management, Chicago, IL – August 2018*.

Bartlett, L., Martin, A., Neil, A. L., Mamish, K., Otahal, P., Kilpatrick, M., & Sanderson, K. (2019). A systematic review and meta-analysis of workplace mindfulness training randomized controlled trials. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 24*(1), 108–126. https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000146.

Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 19*(4), 426–432.

Booth, A., Papaioannou, D., & Sutton, A. (2012). *Systematic approaches to a successful literature review*. London: Sage Publications.

Boyce, L. A., Zaccaro, S. J., & Wisecarver, M. Z. (2010). Propensity for self-development of leadership attributes: Understanding, predicting, and supporting performance of leader self-development. *The Leadership Quarterly, 21*, 159–178.

Brendel, W., Hankerson, S., Byun, S., & Cunningham, B. (2016). Cultivating leadership dharma. Measuring the impact of regular mindfulness practice on creativity, resilience, tolerance for ambiguity, anxiety and stress. *Journal of Management Development, 35*(8), 1056–1078.

Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84* (4), 822–848.

Brown, K. W., Creswell, D., & Ryan, R. M. (2016). Introduction: The evolution of mindfulness science. In K. W. Brown, J. D. Creswell, & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of mindfulness: Theory, research and practice* (pp. 1–6). New York: The Guilford Press.

Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M., & Creswell, D. (2007). Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry, 18*(4), 211–237.

Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 97*(2), 117–134. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002.

Burmansah, B., Rugaiyah, R., Mukhtar, M., Nabilah, S., Ripki, A. J. H., & Fatayan, A. (2020). Mindful leadership: The ability of the leader to develop compassion and attention without judgment - a case study of the leader of Buddhist higher education institute. *European Journal of Educational Research, 9*(1), 51–65.

Byrne, A., Dionisia, A. M., Barling, J., Akers, A., Robertson, J., Lys, R., … Dupré, K. (2014). The depleted leader: The influence of leaders' diminished psychological resources on leadership behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly, 25*(2), 344–357.

Carleton, E. L. (2018). Leaders' trait mindfulness and transformational leadership: The mediating roles of leaders' positive affect and leadership self-efficacy. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 50*(3), 185–194.

Ceravolo, D., & Raines, A. (2019). The impact of a mindfulness intervention for nurse managers. *Journal of Holistic Nursing, 37*(1), 47–55.

Chesley, J., & Wylson, A. (2016). Ambiguity: The emerging impact of mindfulness for change leaders. *Journal of Change Management, 16*(4), 317–336.

Choi, E., & Leroy, H. (2015). Methods of mindfulness: How mindfulness is studied in the workplace. In J. Reb, & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds.), *Mindfulness in organizations* (pp. 67–99). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ciulla, J. B., & Forsyth, D. R. (2011). Leadership ethics. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, R. Jackson, & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *The sage handbook of leadership* (pp. 227–241). Sage: Sage Publications Ltd.

Crivelli, D., Fronda, G., Venturella, I., & Balconi, M. (2019). Stress and neurocognitive efficiency in managerial contexts: A study on technology-mediated mindfulness practice. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management, 12*(2), 42–56.

Davidson, R. J., & Kazniak, A. W. (2015). Conceptual and methodological issues in research on mindfulness and meditation. *American Psychologist, 70*(7), 581–592.

Day, D., & Dragoni, L. (2015). Leadership development: An outcome-oriented review based on time and levels of analyses. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 2*, 133–156.

Day, D. V. (2000). Leadership development: A review in context. *The Leadership Quarterly, 11*(4), 581–613.

Day, D. V. (2011). Leadership development. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, R. Jackson, & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *The sage handbook of leadership* (pp. 37–50). Sage: Sage Publications Ltd.

Day, D. V., Fleenor, J. W., Atwater, L. E., Sturm, R. E., & McKee, R. A. (2014). Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory. *The Leadership Quarterly, 25*, 63–82.

Day, D. V., & Harrison, M. M. (2007). A multilevel, identity-based approach to leadership development. *Human Resource Management Review, 17*, 360–373.

DeRue, D. S., Nahrgang, J. D., Hollenbeck, J. R., & Workman, K. (2012). A quasi-experimental study of after-event reviews and leadership development. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 97*, 997–1015.

Donaldson-Feilder, E., Lewis, R., & Yarker, J. (2019). What outcomes have mindfulness and meditation interventions for managers and leaders achieved? A systematic review. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 28*(1), 11–29.

Drucker, P. F. (2001). *The essential drucker*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Eby, L. T., Allen, T. D., Conley, K. M., Williamson, R. L., Henderson, T. G., & Mancini, V. S. (2019). Mindfulness-based training interventions for employees: A qualitative review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review, 29*(2), 156–178.

Eby, L. T., Robertson, M. M., & Facteau, D. B. (2020). Mindfulness and relationships: An organizational perspective. In M. R. Buckley, A. R. Wheeler, J. E. Baur, & J. R. B. Halbesleben (Eds.), *Research in personnel and human resources management* (pp. 57–102). https://doi.org/10.1108/S0742-730120200000038004.

Eisenbess, S. A. (2012). Re-thinking ethical leadership: An interdisciplinary integrative approach. *The Leadership Quarterly, 23*(5), 791–808.

Frizzell, D. A., Hoon, S., & Banner, D. K. A. (2016). Phenomenological investigation of leader development and mindfulness meditation. *Journal of Social Change, 8*(1), 14–25.

Fry, L., & Kriger, M. (2009). Towards a theory of being-centered leadership: Multiple levels of being as context for effective leadership. *Human Relations, 62*(11), 1667–1696.

Fyke, J. P., & Buzzanell, P. M. (2013). The ethics of conscious capitalism: Wicked problems in leading change and changing leaders. *Human Relations, 66*(2), 1619–1643.

Garavan, M., Sheehan, M., Lai, Y., Saunders, M. N. K., Clarke, N., Carbery, R., & Shanahan, V. (2020). Measuring the organizational impact of training: The need for greater methodological rigor. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 30*(3), 291–309.

Gethin, R. (2011). On some definitions of mindfulness. *Contemporary Buddhism, 12*(1), 263–279.

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2012). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods, 16*(1), 15–31.

Glomb, T. M., Duffy, M. K., Bono, J. E., & Yang, Y. T. (2011). Mindfulness at work. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management, 30*, 115–157.

Goldman-Schuyler, K., Skjei, S., Sanzgiri, J., & Koskela, V. (2017). "Moments of waking up": A doorway to mindfulness and presence. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 26*(1), 86–100.

Good, D. J., Lyddy, C. J., Glomb, T. M., Bono, J. E., Brown, K. W., Duffy, M. K., … Lazar, S. W. (2016). Contemplating mindfulness at work: An integrative review. *Journal of Management, 42*(1), 114–142.

Heslin, P. A., & Keating, L. A. (2017). In learning mode? The role of mindsets in derailing and enabling experiential leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly, 28*, 367–384.

Hunter, J. (2015). Teaching managers to manage themselves: Mindfulness and the inside work of management. In J. Reb, & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds.), *Mindfulness in organizations* (pp. 355–382). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hyland, P. K., Lee, R. A., & Mills, M. J. (2015). Mindfulness at work: A new approach to improving individual and organizational performance. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 8*(4), 576–602.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 10*(2), 144–156.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2011). Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps. *Contemporary Buddhism, 12*(1), 281–306.

Karssiens, A. E. A., Van der Linden, C., Wilderom, C. P. M., & Furtmueller, E. (2014). Embodied mind knowledge in leadership practice: Creating space in patterned thoughts and behaviors. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 23*(3), 231–241.

Keng, S., Smoski, M. J., & Robins, C. J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical Psychology Review, 31*, 1041–1056.

Kersemaekers, Vreeling, Verwij, van der Drift, Cillessen, van Dierendonck, & Speckens. (2020). Effectiveness and feasibility of a mindful leadership course for medical specialists: A pilot study. *BMC Medical Education, 20*(34). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-020-1948-5.

King, E., & Badham, R. (2018). The wheel of mindfulness: A generative framework for second-generation mindful leadership. *Mindfulness.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0890-7. Epub.

Klatt, M. D., Buckworth, J., & Malarkey, W. B. (2009). Effects of low-dose mindfulness-based-stress reduction (MBSR-Id) on working adults. *Health Education & Behavior, 36*(3), 601–614.

Kuechler, W., & Stedham, Y. (2018). Management education and transformational learning: The integration of mindfulness in an MBA course. *Journal of Management Education, 42*(1), 8–33.

Laccrenza, C. N., Reyes, D. L., Marlow, S. L., Joseph, D. L., & Salas, E. (2017). Leadership training design, delivery, and implementation: A meta-analysis. *The Journal of Applied Psychology, 102*(12), 1686–1718.

Lange, S., Bormann, K. C., & Rowold, J. (2018). Mindful leadership: Mindfulness as a new antecedent of destructive and transformational leadership behavior. *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation, 49*(2), 139–147.

Lange, S., & Rowold, J. (2019). Mindful leadership: Evaluation of a mindfulness-based leader intervention. *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation, 50*, 319–335.

Leroy, H., Segers, J., van Dierendonck, D., & den Hartog, D. (2018). Managing people in organizations: Integrating the study of HRM and leadership. *Human Resource Management Review, 28*, 249–257.

Lewis, A. B., & Ebbeck, V. (2014). Mindful and self-compassionate leadership development: Preliminary discussions with wildland fire managers. *Journal of Forestry, 112*(2), 230–236.

Lippincott, M. (2018). Deconstructing the relationship between mindfulness and leader effectiveness. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal, 39*(5), 650–664.

Liu, Z., Venkatesh, S., Murphy, S. E., & Riggio, R. E. (2020). Leader development across the lifespan: A dynamic experiences-grounded approach. *The Leadership Quarterly.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101382. available online 2 Feb 2020.

Lundqvist, C., Ståhl, L., Kenttä, G., & Thulin, U. (2018). Evaluation of a mindfulness intervention for Paralympic leaders prior to the Paralympic games. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching, 13*(1), 62–71.

Lychnell, L. (2017). When work becomes meditation: How managers use work as a tool for personal growth. *Journal of Management Spirituality and Religion, 14*(3), 225–275.

MacKenzie, S. B. (2003). The dangers of poor construct conceptualization. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 31*(3), 323–326.

Mahfouz, J. (2018). Mindfulness training for school administrators: Effects on well-being and leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration, 56*(6), 602–619.

Neal, J. (2018). An overview of the field of transformation. In J. Neal (Ed.), *Handbook of Personal and Organizational Transformation* (pp. 3–46). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66893-2.

Nübold, A., Van Quaquebeke, N., & Hülsheger, U. R. (2019). Be(com)ing real: A multi-source and an intervention study on mindfulness and authentic leadership. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 35*(4), 469–488.

Orvis, K. A., & Ratwani, L. K. (2010). Leader self-development: A contemporary context for leader development evaluation. *The Leadership Quarterly, 21*, 657–674.

Pipe, T. B., Bortz, J. J., Dueck, A., Pendergast, D., Buchda, V., & Summers, J. (2009). Nurse leader mindfulness meditation program for stress management: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Nursing Administration, 39*(3), 130–137.

Pircher Verdorfer, A. (2016). Examining mindfulness and its relations to humility, motivation to lead, and actual servant leadership behaviors. *Mindfulness, 7*(4), 950–961.

Purser, R. E., & Milillo, J. (2015). Mindfulness revisited: A Buddhist-based conceptualization. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 24*(1), 3–24.

Reichard, R. J., & Johnson, S. K. (2011). Leader self-development as organizational strategy. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22*, 33–42.

Reitz, M., Waller, L., Chaskalson, M., Olivier, S., & Rupprecht, S. (2020). Developing leaders through mindfulness practice. *Journal of Management Development.* https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-09-2018-0264. available online March 2020.

Ruedy, N. E., & Schweitzer, M. E. (2010). In the moment: The effect of mindfulness on ethical decision-making. *Journal of Business Ethics, 95*, 73–87.

Rupprecht, S., Falke, P., Kohls, N., Tamdjidi, C., Wittman, M., & Kersemaekers, W. (2019). Mindful leader development: How leaders experience the effects of mindfulness training on leader capabilities. *Frontiers in Psychology.* https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01081.

Schuh, S. C., Zheng, M. X., Xin, K. R., & Fernandez, J. A. (2019). The interpersonal benefits of leader mindfulness: A serial mediation model linking leader mindfulness, leader procedural justice enactment, and employee exhaustion and performance. *Journal of Business Ethics, 156*(4), 1007–1025.

Shallcross, A. J., Visvanathan, P. D., Sperber, S. H., & Duberstein, Z. T. (2019). Waking up to the problem of sleep: Can mindfulness help? A review of theory and evidence for the effects of mindfulness for sleep. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 28*, 37–41.

Shelton, C. D., Hein, S., & Phipps, K. A. (2020). Resilience and spirituality: A mixed methods exploration of executive stress. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 28*(2), 399–416.

Shonin, E., & Van Gordon, W. (2015). Managers' experiences of meditation awareness training. *Mindfulness, 6*, 899–909.

Shonin, E., Van Gordon, W., Dunn, T. J., Singh, N. N., & Griffiths, M. D. (2014). Meditation awareness training (MAT) for work-related wellbeing and job performance: A randomised controlled trial. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, 12*(6), 806–823.

Sutamchai, K., Rowlands, K. E., & Rees, C. J. (2019). The use of mindfulness to promote ethical decision making and behavior: Empirical evidence from the public sector in Thailand. *Public Administration and Development.* https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1872. available online December 2019.

Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management, 14*(3), 207–222.

Van Velsor, E., & McKauley, C. D. (2004). Our view of leadership development. In C. D. McKauley, & E. Van Velsor (Eds.), *The Center for Creative Leadership handbook of leadership development* (2nd ed., pp. 1–22). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Vreeling, K., Kersemaekers, W., Cillessen, L., Van Dierendonck, D., & Speckens, A. (2019). How medical specialists experience the effects of a mindful leadership course on their leadership capabilities: A qualitative interview study in the Netherlands. *BMJ Open.* https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-031643. available online.

Vu, M. C., & Gill, R. (2018). Is there corporate mindfulness? An exploratory study of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leaders' perspectives and practices. *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion, 15*(2), 155–177.

Wasylkiw, L., Holton, J., Azar, R., & Cook, W. (2015). The impact of mindfulness on leadership effectiveness in a health care setting: A pilot study. *Journal of Health Organization and Management, 29*(7), 893–911.

Yu, L., & Zellmer-Bruhn, M. (2018). Introducing team mindfulness and considering its safeguard role against conflict transformation and social undermining. *Academy of Management Journal, 61*(1), 324–347.

Zołnierczyk-Zreda, D., Sanderson, M., & Bedyńska, S. (2016). Mindfulness-based stress reduction for managers: A randomized controlled study. *Occupational Medicine, 66*, 630–635.

118   *Acta Wasaensia*

Table X. Summary of reviewed studies: Publication and study characteristics

Author*	Publication characteristics			Study characteristics		Informants	Country of informants
	Year	Source title	Impact factor	Methodological approach	Study design	Informants	Country of informants
1	2018	Academy of Management Proceedings	NA	Quantitative	Intervention, field study; Randomized, waitlist control group; Pre-post survey (2 weeks prior and 2 weeks after)	130 middle managers	Finland
2	2018	Academy of Management Proceedings	NA	Quantitative	Intervention; Study 1: pre-post survey, 6-month follow-up, waitlist control group, non-randomized; Study 2: multi-cohort, pre-post survey	120 (Study 1) and 46 (Study 2) executives	Canada
3	2016	Journal of Management Development	1,69	Quantitative	Intervention; pre-post survey, active control group (leadership course), non-randomized	41 organizational leaders	US
4	2020	European Journal of Educational Research	NA	Qualitative	Single case study; interview, observation	1 organizational leader and 11 organizational members	France
5	2019	Journal of Holistic Nursing	NA	Quantitative	Intervention; pre-post survey, 3-month follow-up, no control condition	12 nurse managers	US
6	2016	Journal of Change Management	NA	Qualitative	Qualitative (the part of the study which involves mindfulness practice); interviews	19 change leaders	US
7	2019	International Journal of Workplace Health Management	0,98	Quantitative	Intervention; pre-post survey, no control condition	16 people in top management positions	Italy
8	2016	Journal of Social Change	NA	Qualitative	Phenomenological investigation, in-depth interviews	20 organizational leaders	US
9	2017	Journal of Management Inquiry	1,986	Qualitative	2-year action research; Pre-post test; Follow-up focus groups; Phenomenological analysis of notes taken by participants several times per week for 4 weeks	16 organizational leaders	North America, Europe, Asia, Africa and South America
10	2020	BMC Medical Education	2,031	Mixed-method	Intervention; pre-post survey, control period, non-randomized; interviews 1 year post-intervention	59 (quantitative part) and 17 (qualitative part) medical leaders	Netherlands

#	Year	Journal		Method	Description	Sample	Country
11	2018	Journal of Management Education	1,84	Mixed-method	Intervention; pre-post survey, no control condition; student journals, course evaluations, open-ended survey questions	34 MBA students	US
12	2019	Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation.	0,35	Quantitative	Intervention; pre-post survey (pre 4 weeks before, post 3 months after), active control groups (access to instructional mindfulness videos) and passive control groups, non-randomized	58 teams of 58 organizational leaders and 270 subordinates	Germany
13	2014	Journal of Forestry	1,98	Qualitative	Focus group interviews	39 wildland fire managers	US
14	2018	Leadership & Organizational Development Journal	1,66	Qualitative	Behavioral-event interviews	42 senior organizational leaders	US, Brazil, India, Australia, UK, Italy, Canada, Poland, Germany
15	2018	Journal of Sports Science and Coaching	1,253	Quantitative	Intervention; pre-post survey, follow-up 6 weeks post-intervention, passive control group, non-randomized	16 paralympic leaders	Sweden, Norway
16	2017	Journal of Management, Spirituality, & Religion	1,72	Qualitative	Intervention; clinical inquiry (2 years), reflective status reports, and observation	7 business owners/ CEOs of small/medium-sized companies	Sweden
17	2018	Journal of Educational Administration	NA	Qualitative	Intervention; semi-structured pre-post interviews, and observation	13 school administrators	US
18	2019	Journal of Business and Psychology	2,582	Quantitative	Intervention (Study 2); pre-post survey; waitlist control group, randomized	104 organizational leaders and 86 followers	Germany, Serbia, US, Netherlands, Austria
19	2009	Journal of Nursing Administration	1,206	Quantitative	Intervention, pre-post survey, active control group (training on stress and leadership strategies), randomized	33 nurse leaders	US
20	2020	Journal of Management Development	1,69	Mixed-method	Intervention, non-randomized, waitlist control group, pre-post survey (beginning and two weeks after), qualitative follow-up questionnaire 3 months post-intervention	57 senior leaders	UK
21	2019	Frontiers in Psychology	2,129	Qualitative	Intervention; semi-structured interviews 6-12 months after intervention; thematic analysis	13 senior leaders	Germany
22	2019	Journal of Business Ethics	3,796	Quantitative	Intervention (laboratory experiment on mindfulness induction, Study 3); post-survey, active control (unfocused attention practice), randomized	62 senior managers	China

	Year	Journal		Method	Description	Sample	Country
23	2020	International Journal of Organizational Analysis	1,18	Mixed-method	One-point survey and interviews	101 (quantitative part) and 25 (qualitative part) executive MBA alumni	US
24	2014	International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction	1,42	Quantitative	Intervention; pre-post-survey, follow up 3 months post-intervention, active control (cognitive-behavioral education program), randomized	133 office-based middle-managers	UK
25	2015	Mindfulness	3	Qualitative	Intervention; semi-structured interviews during the intervention	10 office-based middle-managers	UK
26	2019	Public Administration and Development	0,918	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	12 public-sector leaders	Thailand
27	2019	BMJ Open	2,376	Qualitative	Intervention; in-depth interviews 12 months post-intervention	17 medical leaders	Netherlands
28	2018	Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion	1,72	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	24 organizational leaders	Vietnam
29	2015	Journal of Health, Organisation and Management	1,306	Mixed-method	Intervention; pre-post survey, follow-up 4 and 8 weeks post-intervention passive control, non-randomized, interviews	21 mid-level health-care managers	Canada
30	2016	Occupational Medicine	1,222	Quantitative	Intervention; pre-post survey, waitlist control, randomized	144 middle managers	Poland

* 1 = Ahlvik et al. (2018); 2 = Baron et al. (2018); 3 = Brendel et al. (2016); 4 = Burmansah et al. (2020); 5 = Ceravolo & Raines (2019); 6 = Chesley & Wylson (2016); 7 = Crivelli et al. (2019); 8 = Frizzell et al. (2016); 9 = Goldman-Schuyler et al. (2017); 10 = Kersemaekers et al. (2020); 11 = Kuechler & Stedham (2018); 12 = Lange & Rowold (2019); 13 = Lewis & Ebbeck (2014) 14 = Lippincott (2018); 15 = Lundqvist et al. (2018); 16 = Lychnell (2017); 17 = Mahfouz (2018); 18 = Nübold et al. (2019); 19 = Pipe et al. (2009); 20 = Reitz et al. (2020); 21 = Rupprecht et al. (2019); 22 = Schuh et al. (2019); 23 = Shelton et al. (2020); 24 = Shonin et al. (2014); 25 = Shonin & Van Gordon (2015); 26 = Sutamchai et al. (2019); 27 = Vreeling et al. (2019); 28 = Vu & Gill (2018); 29 = Wasylkiw et al. (2015); 30 = Zołnierczyk-Zreda et al. (2016)

Table Y. Summary of reviewed studies: Operationalization of mindfulness as a leader-specific practice

Author *	Conceptualization of mindfulness			Leadership-related focus
	Definition	Questionnaire	Type of intervention/practice	
1	*receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience* (Brown & Ryan 2003) (p. 3)	NA	8-week abbreviated Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) training; 1,5 h classes, daily home practice recommendation 10-15 mins	Personal resources of middle managers (Job Demands-Resources theory)
2	*consciously attending to moment-to-moment experience* (Brown & Ryan 2003) (p. 7)	Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004) (Study 2)	1-year executive program on mindfulness and consciousness development including 17 one-day sessions	Consciousness development
3	*an awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose to the present moment and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003)* (p. 1061)	NA	8-week mindfulness program including a weekly, 45-min mindfulness meditation session (live or recorded)	Personal leadership qualities
4	*activity of inner presence or awareness quality to pay attention to things just as they are intentionally [...] without judgment, and with compassion* (Black 2015; Goldstein 2016; Gonzales 2012) (p. 53)	NA	Practice of mindful leadership that combines mindfulness practices and management techniques	Mindful leadership
5	*mindfulness enables self-awareness, reflection, and intentional growth of leadership abilities* (Shirey 2015) (p. 48)	NA	8-week mindfulness intervention (MBSR modification) including a weekly group session	Professional quality of life, burnout, and wellness
6	*a way of cultivating 'observant, open attention' that is focused on the present moment* (Brown & Ryan 2003) (p. 318)	Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al., 2006)	Mindful self-care and self-awareness practices (e.g., meditation)	Managing ambiguity, change leadership
7	*mindfulness-based interventions have been, in particular, deemed as valuable ways to cope with stress-related problems, since they have been shown to efficiently reduce stress and related consequences in in different clinical and non-clinical contexts* (Creswell 2007) (p. 43)	NA	2-week technology-mediated mindfulness training including 2 daily practice sessions combined with a wearable neurofeedback system managed via smartphone	Stress management and neurocognitive efficiency
8	*mindfulness meditation, a receptive practice, has roots in Buddhism and typically refers to practices that bring gentle, unbiased attention and awareness to the moment* (Shapiro, Carlson & Kabat-Zinn 2009) (p. 14)	NA	3-month independent and regular mindfulness meditation practice (minimum 3 days per week)	Leader development

#	Definition	Measure	Intervention	Focus
9	*we use the term waking up to refer to the fleeting moments when people notice they are more aware and present to what is happening within or around them [...] as an entryway to mindfulness* (p. 87)	NA	4-week ongoing awareness practice, "waking up", intending to be present	Quality of experience at work and impact on other people, leadership development and education
10	*intentionally paying attention and being aware of moment by moment experiences of in a non-judgmental and friendly way* (Kabat-Zinn 2013) (p. 1)	Self-compassion scale-short form (incl. Mindfulness) (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011)	10-week "Mindful leadership for medical specialists" course including 10 two-weekly sessions of 5 hours, daily home practice recommendation 30-45 mins	Mindful leadership, burnout, wellbeing
11	*mindfulness allows the separation of a specific experience from the mental and emotional reaction to it which, in turn, provides the opportunity to examine whether one holds distorted assumptions, ungrounded beliefs, or warped perceptions* (p. 42)	Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004)	6-week transformational leadership course with a mindfulness component including 6 sessions of 8 hours, home practice recommendation 20 min at least 3 times a week	Integration of mindfulness component to management education, transformational learning
12	*a state of consciousness where individuals intentionally pay attention to one's current internal and external experiences* (Baer 2003) *by systematically observing and inquiring in a non-judgmental way* (Kabat-Zinn 2003) p. 321	Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al., 2006)	3-month Mindful Leadership program including a 1-day mindfulness training and 2 follow-up sessions, one-on-one coaching and instructional videos	Mindful leadership, stress management, leadership effectiveness, leadership behavior
13	*paying attention on purpose in the present moment* (Kabat-Zinn 2003) (p. 230)	NA	Practice of mindful being	Mindful and self-compassionate leadership development
14	*as both a mental state and as a trait comprising "a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience"* (Brown et al. 2007) (p. 650)	NA	Regular independent mindfulness practice	Behavioral development
15	*non-judgmental, purposeful and moment-to-moment awareness* (Kabat-Zinn 1982, 1990) (p. 63)	Mindfulness Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS), (Brown & Ryan, 2003)	8-week mindfulness intervention for stress reduction including 8 web-based seminars	Stress reduction
16	*mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally* (Kabat-Zinn 1994) (p. 258)	NA	2-year intervention consisting of a meditation-based course, introductory meeting and 15 10-hour process days, home practice included a contemplative practice (e.g., mindfulness meditation) and reflective writing	Meditative attitude at work, personal growth
17	*the ability to be self-aware, to observe and accept the thoughts, sensations and emotions one experiences without attempting to alter them* (Baer	NA	5-week mindfulness-based professional development program Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) including 5 sessions and a booster session four weeks after program completion	Leadership and wellbeing

	2003; Grossman et al. 2004; Kabat-Zinn 2003; Marlatt & Kristeller 1999) (p. 602)			
18	*being mindful means paying attention to present-moment experiences in a receptive and non-judgmental way* (Bishop et al. 2004; Brown, Ryan & Creswell 2007) (p. 2)	Mindfulness Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS), (Brown & Ryan, 2003)	30-day self-guided, app-based mindfulness training including guided mindfulness meditation exercises, daily home practice recommmentation 10 min	Authentic leadership
19	*a way of caring/nurturing the self so that one's leadership could be more caring and effective by extension* (Watson 1999) (p. 131)	NA	4-week mindfulness meditation program for stress management (abbreviated MBSR modification)	Stress, depression, anxiety and caring efficacy
20	*a state of being attentive and aware characterized by a clear purpose and a non-judgmental attitude* (Kabat-Zinn 2003) (p. 224)	Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al., 2006)	8-week "Mindful Leader" program including three half-day workshops every two weeks, one full day retreat and a 1h group conference call, daily home practice recommendation 20 min	Resilience, leading in complex contexts, and collaboration
21	*the state of paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally* (Kabat-Zinn 2011) (p. 1)	NA	10-week workplace mindfulness training including 2 6h day retreats and 8 2,5h weekly sessions, daily home practice recommendation 10+ min	Work lives and leadership ability, leader development, self-leadership and leadership capabilities, self-directed leadership development
22	*people's ability to bring "their attention to the experiences occurring in the present moment, in a non-judgmental or accepting way"* (Baer et al. 2006) (p. 1)	Mindfulness Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS), (Brown & Ryan, 2003)	10-minute mindfulness induction as part of a leadership course	Procedural justice enactment
23	*spiritual practice* (p. 401)	NA	Independent and frequent spiritual, meditative practice	Spiritual practices, resiliency, life satisfaction and sense of well-being
24	*a modality of Buddhist meditation* (p. 807)	NA	8-week Meditation Awareness Training (MAT) including 8 90min workshops and 2 one-on-one support sessions, and a CD for daily home practice	Work-related wellbeing and job performance
25	*the process of engaging a full, direct, and active awareness of experienced phenomena that is spiritual in aspect and that is maintained from one moment to the next* (p. 900)	NA	8-week Meditation Awareness Training (MAT) including 8 90min workshops and 2 one-on-one support sessions, and a CD for daily home practice	Leaders' experiences of meditation training
26	*Buddhist-based mindfulness practices that focus on the awareness of the inner self, the interrelatedness of everything, and the balance og good for oneself with good for society* (Rozuel and Kakabadse 2010) (p. 2)	NA	Independent Buddhist-based mindfulness practice	Ethical decision making and behaviors

27	*intentionally paying attention and being aware of moment by moment experiences of in a non-judgmental way (Kabat-Zinn 2009) (p. 2)*	NA	10-week "Mindful leadership for medical specialists" course including 10 two-weekly sessions of 5 hours, daily home practice recommendation 45 min	Mindful leadership, leadership capabilities
28	*a wisdom-based practice that has been exploited as an instrument for stress-reduction or moment awareness techniques (p. 155)*	NA	Personal practice based on wisdom and values comprising various techniques and practices in attaining a state of mindfulness	Experiences of personal wisdom and values-based practice
29	*a mode of consciousness that involves being attentive to and aware of what is occurring in the present moment (Brown & Ryan 2003) (p. 896)*	Mindfulness Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS), (Brown & Ryan, 2003)	Mindfulness awareness practice (MAP) intervention including a weekend retreat and follow-up webinar	Leadership effectiveness
30	*a state of non-judgmental attentiveness to and awareness of moment-to-moment experiences (Kabat-Zinn 1982, 1990; Bishop et al. 2004) (p. 631)*	NA	8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) intervention	Stress reduction

* 1 = Ahlvik et al. (2018); 2 = Baron et al. (2018); 3 = Brendel et al. (2016); 4 = Burmansah et al. (2020); 5 = Ceravolo & Raines (2019); 6 = Chesley & Wylson (2016); 7 = Crivelli et al. (2019); 8 = Frizzell et al. (2016); 9 = Goldman-Schuyler et al. (2017); 10 = Kersemaekers et al. (2020); 11 = Kuechler & Stedham (2018); 12 = Lange & Rowold (2019); 13 = Lewis & Ebbeck (2014) 14 = Lippincott (2018); 15 = Lundqvist et al. (2018); 16 = Lychnell (2017); 17 = Mahfouz (2018); 18 = Nübold et al. (2019); 19 = Pipe et al. (2009); 20 = Reitz et al. (2020); 21 = Rupprecht et al. (2019); 22 = Schuh et al. (2019); 23 = Shelton et al. (2020); 24 = Shonin et al. (2014); 25 = Shonin & Van Gordon (2015); 26 = Sutamchai et al. (2019); 27 = Vreeling et al. (2019); 28 = Vu & Gill (2018); 29 = Wasylkiw et al. (2015); 30 = Zołnierczyk-Zreda et al. (2016)

Paper 2

Mindfulness-trained leaders' experiences of their enhanced social awareness

Abstract

The importance of mindfulness for social relations has been recognized in management literature, yet a thorough investigation has been lacking into how mindfulness may help leaders tap into their other-orientation. In this study, we examine whether and how mindfulness training contributes to the development of leaders' social awareness by studying the experiences of 62 leaders who participated in an eight-week-long mindfulness training program. Our study contributes to the literature on management learning and mindfulness in leadership. It clarifies mindfulness as a value-based developmental practice and interpersonal phenomenon. It identifies how the leaders who participated in mindfulness training see themselves developing toward becoming more socially aware in situations involving followers. It also improves the current understanding of how mindfulness training can enhance leaders' social awareness through a combination of a formal program and self-development. Finally, the research provides a conceptual framework that highlights the pathway with the potential to build social leadership capacity. Overall, this study illustrates how leaders perceive mindfulness learning to foster the development of their social awareness in three interlinked domains of human functioning—the cognitive, affective, and behavioral.

To meditate means to go home to yourself. Then you know how to take care of the things that are happening inside you, and you know how to take care of the things that happen around you.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

The importance of mindfulness for social relations has been recognized in management literature. Nevertheless, the research area lacks a thorough investigation into how practicing mindfulness—commonly defined as "the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present" (Brown and Ryan, 2003: 822)—could help leaders tap into their other-orientation (e.g., Dietl and Reb, 2021; Roche et al., 2020; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). Being fully present to their followers may help leaders better understand the followers' needs and support their followers' well-being and performance (Reb et al., 2014; for a review, see Inceoglu et al., 2018). A leader's presence to and awareness of others in social situations, *social awareness*, is a critical contributor to the individual leader's capacity to be an effective leader in social situations involving followers, which we call *social leadership capacity* (Dane and Rockmann, 2020; Day, 2011; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017). Social awareness is as an other-oriented form of awareness that may be conceptualized in relation to other people and in terms of *social* and *emotional intelligence*, all of which are important components of mindfulness (Goleman, 1995; Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Svalgaard, 2018; Thorndike, 1920; for a review see Carden et al., 2021). Theoretically, the awareness of the self and others that is enhanced by mindfulness practice could have a significant impact on the development of leaders, for instance through improved reflection of feedback,

listening, trust and respect, collaboration, better conflict management, and reduced emotional contagion (Badham and King, 2021; Good et al., 2016; Hyland et al., 2015; Stedham and Skaar, 2019; Vu and Burton, 2020).

Empirical research on mindfulness in relationships originating mainly outside of management research indicates that mindfulness practice can benefit interpersonal relationships by influencing the interlinked processes of other-directed attention, affect, and behavior—such as perspective-taking, compassion, and sharing cultivated in relationships (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007; Fazia et al., 2020; Vich et al., 2020; for reviews see Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019). Research on mindfulness for leaders (e.g., Ceravolo and Raines, 2019; Crivelli et al., 2019; Lundqvist et al., 2018; for reviews, see Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019; Urrila, 2021) and in workplace settings in general (for a review, see Eby et al., 2019) has typically taken a positivistic approach to assessing the influence of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) on individuals using predefined well-being and performance-related outcome measures (Karjalainen et al., 2018). An empirical focus on a stressful work environment lends itself to criticism concerning reducing the originally interconnected mindfulness practice to a personal stress-reduction and attention-enhancement technique (e.g., Badham and King, 2021; Purser, 2018). Emerging research (e.g., Nübold et al., 2019; Shonin and Van Gordon, 2015; Rupprecht et al., 2019), however, is seeking to advance understanding of the multifaceted expressions of mindfulness in leadership. Mindfulness training may support leaders in task performance, managing change, ethical decision making, and relationships (Roche et al., 2020). It may help leaders

better understand the value of being supportive to their followers (Gonzales-Morales et al., 2018), nevertheless, much of the literature discussing the social and relational aspects of mindfulness in leadership is theoretical (e.g., Stedham and Skaar, 2019). The prospect of strengthening leaders' other-orientation necessitates thorough exploration of the other-oriented expressions of mindfulness in the leadership context.

In this study, we examine whether and how mindfulness training contributes to the development of leaders' social awareness by studying the experiences of 62 leaders who participated in an eight-week-long mindfulness training program. The rich material collected before and after the intervention covers the leaders' pre-intervention expectations and post-intervention perceptions. This study contributes to the literature on management learning and mindfulness in leadership in three ways. First, we challenge the predominant emphasis of workplace mindfulness research and practice (e.g., Eby et al., 2019) by clarifying mindfulness as a value-based developmental practice and interpersonal phenomenon (Purser, 2018; Skoranski et al., 2019). Second, we identify how the leaders who participated in mindfulness training see themselves developing toward becoming more socially aware in situations involving followers across the three interlinked domains of human functioning—the cognitive, affective, and behavioral. We also increase understanding of how mindfulness training can enhance leaders' social awareness through a combination of a formal program and self-development (Svalgaard, 2018). Third, we provide a conceptual framework that highlights the pathway with the potential to build social leadership capacity.

Theoretical background

Social awareness in leadership

An organizational leader's role is to set and facilitate the development of a direction and engage and motivate other people (followers) toward accomplishing the common goal (e.g., Day and Dragoni, 2015). Leader-follower relationships may be the most important relationships people have at work and can profoundly influence followers' well-being and performance (Inceoglu et al., 2018). Leadership and leader development efforts aim to expand the collective and the individual capacity to be effective in a leadership role (e.g., Day and Dragoni, 2015). The skills and abilities of leaders contribute toward their capacity to be an effective leader in social situations involving followers, which we call *social leadership capacity* (Day, 2011; Day and Dragoni, 2015; Mumford et al., 2000). Social skills relevant for a leader would include building relationships, managing communication and conflict, and developing others; however, a leader also requires self-view skills in the form of self-awareness and social awareness.

In 1920, the psychologist E.L. Thorndike introduced *social intelligence* to refer to a form of intelligence separate from general intelligence that involves the ability to understand other people and "to act wisely in human relations" (Thorndike, 1920: 228). In 1990, Salovey and Mayer defined emotional intelligence as a type of social intelligence involving the ability to understand one's own and others' emotions, and to use that understanding to guide one's thinking and actions. In management literature, social and emotional intelligence have been viewed as

intertwined (social intelligence being the other-oriented extension of emotional intelligence). The combination involves interacting cognitive processes, emotions, and actions, required by an effective organizational leader to respond wisely in challenging social situations that arise in groups (e.g., Gill, 2011, Goleman, 1995; Mumford et al., 2000). Self-awareness and social awareness are key components of social and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Self-awareness, "a higher-level concept which includes the extent to which people are consciously aware of their interactions or relationships with others and their internal states" (Sutton et al., 2015: 611) entails the other-oriented quality of consciousness which may be conceptualized in relation to other people, *social awareness*. Social awareness involves introspective reflection of the multidimensional self, informed by the observations of others (Carden, 2021). Even though the importance of self-awareness has been widely recognized in management literature, social awareness has been given relatively little attention in research and is often discussed alongside, or as a sub-category of, self-awareness (Svalgaard, 2018; for a review, see Carden et al., 2021). Nevertheless, a leader being present for and aware of followers in social situations is deemed critical for the individual leader's capacity to be an effective leader (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Dane and Rockmann, 2020; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Reb et al., 2014).

It has been acknowledged that formal development programs can initiate the continuous development of self- and social awareness at the core of leading people wisely (Svalgaard, 2018). However, to raise such awareness, it is imperative that the individual leader proactively engages in self-development activities, such as

self-reflection of leadership experiences based on internal and external feedback that support holistic development (Boyce et al., 2010; Day and Dragoni, 2015; Liu et al., 2020; Reichard and Johnson, 2011).

Mindfulness in relationships

Common definitions describe mindfulness as a state of attention to and awareness of events and experience in the present moment (e.g., Brown and Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003) that can be pursued intentionally through formal mindfulness meditation practice or informal practice, a way of being (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Research within the Western medical and psychological domain since the late 1970s has focused mainly on the investigation of mindfulness as a stable or fluctuating intra-individual psychological capacity and a type of intervention and practice to induce a mindful mental state, offered for clinical or non-clinical audiences (e.g., mindfulness-based stress reduction or MBSR) (Brown et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Keng et al., 2011). Mindfulness practice is centered around the holistic development of the physiological, cognitive and attentional, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual qualities of an individual in relationship to the self and others (Kristeller, 2004). It is assumed mindfulness practice benefits an individual's health, well-being, and functioning. Further, mindfulness should then influence the connection with other people. Accordingly, current literature expands the understanding of mindfulness from being a within-person psychological capacity to an interpersonal phenomenon that takes place in interactions and social processes (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019). Mindfulness is then often referred to as *interpersonal* (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007), *relational* (e.g., Vich et al., 2020), and

social (e.g., Fazia et al., 2020) mindfulness. Empirical research on the phenomenon originates mainly in non-work contexts such as parental interaction, romantic relationships, and friendships. That research indicates that practicing mindfulness may benefit interpersonal relationships by influencing the interlinked processes of other-directed attention, affect, and behavior (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007).

In studies of the cognitive aspects of mindfulness related to attention, thinking, and perceiving in relationships, Carson and colleagues (2004), for instance, found mindfulness intervention to increase people's acceptance of one another in romantic relationships. Once the emotional aspects of mindfulness related to feelings and affect in relationships have been studied, the focus has been on emotional awareness and cultivating prosocial emotions via interventions (for a review, see Galante et al., 2014). For example, mindfulness meditation has been associated with interpersonal forgiveness (Karremans et al., 2020) and compassion (Condon et al., 2013; Fredrickson et al., 2008). Studies on the behavioral aspects of mindfulness related to volition in relationships showed that mindfulness interventions increase prosocial behavior, that is, voluntary actions, such as helping, intended to benefit others (for a meta-analysis, see Donald et al., 2019). In addition, communication quality improved owing to reduced negativity and verbal and non-verbal aggression in stressful interpersonal dialogue (Barnes et al., 2007) and constructive and compassionate responding (Barnes et al., 2007; Condon et al., 2013).

Fredrickson and colleagues (2008) showed that cultivating positive emotions through a mindfulness-based intervention in working adults was linked to improved

personal resources, including maintaining positive relations with others. To explain the linkages between the attentional, emotional, and behavioral aspects of mindfulness in relationships, they propose positive affect as a central mechanism driving positive change in and between people. Currently available evidence on mindfulness intervention studies reviewed by Donald and colleagues (2019) suggests that mindfulness meditation enhances prosocial behaviors through empathetic concern/compassion and that mindfulness-based compassion meditation may enhance prosociality via the mechanisms of emotion regulation and positive affect. The regulation of affect and personal distress, enhanced by mindfulness, has been found to determine how compassionately, altruistically, or kindly people respond to others (Skoranski et al., 2019; Donald et al., 2019). Skoranski and colleagues (2019) argue that mindful attention, exhibited in the constant dynamic process of interpersonal interaction between people, supports mutual positive affect and reinforces positive behaviors, causing a recursive loop because of which the relationship becomes increasingly mindful.

Summing up, mindfulness and mindfulness practice, which involves raising awareness of oneself in the context of others, has been conceptualized as a developmental phenomenon occurring in the context of interpersonal relationships. However, much of the existing empirical research on mindfulness in relationships is set in specific non-work contexts (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019).

Application of mindfulness for leaders

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are developmentally focused activities built around the mindfulness concept. Those offered to leaders and other workplace audiences are heterogenous in terms of length and intensity and often tailored according to the requirements and expectations of the purchasing organization (Bartlett et al., 2019; Davidson and Kazniak, 2015; Islam et al., 2017). Depending on the intervention, they approach mindfulness, for instance, as an instrument for stress-reduction and productivity-enhancement, or as a spiritual practice, which is likely to affect the participants' experience (King and Badham, 2018; Shonin and Van Gordon, 2015). Most typically, mindfulness interventions contain meditation and awareness practices, psychoeducational content, and opportunity for self-reflection (Urrila, 2021). Optimally, developing leaders' social intelligence, value-orientation, and compassion through mindfulness could promote positive organizational forms and supportive leadership characterized by "recognition of long-term consequences of actions, simultaneous awareness of inner self, external reality and work impacts, and commitment to authenticity, truth and responsibility" (Badham and King, 2021: 545).

However, empirical research on mindfulness for leaders (e.g., Ceravolo and Raines, 2019; Crivelli et al., 2019; Lundqvist et al., 2018; for reviews, see Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019; Urrila, 2021) and in workplace settings in general (for a review, see Eby et al., 2019) tends to focus on the stressfulness of the work from the outset. While research has shown that practicing mindfulness can help individual leaders often working in high-stress environments like the corporate world and healthcare restore their personal resources, sufficing with that has

elicited criticism. According to critics, promoting mindfulness techniques (such as managing unpleasant emotions by accepting them as they are) as a self-help tool could make people lose their ability for healthy criticism and docilely adapt to systemic causes of stress in search for a better ability to cope and perform in a demanding environment (e.g., duPlessis and Just, 2021; Purser, 2018; Walsh, 2018). This could corrupt mindfulness practice intended to connect people, not separate them from each other and the context they live in (Purser, 2018). Purser and Loy (2013: 4) assert that "right mindfulness is guided by intentions and motivations based on self-restraint, wholesome mental states, and ethical behaviors—goals that include but supersede stress-reduction and improvements in concentration."

Consequently, collective and substantive approaches to mindfulness emphasize values such as interconnectedness and collaboration instead of within-person attention and awareness, and practices that support mindful consideration and reflection instead of stress-reduction and performance-related outcomes (Badham and King, 2021; duPlessis and Just, 2021). A line of research within management studies is seeking to advance understanding of the multifaceted expressions of mindfulness in leadership. It does so by employing notions of mindfulness as a holistic developmental practice that intrinsically involves contemplation directed toward internal and external phenomena (meditation), introspective monitoring of mental state and actions, and value-based evaluation that only people are capable of, concerning not only oneself but other people (Gethin, 2011; Purser and Milillo), 2015). Emerging empirical research indicates

that a leader's mindfulness practice may facilitate a positive form of leadership—involving the ability to take the perspective of others (e.g., Wasylkiw et al., 2015), empathize with others (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017), and internalize the social and ethical norms for behavior (e.g., Nübold et al., 2019). So far, few mindfulness interventions studies have focused on the social and relational aspects of mindfulness-based leadership development (Islam at al., 2017). Those quantitative intervention studies with a direct focus on the leader-follower dyad have focused on measuring the effect of mindfulness practice on behavioral outcomes (Lange and Rowold, 2019; Nübold et al., 2019). None of the existing qualitative mindfulness intervention studies have focused on leader development involving followers as the context of the investigation. Instead, they have approached leaders' perceptions of their leadership in general, mainly from the personal well-being perspective (Rupprecht et al., 2019; Mahfouz, 2018; Wasylkiw et al., 2015) and with small sample sizes. Three prior qualitative studies focusing on leaders' independent mindfulness practice (Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Lippincott, 2018; Vu and Gill, 2018) suggest that practicing mindfulness can heighten leaders' social and contextual awareness.

In sum, mindfulness in work-related settings may be viewed as a developmental practice to support relationships and the collective good, rather than merely a personal stress-reduction and attention-enhancement technique (Purser and Milillo, 2015; Skoranski et al., 2019). The interpersonal conceptualizations of mindfulness may be particularly relevant for leadership, as leadership is inherently relational and takes place in leader-follower interactions (Avolio and Gardner,

2005; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Research investigating how the awareness of the self and others enhanced by mindfulness influences the development of leaders has been called for (e.g., Good et al., 2016; Hyland et al., 2015). Empirical research seeking to understand how a leader's mindfulness practice could support leadership relationships is an emerging stream (e.g., Nübold et al., 2019; Roche et al., 2020). That is perhaps surprising given the recognition that other-orientation and taking an interest in the needs of others may be a key aspect of mindfulness in leadership (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). We argue that the other-oriented components of mindfulness, such as perspective-taking, compassion, and sharing cultivated in relationships (Skoranski et al., 2019) warrant exploration in the context of organizational leadership.

Methods

To investigate whether and how mindfulness training contributes to the development of leaders' social awareness in the context of followers, we study the experiences of 62 leaders who participated in an eight-week mindfulness program. Empirical research on mindfulness for leaders (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019) has often taken a positivistic approach to assessing the influence of mindfulness-based interventions on individuals using predefined well-being and performance-related outcome measures (Karjalainen et al., 2018). Viewing mindfulness as an interconnected wisdom practice that occurs in interpersonal relationships, rather than as merely a stress-reduction and attention-enhancement technique, has an advantage (Badham and King, 2021; Purser, 2018; Skoranski et al., 2019). This perspective facilitates assessing how the beneficial transformational impact of

mindfulness in organizations manifests in enhanced social awareness and interpersonal functioning (Good et al., 2016; Hülsheger, 2015). The perceptions and experiences of the leaders were probed in this study as the development of self- and social awareness is a conscious, lived experience for which the subjective self, the first person, can provide a subjectively relevant account (Goldman-Schuyler et al. 2017; Varela and Shear, 2000). As Ihl and colleagues (2020) point out, research is lacking on how organizational members interpret mindfulness practices. By focusing on the leader's personal experience, management research can respond to questions concerning the internalized role and the development of an individual leader (Goldman-Schuyler, 2017; Rostron, 2021).

Research setting

The first author took responsibility for the delivery of the interventions and data collection. The training was coordinated and conducted by an experienced mindfulness trainer. Participants were recruited by the participating organizations' human resource departments. Ethical governance processes required the first author to inform the participants about the research project and data collection procedures, and to obtain their informed consent.

Intervention. Five eight-week mindfulness interventions were organized in 2019, one for each participating organization. Each intervention consisted of six 90-minute group sessions delivered at an approximately 1.5-week interval. The purpose of the intervention was to increase participants' knowledge of mindfulness and introduce mindfulness practices. The intervention contained mindfulness

practice and invited self-reflection and open discussion. The participants received guidance for independent practice and had access to a mobile application featuring 16 mindfulness meditation recordings, including body-scanning and (self-)compassion.

Participants. The current research is informed by data elicited from 62 organizational leaders (56 female, six male) who participated in a mindfulness intervention offered by their employers, five Finnish organizations across different sectors. Twenty-two participants worked in health, 17 in insurance, nine in forestry, ten in information technology, and four in production. A leader was defined as a leader, manager, or supervisor who had direct reports; in this article, followers. On average, the participants had 17 direct reports. Their experience in leadership positions varied between one and 30 years (average 10 years). Their ages varied between 26 and 63 years (average 45 years). Fifty-two informants were Finnish, 10 were of other European nationalities. All participants actively participated in the intervention. Participation in the intervention was voluntary, and participants were not paid for participation in the research.

Data collection

The data for analysis were collected from 62 written pre-intervention tasks and post-intervention interviews. Data collection took place between January and November 2019, with the written pre-tasks completed before the intervention commenced. We asked the participants to write a self-reflective text about their recent experience and their expectations for personal development and from the

mindfulness training. The lengths of the written tasks were typically one to two pages of typewritten text. After the intervention ended (maximum three weeks), participants were interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured. The first author asked open-ended questions from the participants about their experiences of mindfulness training. The questions followed a structure which allowed freedom and flexibility for the participants to describe their personal experience in the way that was meaningful for them. Everyone was asked about their experiences with mindfulness training (e.g., *What do you think of mindfulness as a learning experience?*), how they understood and practiced mindfulness (e.g., *Please describe what mindfulness means to you, in your terms?*), how they viewed their development as a leader (e.g., *What is the most important area of development for you personally as a leader?)*, and if and how they viewed mindfulness could support them in the leader role (e.g., *Do you see the mindfulness training offered for leaders, and mindfulness practice, could support your leadership and how?*). Asking follow-up questions required stepping outside the guiding structure when the interviewee sensed an area of importance for the interviewee. Examples were asked to allow in-depth exploration and enrichen the interviewees' descriptions. The interview duration varied between 26 and 76 minutes (average 48 minutes). 39 interviews were conducted face-to-face and 23 remotely.

Data preparation and analysis

Extensive qualitative data were gathered to provide an adequate account of the experience of the participants, who were 'knowledgeable agents' willing and able to describe their organizational reality, thoughts, intentions, and actions (Gioia et

al., 2012: 17). Thematic content analysis was conducted to classify the raw data into thematic categories and dimensions. Handwritten reflective notes and frameworks were compiled at the interview stage. Emerging themes and sub-themes were identified in an iterative, continuous manner. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and downloaded to the NVivo program by the first author. Information was coded into main categories and sub-themes. Regular discussions between the authors concerning the emerged themes throughout the process provided a deeper understanding of the findings. A systematic approach by Gioia and colleagues (2012) that was suitable for qualitative and interpretive inductive research that facilitates new concept development was utilized to analyze the data and present findings. In line with Gioia and colleagues (2012: 21), the informant-centric terms and codes presented as first-order concepts and the researcher-centric themes presented as second-order themes demonstrate the connections between the data and the emerging concepts, while the aggregate dimensions answer the research question on the theoretical level. An illustration of the analysis (see Figure 1) was created early in the process and constantly developed throughout the analysis. A conceptual framework was developed based on the findings, which contains the elements indicating how mindfulness training influenced the development of social leadership capacity (see Figure 2). A key principle in establishing qualitative rigor is ensuring trustworthiness, which is indicated by data having credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness is particularly important when dealing with large qualitative data sets (White et al., 2012). Rigor is assured here by the systematic

organization of the study and the iterative analysis of data following the guidelines proposed by White and colleagues (2012).

Findings

The findings of the study are now examined in detail. First, we present the leaders' pre-intervention expectations of mindfulness training to illuminate the context in which the leaders worked and their leadership and leader development priorities concerning mindfulness training. Then, we present the post-intervention interview findings. The focus is on the leaders' expressions of social awareness across three related yet distinct dimensions—*other-oriented thought*, *other-oriented emotion*, and *other-oriented behavior*. Finally, we discuss the leaders' understandings of mindfulness as a leader development method. The interview excerpts are labeled according to the intervention group A, B, C, D, or E and the number assigned to each participant within the group.

Leaders' expectations for mindfulness training

The leaders' written accounts gathered before the start of the mindfulness program reported heavy workloads, challenging relationships with followers, and difficulties with team functioning. The leaders hoped mindfulness training could improve their stress management and coping skills, calmness and mental balance, self-compassion, and emotional development. As one of the leaders put it:

> The biggest development [due to this course] should by far occur in stress management and being kind to myself. I believe this would also help in the supervisory work—I wouldn't so often appear to be 'the always so busy leader,' and I would be more present for them. (D3)

So, the leaders believed that strengthening their own mental skills through mindfulness could help them be more supportive leaders. Promisingly, the leaders also expressed their intention to bring the mindfulness learnings for their followers to provide them means to restore their mental resources and to take care of their own well-being, which could, in the best case, lead to the improved *overall well-being of the entire team*. One of the leaders put it this way:

> [The mindfulness course] interests me also because the nature of my followers' work has become more burdening during the past year, and that won't ease in the future. I would like to see if mindfulness could help them in some way. (C4)

Secondly, the leaders talked about their expectations from mindfulness training for enhanced *focusing* abilities and work performance. For example, one leader said that he expected mindfulness training to bring mental clarity that would help in the prioritization of work tasks and affect his followers:

> I have never really familiarized myself with mindfulness. … I expect the mental balance to help me see the most important things in my work clearly, and ease structuring my work and my leadership model because I'm afraid I am a little restless. I have bad conscience all the time, like does this affect my followers, even when they know we're in the same boat. (A3)

Thirdly, the leaders discussed their expectation that mindfulness training would help them *connect with others* through improved presence and thus be able to support their followers better. For example, one leader explained how she felt that with the help of mindfulness techniques, she could act as an encouraging and present-oriented role model for positive behavior among her team of experts:

> I hope to be able to be more and better present also in the situations in which I work with the experts in my team. I'd like to encourage and help them to be more creative and find their strength in new and insecure situations. I expect concrete techniques that I can apply, to stop in the moment better than before and help others do the same. (C6)

Fourthly, the leaders discussed expectations regarding personal *leader development.* Some reported quite broadly that they believed mindfulness could provide concrete tools for self-development and self-leadership. Others hoped for enhanced self-confidence and a clearer sense of purpose and picture of oneself as a leader. Many believed mindfulness would increase their self-knowledge and help leverage that knowledge better in the leader role, as exemplified by this leader:

> I have high hopes regarding this course. Hopefully, the training will support me in forming a clearer picture of my stronger and weaker skills as a manager and give me tools to cope with the weaknesses and improve them. (E3)

Based on the pre-intervention assessment, the leaders were motivated to develop themselves to become better leaders. The majority did not have any prior experience of mindfulness training nor an adequate understanding of the type of practice involved thus their expectations of mindfulness were quite broad and outcome-focused. They seemed open to mindfulness and believed that the mindfulness training could benefit themselves and their followers, but they had not yet experienced *how* mindfulness could help them as leaders.

Leaders' experiences of mindfulness training

The analysis of the leaders' experiences following their participation in an eight-week mindfulness program revealed developments that the leaders associated with mindfulness training and practice. Figure 1 illustrates the findings through a thematic data structure.
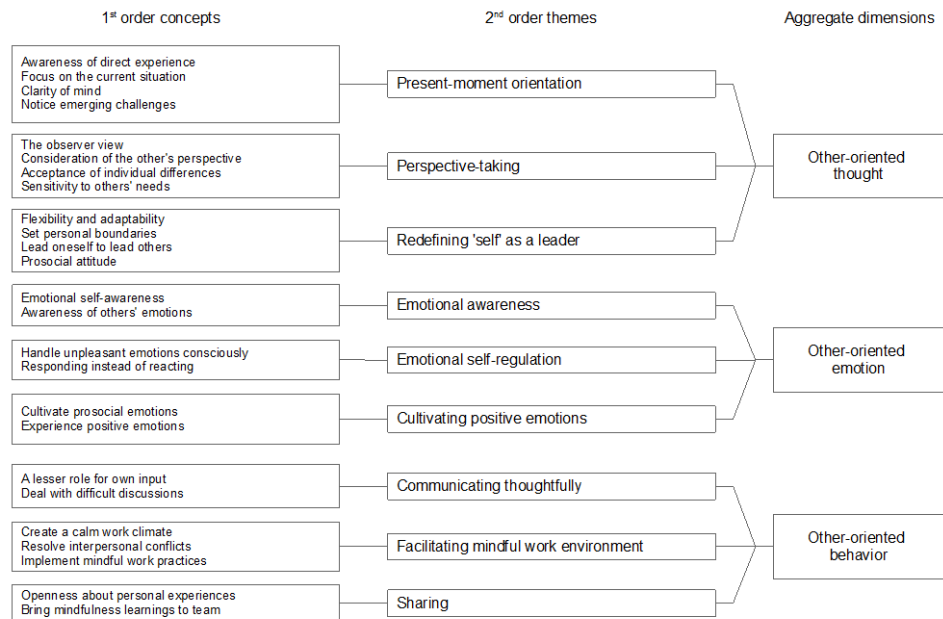
Figure 1. Data structure for the leaders' experiences of mindfulness training

Other-oriented thought

The theme of *other-oriented thought* concerns the cognitive domain: attention, perceptions, perspectives, and attitudes.

Present-moment orientation. Participating in mindfulness training offered the leaders insights into the importance of focusing on their direct experience in the 'here-and-now'. They came to view presence as something that they wished to better integrate in their way of working with others. A few respondents also recognized that others 'deserved' to have their leader's presence.

The leaders commonly reported how mindfulness had enhanced their *awareness of direct experience*. For example, one leader described how she had

learned to get in touch with what was currently happening within herself, cognitively, emotionally, and sensually, which extends to interacting with her followers:

> Awareness is the key [in practicing mindfulness], like awareness of one's feelings, and stress level, and presence, and focus, and then awareness of others' viewpoints and feelings. (D1)

The leaders thus appeared to understand that their internal states influenced their interaction with employees and that mindfulness helped create a positive, calming presence. They also said that mindfulness practice helped them *focus on the current situation*, something seen as particularly useful when under pressure and in challenging one-on-one discussions, for instance, with followers with a different communication style. Consciously transitioning to a new situation was often mentioned as a newly acquired practice that could be fitted into leaders' busy schedules, as this leader described:

> Moving from one encounter to another…I can [now] better…close the previous encounter and then meet the new person or new people and topic, so that I am more present in the situation. …I have developed in that [way due to mindfulness]. For instance, in a meeting, I don't think about the previous meeting or the next meeting, every encounter is valuable…I walk down that aisle calmly, breathing calmly, consciously. (C12)

So, the leaders realized that it is possible to control the distractable mind to a certain extent. They also described mindfulness practice helped attain *clarity of mind,* which was perceived as an invaluable attribute to facilitate effective communication with followers. For example, this leader said mindfulness helped her keep a clear head amidst daily challenges:

> In the afternoons, it may have been really challenging to lead a unit meeting when I've felt that my words had become porridge and I said wrong words and when I'm just no longer able to produce sensible speech, which can be a challenge for a supervisor when you're leading a unit meeting...So, now I haven't had this. …My thoughts are clearer, so when I discuss and talk, I don't have to make an effort to find the words, so all in all, I feel clear and good. (B18)

She continued to explain how mindfulness practice enabled her to act on issues promptly:

> You can quickly sense what the situation is, and move on to develop a solution, and also have the employees participate in it, give them the facts in a way that they can understand, since these unplanned situations happen quickly… so it's about how you solve them. (B18)

This exemplifies an important observation of the leaders related to how their heightened present-moment orientation improved their ability to *notice emerging challenges* within the team.

Perspective-taking. Due to mindfulness learning, the leaders began to see themselves as becoming open to other people's viewpoints. This meant consciously creating the mental space to accommodate the other people's views, being less forceful and attached to their own opinions, being more sensitive, and being willing to listen to others, all practices seen as enhancing objectivity.

The leaders often mentioned an improved ability to take *the observer view* of an objective outsider when facing difficult situations in the team instead of becoming entangled in the issue. This objectivity sometimes involved mentally detaching from others' annoying or even destructive behavior, as this leader reported:

> So, it is quite hectic, and you must react to everything immediately…and one easily goes into this state when it is busy all the time, all the time there is a fire somewhere.

> So now I can at least observe when the situation gets like that, when the people are in that state…I can calm the situation in a way from outside it, not going into the same panic myself. (A10)

Stepping back and keeping a distance enabled the leaders to stay calm and avoid progressing to a state of alarm, which was seen as helpful in guiding followers through challenges.

The leaders reported an improved ability to *consider the other's perspective*, which involved increased sensitivity to followers' underlying motivations and intentions, such as things left unsaid, that could be influential beneath the surface. This sensitivity was seen as key in directing the followers toward the right goals, as exemplified by this leader who was keen to understand her followers on a deeper level:

> Go behind the fact 'OK this person is now happy or angry', like what it is the thing in the background …You should not hurry…but rather stop, observe and give time for the interaction as it is in that moment, and if you want to steer the person in some direction, it will not happen fast. With mindfulness, you can learn patience…You come to understand why this person did not take my message and do what I wanted straight away. (A2)

Moreover, many leaders reported that mindfulness had influenced their ability to *accept individual differences*. For instance, this leader had started to accept that some people tend to be more optimistic while others are pessimistic:

> What stuck in my mind quite well was [that] others are pessimistic, and others are optimistic, and then you should be able to tell who is what…who brings what thinking to this…so I have started to think more about what is this person's and that person's point of view, because facts are the same for everyone. (D1)

Furthermore, interviewees described how mindfulness had improved their *sensitivity to others' needs*. For example, this leader reported how mindfulness meant he may be better able to notice if a follower's well-being was at risk or if there were other problems:

> To learn to recognize the alarm signs when some people perform badly somehow or if there's a problem with coping. (D2)

Redefining 'self' as a leader. The leaders expressed how mindfulness training encouraged developing the idea of the self as a leader, in reference to examining one's attitudes, character, values, motivations, and desires. Consequently, mindfulness was seen as having imparted new insights into their own identity and role as a leader, including recognition of their function as role models.

The leaders often mentioned that mindfulness training had taught them to cope in a constantly changing work environment involving juggling people-related responsibilities and other work tasks. For example, this leader described how mindfulness had helped her to relax and adopt the attitude of trusting that everything would work out:

> My attitude and how I respond, for example … if there are absences, they always must be covered … The situation can change so many times between Tuesday and Thursday, so I don't worry about those situations beforehand anymore … I've learned that I won't worry about it before it's time to act. It would be a complete waste. … So, these things don't cause horrible anxiety anymore. (B2)

Thus, mindfulness conferred *flexibility and adaptability*.

On many occasions, mindfulness learning had encouraged the leaders to reconsider their perceptions of their leadership qualities, most typically their internal need to overperform or seek perfection. Interestingly, a major theme raised was *setting personal boundaries* that were stricter than before. The newly gained confidence was viewed to help the leaders to perform well in the leader role, as exemplified by this participant:

> When you're so conscientious, [it] turns negative when you try to stretch and do everything. …You try to do your best, like write a retirement speech that matters to the listener. …There, mindfulness has been good. My workload is not going to change, but I can change my attitude…It's not the end of the world if something won't be done. …The change in my own thinking, my attitude toward the community, my own working, how much is expected from me…I don't want work to get me down, so in a way, there has to be a balance. (B7)

Mindfulness training seemed to help the leaders develop self-compassion and to be lenient on themselves, which made them feel both more balanced and at the same time more accomplished. That development also involved insights relating to self-criticism. This appeared to be such an important realization that several leaders described having already established clearer limits relating to followers, which, for instance, involved not responding to all new requests immediately or sometimes shutting their office door.

Curiously, the leaders' accounts involved insights into *leading oneself to be able to lead others* that they linked to mindfulness training. Mindfulness was commonly seen as a self-leadership method that enables leading others well, as captured by a female unit head:

> I see it quite strongly as a self-leadership tool. The idea here is that when your own stuff is in order, then you can lead others. …There are many things about how you can use [mindfulness] for leadership, but they are a bit secondary. The biggest thing for me…is that when you are on good terms with yourself, you can do that leadership job for others. (A8)

Additionally, the leaders found mindfulness learning aligned with their intention to provide support for and to serve their followers wisely, as this leader expressed:

> "I hope I'll grow this great wisdom which I can then share with others." (D1)

Thus, mindfulness seemed to strengthen a *prosocial attitude* in some leaders.

Other-oriented emotion

The theme of *other-oriented emotion* concerns the affective domain: feelings, emotional states, and moods.

Emotional awareness. Due to training in mindfulness, the leaders developed the ability to notice emotions in oneself and others.

Among the leaders, *emotional self-awareness* could mean noticing their unproductive emotions in each situation, often observed in the context of their followers. For example, this leader had learned to become aware of being irritated when she was interrupted:

> Then you notice, for example, sometimes when a team member comes by and they can clearly see that steam is almost coming from my head, so it is easier in a way for me to recognize my own feelings after the mindfulness course, that 'OK, now I'm getting in the angry sector.' (B5)

Furthermore, the ability to recognize one's own feelings extended to recognizing their followers' emotions. The leaders reported that practicing mindfulness enhanced their *awareness of others' emotions*, as a female director noted:

> You notice not just your own emotional states but that of the people you lead.…You try to understand what could be behind them, and what influences them. (C8)

Emotional self-regulation. Learning to manage and self-regulate automatic emotional reactions proactively was a common theme in the leaders' accounts. Mindfulness helped the leaders realize that it is possible to work on an emotion

internally before the internal state or any harmful reactive consequence, such as lashing out in front of a follower, becomes visible to others.

Then *handling unpleasant emotions consciously* became possible. That approach was seen as central to recovering quickly from frustration, learning from the event, and not letting negative emotions harm the team, as explained by one leader:

> You must let the feelings come out too, but in some other situation, when I'm not with the staff...in a way I can dissolve them in some other way, those, what, fears or unpleasant situations or others, for instance with these [mindfulness] practices I can dissolve them. (B4)

Emotional self-regulation often involved *responding instead of reacting*; instead of sharpness finding a wiser way around an emotionally challenging or irritating situation. Often that involved the leader signified adapting their communication behavior. For instance, one leader described a major change in her way of responding instead of reacting to an irritating situation with a follower:

> Well, I have this one [team member] who… well, let's say that [s/he] is the kind of person who gets easily agitated, so with this person [I] must be careful…so that [I] don't do the same and get to that same state. So, I'm like… I consciously say [to myself] 'Now, a couple of breaths and a calm voice, and continue…' (B11)

Cultivating positive emotions. The leaders seemed to have developed a sense of responsibility over the emotional atmosphere at the workplace due to mindfulness. The leaders reported that their practice of mindfulness had increased the instances of having positive other-oriented emotions, such as relaxation, joy, gratitude, compassion, and kindness, in the interactions with followers.

The leaders described having started to consciously *cultivate prosocial emotions* amongst others. For instance, one leader described an experience of a shared happy moment with a follower. Mindfulness learning had helped her understand the value of seizing the moment, an example of informal mindfulness practice:

> Just now with [a team member] whose family situation has been tight… and we talked, and it was so lovely to enjoy with her so truly and bubblingly, it made me feel good, too. It was a happy moment.…It wasn't for that long a time, but I felt she also felt good about it when we were there, and I listened to her story. And that [moment] could have just… passed, had we not paused there. (B1)

Additionally, the leaders *experienced connection* with followers, as described by this leader:

> I feel that instead of, like before they have sent me email, now they have more eagerly called or come talk face-to-face, so could it be that I've been more relaxed and somehow happier and not so filled with hurry and negativity, so that others could have noticed it too, I don't know. (A2)

The nuances of connection seemed so subtle one might miss them without the present-moment awareness the leaders viewed mindfulness learning offered them. Overall, the space provided by mindfulness practice seemed to broaden the leaders' awareness of their spectrum of emotions in the work context. Consequently, they had started to intentionally cultivate space for positive emotions among their teams.

Other-oriented behavior

The theme of *other-oriented behavior* concerns the behavioral domain, that is, voluntary action.

Communicating thoughtfully. The leaders reported that practicing mindfulness provided a means to engage with awareness in verbal and non-verbal communication with others, which involves behavioral regulation in communication.

The leaders typically emphasized listening as the cornerstone of respectful interaction in their role. With the help of mindfulness and enhanced present-moment orientation, they felt that they could facilitate dialogue in one-to-one discussions with followers *by ensuring a lesser role for their own input*, as one leader put it:

> I feel that I've left out a lot of my own, kind of, train of thought from those discussions, and maybe just that…I've been able to be quiet, able to wait, able to listen. (D3)

The leaders described that keeping quiet more often or delaying their response was beneficial to allowing the followers the space to express themselves. Merely observing—something the leaders reported they had learned in mindfulness training—helped avoid rushing to say something and instead allowing others time to respond, which could elicit valuable input from the other person.

Additionally, the leaders perceived that mindfulness helped them in terms of *dealing with difficult discussions* more kindly and patiently, which usually involved responding with improved self-regulation. For instance, one leader described at length how her tactic in discussing sickness absences with a follower had changed dramatically after the realization that a straightforward approach was not the most fruitful option:

> Now I have consciously done so that I let the employee first tell me about their own issues…and I have kept quiet, let the other person speak, so I have given them the space for presence and then we have gone forward with the difficult matter. So, there it's been significant. …The result is a lot better; it is then easier for the person to speak about the difficult matter and go through it after they have space for it. (B1)

Facilitating mindful work environment. The leaders often brought up the theme of facilitating follower work performance and team functioning when they described a leader's responsibilities where mindfulness skills could be useful. This meant helpful action to ease people's work at the workplace.

Creating a calm work climate was seen as an important responsibility of a leader where mindfulness could help. For instance, this leader recognized that she could influence her team by the quality of her own state of mind:

> This simple thing that you do (practicing mindfulness) can have wider effects. Certainly, it does show when you focus on something for a moment and get other things off your mind and become calm. Of course, your own presence will impact your surroundings, and your being, and of course the team will immediately sense it in you. They know exactly when you're busy...they can read it from you. …So, the state you go there in has a big impact. (B10)

The leaders seemed to have understood that the mental and emotional factors affecting the climate in the team were contagious and, in fact, could be influenced by an intentional leadership practice.

Mindfulness learning was also seen as providing tangible support for *resolving interpersonal conflicts*, which leaders regularly had to deal with. For instance, one leader explained that careful observation, induced by mindfulness practice, helped her adopt a neutral, present-oriented stance:

> Like, you have this idea of each employee and then, you hear this, and you hear that, and then there is a conflict… it is dangerous, but you could, like form a picture beforehand…when these people…So, one should not form that picture based on prior

assumptions, so for me, this is a major area of development, but I mean… It does require one to stop and remember that, well, there mindfulness probably can help. (B15)

Interestingly, the mindfulness training had prompted the interviewees to start *implementing mindful work practices* for various purposes, such as raising the team's emotional awareness. One leader explained:

> I call it a check-in moment…At the beginning of each team meeting, everyone shares their own feelings they came to that meeting with…Everyone understands that one person is tired and angry, and maybe another is really excited. So, everyone knows where we are. I introduced this after a session of [mindfulness] training that discussed how you can really come to this moment…It is really nice for me to know if the whole team is in a bad mood, because then it's useless to go through something boring, then I can start from a little different angle. (D4)

Sharing. The leaders thought that mindfulness training had encouraged sharing mental and relational energy and information with others. Mindfulness was seen as encouraging authenticity and *openness about personal experiences*. For instance, one leader seemed to even surprise herself by her new found openness:

> During this [mindfulness] course, I have tried to tell [my team] a little more about myself, I'm sure [the mindfulness course] has caused that in a way, I've even been a little astonished and asked myself why did I say that about myself. I'm usually quite reserved, I don't speak about private matters, only neutral ones, but now I realized that I spoke about a truly personal matter…I kind of didn't see anything to lose…It felt like something that I could share. It was a bigger thing, so maybe it was time to mention it. (B18)

Mindfulness training clearly resonated with the leaders' willingness to share delicate personal matters and vulnerabilities with their followers more openly, which was seen to help build trust.

Bringing mindfulness learning to the team was a common desire among those leaders who had participated in mindfulness training. The leaders frequently found

ways to directly integrate mindfulness learning in day-to-day leadership work, as one leader exemplified:

> Last week my team member had a difficult situation with her own team member, and I noticed that both of them had feelings going on and I foresaw we might not be getting to the topic at all, so I just told them that I was doing this training and…[asked] would you like to try this practice? And we did it together and I think it had a good, a surprisingly good, impact on that situation and everyone had a calmer mind when we started to solve it. (C8)

In sum, we discovered that participation in mindfulness training was perceived by leaders to affect their interaction with followers in three domains of social awareness—other-oriented thought, other-oriented emotion, and other-oriented behavior. Table 1 summarizes the identified themes.

Table 1. Second-order themes and exemplary quotations

Theme	Description	Exemplary quotation
Other-oriented thought		
Present-moment orientation	Leaders learn to focus on their direct experience in the 'here-and-now'.	*Mindfulness in a way helps me to listen to people more carefully, as you strip off the distractions, and you create ways of working for yourself, like, when you have agreed on something, so then you kind of encounter, and that encounter is 'clean' and it does not contain any distractions, so that brings the quality to it, I've noticed. (B13)*
Perspective-taking	Leaders see themselves as becoming open to other people's viewpoints.	*This kind of mercifulness towards myself and others, like, well I have always been really good with systems, and I learn quickly. So, to understand that everyone is not like that, and I think some of my team members feel pressured ... So, [now] I've tried to make it easier for them to ask help, like encouraged them to say it out loud if they don't know how to do something ... These kinds of things [mindfulness] has brought, I try to, again, look at things from many sides, and with calmness. (C13)*
'Redefining 'self' as a leader	Leaders develop the idea of the self as a leader, in reference to examining one's attitudes, character, values, motivations,	*I see [mindfulness] as developing oneself, psychological growth ... that's a big difference [compared to other managerial trainings]. ... This is about how I grow as a person. As being a leader is about being human, and being humane. So it's about what I am like, that's how I work, that influences how I face other people,*

	and desires in the leader role.	*what my values are in relation to others. So... leadership is doing with people. ... In the end, it's about my own coping and well-being. So that you can do the leadership job, it's so demanding, varying, and if you're not ok you cannot do it.* (B21)
Other-oriented emotion		
Emotional awareness	Leaders develop the ability to notice emotions in oneself and others.	*Of course there may be a situation sometimes which you cannot influence, like when employees are having an argument and there is some schism, and then you become agitated as well.... So [with the help of mindfulness] already before the situations gets that far and before you get agitated, you should calmly handle it, like, to be more aware of how you behave and why your body is doing this now.* (B9)
Emotional self-regulation	Leaders learn to manage their frustrations and automatic emotional reactions proactively.	*In the team here, we have some strong personalities, so every now and then, or quite often, comes a situation when I've noticed that [now] I don't say anything so sharply, or that I really think a little about how I should respond, to an email or something. .... Some of it was.. well I didn't agree, and that's fine, but now I've thought that I want to process it more on my own, think about what we could do about it, without getting irritated.* (E8)
Cultivating positive emotions	Leaders experience positive emotions and and foster prosocial emotions, such as connection and kindness.	*I've experienced physical and mental fatigue, so [mindfulness] has given some strength to face those people and be present for them. In my team some people have bigger and some have smaller problems, it can be about private life or performance or whatever, I feel that I can listen better now, I can stop, and it doesn't feel so burdening... I can take it all in better. I do claim [mindfulness] has helped in that. ... I am not so grumpy even to my dogs, and my spouse says I am easier now [laughter] ... It is easier to [consciously] find the positive things in the day, and in life.* (C14)
Other-oriented behavior		
Communicating thoughtfully	Leaders engage with awareness in verbal and non-verbal communication with others.	*I had this challenging discussion with a team member during this training where s/he told me s/he is so fed up with work and considers going on a long sick leave or resign. So I tried to use the mindfulness course learning and said that we can take one step at a time and that everything will work out, we can look at the new systems one at a time and I will arrange some help ... S/he's also having a hard time in private life ... And that team member sent me a message next day and thanked and said the conversation was really good and made her/him think. I think it was wonderful that I could maybe help her/him with this same learning. So this kind of very concrete benefit [from mindfulness]. ... It*

		was as if I had earned her/his trust, something changed there. (C13)
Facilitating mindful work environment	Leaders act to create a benign workplace to support follower work performance and team functioning.	*I learned that, and now I see also in the leadership how important it is not to multitask and try to avoid this. Sometimes you have to, because there just simply is no other way, but I think that what mindfulness brought to me, the concept that multitasking is not actually good, it's something that distracts your attention, and I realized on myself that ... it's hard for me to focus when I do more things. I have this high speed ... but I don't focus .... and when it comes to the team, I really like all those documents we were given, the tips for mindfulness .... this is good also for the team. (E6)*
Sharing	Leaders openly share their mental and relational energy and information with others.	*I felt that I must share [mindfulness] with the work community, so we started a morning meeting with this. I asked if the employees were interested and they were really interested and somehow I surprised myself, too. I hadn't planned it, I just felt that it was the right place and time and it would do good to us all, and clearly that meeting.... it was an experience when I noticed that when we did the practice we calmed down and stepped out of the continuous hassle.... In that moment together, we really focused on the moment. .... But I did notice that not everyone liked it. .... It divides opinions and can be misunderstood, also. (B6)*

Leaders' understandings of mindfulness as a developmental practice

We now present the leaders' thoughts on the relevance of mindfulness to them as leaders. The enhanced other-orientations induced by mindfulness training and practice reported above seemed to strengthen the leaders' views of themselves as those who could *positively influence challenging work situations* requiring that they constantly interact with other people. Becoming aware of the consequences of the alternative (mindful or less mindful) ways to respond in certain situations was key in this development, as crystallized by one leader:

> When you are about to get frustrated…I mean these situations come every day, so you take the mindfulness gear and choose whether you go along with that tightness, or

whether you take it a little easier. So, this—choosing the path—is the takeaway from this course. (B20)

The leaders commonly recognized that the eight-week training was only the *beginning of a longer development process*, as one leader hinted:

> Eight weeks is such a short time that perhaps nothing has yet changed. It may be that some thoughts have only just begun to emerge. … I think it'll take some time from me… Let's say a few months from here, the next half a year, maybe then I will see if I can integrate some of the practices into leadership, I don't think that it'll happen very quickly. (D1)

So, the leaders perceived that the continuous journey initiated by the formal mindfulness training could potentially lead to deeper self-awareness and improved capacity to act wisely as a leader. The positive experiences during the training program motivated the leaders to consider *mindfulness as a practice they would like to engage in on long-term*, as this leader described:

> Isn't it more like a process…that at best, doesn't end? I mean somehow it will live in me, I mean I don't ever stop thinking, like, more 'mindful' …If I've got these new ideas, or realized something, or got help with stress management, I don't just suddenly stop it. Surely it does not stop when [mindfulness training] ends. I guess for me…I hope that this is something lasting. (B12)

The idea of mindfulness as an ongoing process contained the recognition that the key to reaping lasting benefits may be a regular practice—rewarding, yet painfully hard to maintain. During the intervention, active participation, engaging in mindfulness practices and self-reflection contributed to the perceived developments. After the intervention, the leaders discussed their desire to *establish practical personal mindfulness practice*. Even when often mentioned as a restraint, this comment conveys that lack of time may not be a real constraint:

> If the impact is what I can already see…small change has already happened…[mindfulness practice] will take a kind of established place in my life.…I

> will take care of those calming breaks and increase them…I will find more opportunities for [mindfulness], instead of browsing [the newspaper] with my cellphone, I'll close my eyes and spend five minutes by myself. (C14)

Finally, the leaders shared their reflections on the *distinct characteristics of mindfulness training* as a method of leadership and leader development among other HRD (human resource development) programs that they had attended in the past. Commonly, the focus on the development of self-views and awareness was seen as a unique feature of mindfulness. One leader stated:

> The more I think about it, the more I just can't imagine that we can have leadership courses without talking about mindfulness. …Because I have been to very good…management courses…providing practical tools in terms of, you know, how to do an appraisal talk…how to have these confrontational discussions…but that, to me, is not really leadership. …I mean, you are not leading by telling somebody. You are leading by inspiring people. And how can you inspire people if you are not present and aware? … If you're not clear about your own… state of mind. So, I guess if people want to learn leadership, they must learn these self-leadership techniques, which are, of course, related to being aware and being mindful, and being in control of your thoughts. (E1)

The mindfulness learning the leaders had acquired seemed to refine the leaders' expectations of mindfulness. It appears that the more knowledge the leaders acquired about mindfulness, the less specific and instrumental became the outcomes they expected from mindfulness. The last example illustrates that the leaders found mindfulness assisted an essential role for effective leaders—positively influencing their followers—which culminates in the enhanced presence for and awareness of others.

Discussion

In this study, we examined leaders' experiences of mindfulness training. Building on the interpersonal conceptualizations of mindfulness (e.g., Skoranski et al.,

2019), the analytical focus was on the leaders' experiences in the context of their followers. A qualitative approach allowed for an open exploration of multiple other-oriented dimensions and expressions of mindfulness perceived by the leaders. The leaders learned that mindfulness practice could help them become better leaders of people through raising their social awareness (Carden et al., 2019; Svalgaard, 2018). Our findings capture the leaders' experiences in the cognitive domain regarding perceptions and attitudes; in the affective domain involving management of feelings and emotional states; and in the behavioral domain in fostering positive leadership behaviors. While prior studies report leaders' mindfulness practice as having some relational influences (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Rupprecht et al., 2019; Wasylkiw et al., 2015), this study provides unique evidence that leaders view mindfulness practice as a transformative experience that has a holistic influence on the development of their interpersonal capabilities and social awareness as applied in social interactions with followers. Our work has several implications for theory and practice.

Theoretical contribution

First, our study contributes to the research on relational mindfulness within management and organization studies by clarifying mindfulness as a value-based developmental practice and interpersonal phenomenon (Purser, 2018; Skoranski et al., 2019). The empirical findings of the current study support the argument that mindfulness is not merely an intra-individual phenomenon but also an inter-individual one expressed in the dynamic everyday interactions that occur between people (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019). Our findings extend those from

studies on general populations (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007; Condon et al., 2013; Karremans et al., 2020) by offering empirical insight into a specific work-related relational context, leadership, in which relationships are often a non-voluntary and business-like lacking emotional expression (Humphrey et al., 2008).

Second, our study contributes to the literature on management learning. It corroborates and extends proposals that the awareness of the self and others, as enhanced by mindfulness, could significantly influence the development of leadership skills in a sustained way (e.g., Hyland et al., 2015). The interviewed leaders learned that simple mindfulness practices, such as taking a few conscious breaths upon transitioning from one work event to another, helped them be more present in the company of their followers. That enhanced presence was beneficial for interactions now guided by giving space to the other, seeking to understand another's perspective, and acting pro-socially. In essence, mindfulness learning and practice seemed to encourage self-reflective observation leading to the development of perceptions and emotions and integrating that understanding into their everyday leadership practices and interaction with followers. Our findings show that mindfulness practice can help leaders develop their performance of key leadership tasks requiring social skill, such as communicating, resolving conflicts between people, and dealing effectively with their reactive emotions in social situations. This development is relevant for the individual leader's capacity to be an effective leader in today's global environment marked by major transformations and crises that threaten people's well-being, functioning and sense of safety, such

as the COVID-19 pandemic and war (e.g., (Antonakis, 2021; Humphrey et al., 2008; Mumford et al., 2000).

Importantly, we found that the leader practitioners do not view mindfulness as a value-neutral cognitive technique (or personal 'pocket tool') only to aid staying calm and focused when social situations require (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Karjalainen et al., 2018; Roche et al., 2020; Vu and Burton, 2020). Instead, they viewed the mindfulness practice as facilitating an ongoing transformative personal development process closely linked to motivation and taking specific action to improve the relational leadership processes they are key contributors to. By indicating that mindfulness can strengthen leaders' capacity to act for the collective good, our findings challenge the predominant emphasis of workplace mindfulness research and practice (e.g., Eby et al., 2019) and aid in re-establishing the interconnected ethical and relational elements of mindfulness feared lost in the adaptations and assessments of mindfulness interventions in corporate settings (e.g., Badham and King, 2021; Purser, 2018; Walsh, 2018).

Further, our study extends understanding of sustained development which necessitates that the leader takes a reflective stance and voluntarily engages in regular mindfulness practice (Boyce et al., 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Reichard and Johnson, 2011). Mindfulness training helps leaders understand *how* to develop themselves as leaders. Our findings suggest that active attendance of a formal eight-week-long mindfulness training program can be an important developmental stepping-stone to improved social awareness (Svalgaard, 2018), as it offers knowledge, expert guidance, and support for independent practice that can enhance

leaders' other-oriented thought, emotion, and behavior. Our findings also support views of leader mindfulness training as a beginning of a continuous developmental process, as leaders shift their expectations away from outcome-focused quick fix thinking (e.g., Karjalainen et al., 2018).

The third contribution lies in providing a conceptual framework (see Figure 2) that integrates current knowledge into a coherent whole and shapes how mindfulness training is understood and defined as a method for holistic leadership and leader development that can genuinely enhance leaders' other-orientation and build leaders' capacity for social leadership. The framework explicates how mindfulness training can spawn prosocial and socially sustainable leadership across multiple domains of human experience through a combination of a formal program and leader self-development activities (Boyce et al., 2010; Reichard and Johnson, 2011; Svalgaard, 2018). While prior research has examined leader mindfulness interventions with much focus on the outcomes but few references to its antecedents and mechanisms, our framework highlights the pathway with the potential to build social leadership capacity. The antecedents might be the employer commissioning formal mindfulness training for leaders and teams, and the format and delivery of the training program; the mechanism could be active participation in the training program, developing a personal way of practicing mindfulness, and taking a reflective stance, and ultimately applying learning in the relational, organizational context. Our framework highlights the potential significance of mindfulness learning to leaders' social leadership capacity, guides future research endeavors that will extend understanding of the antecedents and mechanisms of

mindfulness-based leader development, and acts as a resource for researchers and practitioners alike.
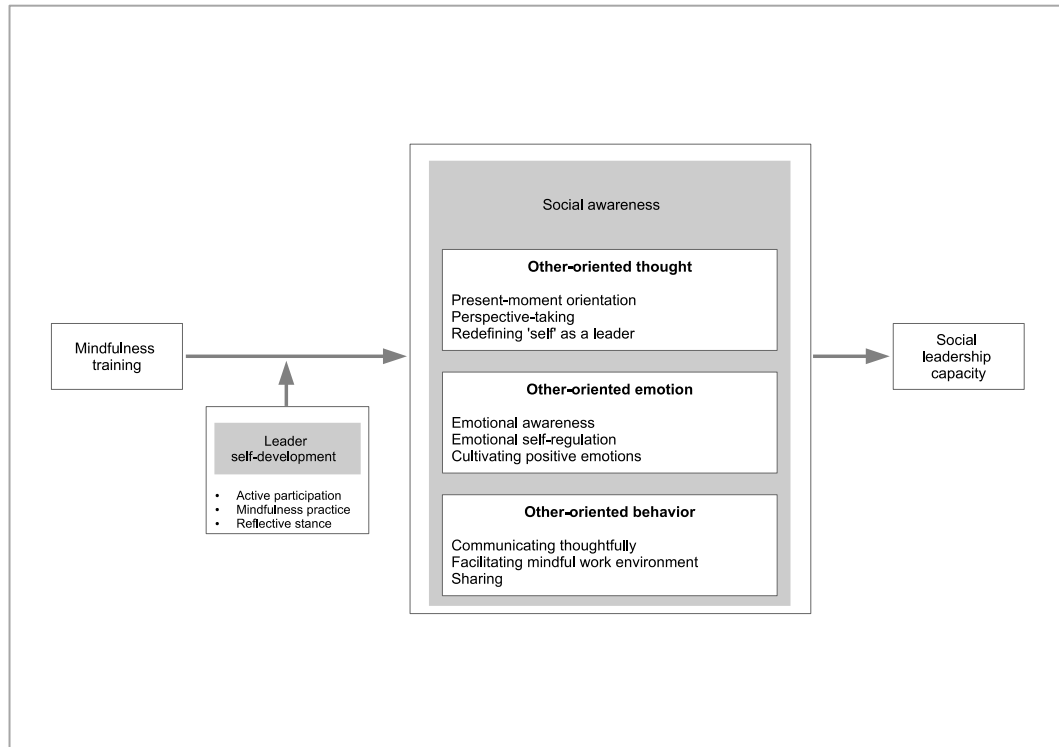

Figure 2. Development of leaders' social awareness through mindfulness training

Practical implications

Research on mindfulness in relationships is significant for the practice of leadership, as leadership is relational and takes place in leader-follower interactions (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Good et al., 2015). The current study provides valuable information for practicing HR directors and development professionals evaluating and selecting mindfulness-based leader development interventions. We found mindfulness knowledge and practice strengthened leaders' prosocial intentions regarding followers. The leaders attested that the change was evident in their

thoughts and feelings about their followers and their actions toward them. While training leaders in mindfulness appears a viable method to build the social leadership capacity of individual leaders, it remains at the leaders' discretion to decide how to integrate the teachings into their lives to support their personal development and professional relationships. To encourage more leaders and employees to engage in mindfulness, we recommend employers provide staff with information on the individual and interpersonal benefits of the practice. However, it is always worthwhile remembering that participatory organizational interventions are complex processes, and therefore outcomes can vary in different organizations and situations (Simonsen Abildgaard et al., 2020).

This study also has implications for mindfulness instructors. It confirms the need for formalized leader development approaches that address the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of leaders' holistic functioning affecting the development of their social and interpersonal competence at the core of leadership (Liu et al., 2020). The framework developed in this study can serve as a useful resource for practitioners involved in mindfulness who wish to apply new knowledge on this important topic. We recommend that leader-specific elements (such as training in leading people with compassion) and technological tools that help practitioners engage despite tight schedules are built into the design and delivery of mindfulness interventions for leaders.

Finally, our study has implications for the individual leader. Its results indicate that mindfulness training influences the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of human functioning. Those effects are expressed in the relational context

with followers, which appears to support the adage that leadership starts from within. The identified enhancements to leadership ability are connected to human psychological processes that evolve over time (Day et al., 2014). Consequently, to reap sustained benefits capable of spanning various areas of life (i.e., well-being, work productivity, inner growth, and relationships), practitioners should see a formal mindfulness training program as a starting point. We would suggest they establish regular, independent mindfulness practice beyond the formal intervention context.

Limitations and future research

Despite its strengths (pre-/post-intervention design, rich interview material and large sample), this study has some limitations, which should inspire future studies. First, we did not measure changes in predefined variables. Instead, we openly probed the subjective experiences of the leaders by utilizing a qualitative pre-post design (Goldman-Schuyler et al.; Varela and Shear, 2000). We provided insights into the key domains of leaders' social awareness and presented them as a conceptual framework. We acknowledge that the elements within this framework are related. For instance, behavior may be seen as an expression of thoughts and emotions (Gill, 2011), but we did not focus on assessing the relationships between those elements. In the future, connections between the attentional, affective, and behavioral elements could be investigated. Another option would be a deep dive into any of the above areas, for instance exploring the sustained behavioral changes might offer valuable insights into the processes of leader mindfulness. Future research might also investigate the broader implications for the workplace climate,

for instance, if practicing mindfulness enhances human flourishing at work (Arch and Landy, 2015).

Second, we did not assess second-person perspectives such as those of followers. This study focused on revealing the subjective experience of leaders and their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. We acknowledge that personal interviews focusing on individuals' perceptions of themselves in relation to others could be subject to halo effects, meaning that the enhanced social behaviors of the interviewees may, for instance, be over-emphasized when the behavior is self-reported, as opposed to being assessed by another person (Donaldson and Grant-Vallone, 2002). However, the information from leaders on their mental and behavioral processes presented by the current analysis could be obtained only by studying the leaders' first-person accounts (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017). Future research might investigate how mindfulness practice affects the quality of dyadic and workgroup relationships at multiple levels (Good et al., 2016; Hülsheger, 2015). That might be achieved by qualitatively examining followers' attitudes, emotions, and behaviors (a considerable time) after they and/or their leaders attend mindfulness training. Future research could also explore how team mindfulness (Yu and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018) develops as a result of leader mindfulness training.

Third, the focus of this study was on the leaders' experiences described by them immediately after the mindfulness training. We would encourage investigations of the long-term relational impacts of mindfulness training on leadership through a longitudinal design (Davidson and Kazniak, 2015). Follow-

up interviews or surveys could be conducted six and 12 months, or even several years, after the intervention.

Fourth, the potential limitations of the research setting should be considered. Participation in the research intervention was, as is typical of mindfulness programs, voluntary (Davidson and Kazniak, 2015). Self-selection may have led to the participants being more pro-mindfulness than a randomly selected leader population (Davidson and Kazniak, 2015), and participants in mindfulness interventions who perceive the experience positively may be more enthusiastic about taking part in research than those who had a negative experience (Rupprecht et al., 2019). Interviewees may also provide answers they think the interviewer wants to hear (Davidson and Kazkiak, 2015). Furthermore, female participants dominated the population of the current study, which is perhaps telling of the popularity of workplace mindfulness among women. Future studies might balance potential biases by seeking the view of individuals who did not agree to be interviewed or who dropped out from the program, constructing samples with equal numbers of female and male informants, and exploring the obstacles to imparting the value of mindfulness.

Finally, workplace mindfulness interventions are heterogenous in terms of length and intensity, and often tailored according to the requirements of the purchasing organization. Both the content and context of the intervention may influence the results (Bartlett et al., 2019). The current research intervention did not have a particular emphasis, for instance on stress-reduction or spirituality (King and Badham, 2018; Shonin and Van Gordon, 2015). The heterogeneity of the

different mindfulness programs available and not being able to control how individuals practice what they learn complicate comparison (Davidson and Kazniak, 2015), but supports the assessment of their effectiveness in ways that can accommodate accounts of subjective experiences as we have done. In the current research intervention, regular home practice was encouraged, which is an important element of mindfulness interventions (Davidson and Kazniak, 2015). The participants' experiences may have been different had the participants not been provided support and a mobile application to encourage independent practice. Practicing mindfulness is a personal and contextual choice that practitioners independently make (Vu and Gill, 2018: 155), as described by our interviewees. Because the results of organizational interventions are "products of multiple intervention mechanisms interacting with the specific organizational contexts" (Simonsen Abildgaard et al., 2020: 1340), future studies might address the context of the intervention.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we found that leaders perceive mindfulness learning to foster their other-orientation as a leader. Our findings illustrate three interlinked aspects of their enhanced social awareness—the cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Our research highlights that the examination of mindfulness in relation to others concerns not only an individual's personal gain, like well-being and attention-enhancement, but their enhanced other-orientation; intention to do well by others, to respond wisely, and act responsibly. Leaders recognize that an eight-week-long training program may be only beginning of a continuous journey toward enhanced

self-awareness and becoming a more socially-aware leader. Thus, our research implies that training leaders in mindfulness could unleash beneficial relational value and improve their capacity for leading others in a sustained way. To build on this research, we encourage management learning scholars to continue the investigation of mindfulness as an interpersonal phenomenon.

References

Antonakis, J (2021) Leadership to defeat COVID-19. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 24(2): 210–215.

Arch JJ and Landy LN (2015) Emotional benefits of mindfulness. In: Brown KW, Creswell JD and Ryan RM (eds) *Handbook of Mindfulness*. New York: The Guildford Press, pp. 208–224.

Avolio BJ and Gardner WL (2005) Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly* 16(3): 315–338.

Badham R and King E (2021) Mindfulness at work: A critical re-view. *Organization* 28(4): 531–554.

Barnes S, Brown KW, Krusemark E, Campbell WK and Rogge RD (2007) The role of mindfulness in romantic relationship satisfaction and responses to relationship stress. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 33(4): 482–500.

Boyce LA, Zaccaro SJ and Wisecarver MZ (2010) Propensity for self-development of leadership attributes: Understanding, predicting, and supporting performance of leader self-development. *The Leadership Quarterly* 21(1): 159–178.

Brown KW and Ryan RM (2003) The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84(4): 822–848.

Carden J, Jones RJ and Passmore J (2021) Defining self-awareness in the context of adult development: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Management Education* 1–38. doi.org/10.1177/1052562921990065

Carson JW, Carson KM, Gil KM and Baucom DH (2004) Mindfulness-based relationship enhancement. *Behavior Therapy* 35(3): 471–494.

Ceravolo D and Raines A (2019) The impact of a mindfulness intervention for nurse managers. *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 37(1): 47–55.

Condon P, Desbordes G, Miller, WB and DeSteno D (2013) Meditation Increases Compassionate Responses to Suffering. *Psychological Science* 24(10): 2125–2127.

Crivelli D, Fronda G, Venturella I and Balconi M (2019) Stress and neurocognitive efficiency in managerial contexts: A study on technology-mediated mindfulness practice. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management* 12(2): 42–56.

Dane E and Rockmann KW (2020) Traveler's mind: A narrative-based account of working and living mindfully. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 29(3): 330–337.

Davidson RJ and Kazniak AW (2015) Conceptual and methodological issues in research on mindfulness and meditation. *American Psychologist* 70(7): 581–592.

Day DV (2011) Leadership Development. In: Bryman A, Collinson D, Grint K, Jackson R and Uhl-Bien M (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership.* London: SAGE, pp. 37–50.

Day D and Dragoni L (2015) Leadership development: An outcome-oriented review based on time and levels of analyses. Annual Review of *Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 2: 133–156.

Day DV, Fleenor JW, Atwater LE, Sturm RE and McKee RA (2014) Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory. *The Leadership Quarterly* 25(1): 63–82.

Dietl E and Reb J (2021) A self-regulation model of leader authenticity based on mindful self-regulated attention and political skill. *Human Relations* 74(4): 473–501.

Donald JN, Sahdra BK, Van Zanden B, Duineveld J, Atkins PWB, Marshall SL and Ciarrochi J (2019) Does your mindfulness benefit others? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the link between mindfulness and prosocial behaviour. *British Journal of Psychology* 110(1): 101–125.

Donaldson-Feilder E, Lewis R and Yarker J (2019) What outcomes have mindfulness and meditation interventions for managers and leaders achieved? A systematic review. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 28(1): 11–29.

Donaldson SI and Grant-Vallone EJ (2002) Understanding self-report bias in organizational behavior research. Journal of Business and Psychology 17(2): 245–262.

duPlessis and Just (2021) Mindfulness—it's not what you think: Toward critical reconciliation with progressive self-development practices. *Organization* 29(1): 209–221.

Eby LT, Allen TD, Conley KM, Williamson RL, Henderson TG and Mancini VS (2019) Mindfulness-based training interventions for employees: A qualitative review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review* 29(2): 156–178.

Fazia, T., Bubbico, F., Salvato, G., Berzuini, G., Bruno, S., Bottini, G. & Bernardinelli, L. (2020). Boosting psychological well-being through a social mindfulness-based intervention in the general population. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, 8404.

Fredrickson BL, Cohn MA, Coffey KA, Pek J and Finkel SM (2008) Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95(5): 1045–1062.

Galante J, Galante I, Bekkers M-J and Gallacher J (2014) Effect of kindness-based meditation on health and well-being: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 82(6): 1101–1114.

Gethin R (2011) On some definitions of mindfulness. *Contemporary Buddhism* 12(1): 263–279.

Gill R (2011) *Theory and Practice of Leadership*. Sage: London.

Gioia DA, Corley KG and Hamilton AL (2012) Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods* 16 (1): 15–31.

Glomb TM, Duffy MK, Bono JE and Yang YT (2011) Mindfulness at work. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* 30: 115–157.

Goleman D (1995) *Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam: New York.

Goldman-Schuyler K, Skjei S, Sanzgiri J and Koskela V (2017) "Moments of waking up": A doorway to mindfulness and presence. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 26(1): 86–100.

Good DJ, Lyddy CJ, Glomb TM, Bono JE, Brown KW, Duffy MK, Baer RA, Brewer JA and Lazar SW (2016) Contemplating mindfulness at work: An integrative review. *Journal of Management* 42(1): 114–142.

Gonzales-Morales MG, Kernan MC, Becker TE and Eisenberger R (2018) Defeating Abusive Supervision: Training Supervisors to Support Subordinates. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 23(2): 151–162.

Humphrey RH, Pollack JM and Hawver T (2008) Leading with emotional labor. *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 23(2): 151–168.

Hunter J (2015) Teaching managers to manage themselves: Mindfulness and the inside work of management. In: Reb J and Atkins PWB (eds) *Mindfulness in Organizations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 355–382.

Hyland PK, Lee RA and Mills MJ (2015) Mindfulness at work: A new approach to improving individual and organizational performance. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 8(4): 576–602.

Hülsheger UR (2015) Making sure that mindfulness is promoted in organizations in the right way and for the right goals. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 8(4): 674–679.

Ihl A, Strunk K and Fiedler M (2020) Interpretations of mindfulness practices in organizations:
A multi-level analysis of interpretations on an organizational, group, and individual level. *Organization*. DOI: 10.1177/1350508420968195.

Inceoglu I, Thomas G, Chu C, Plans D and Gerbasi A (2018) Leadership behavior and employee well-being: An integrated review and future research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly* 29(1): 179–202.

Islam G, Holm M and Karjalainen M (2017) Sign of the times: Workplace mindfulness as an empty signifier. *Organization* 29(1): 3–29.

Kabat-Zinn J (2003) Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 10(2): 144–156.

Karjalainen M, Islam G and Holm M (2021) Scientization, instrumentalization, and commodification of mindfulness in a professional services firm. *Organization* 28(3): 483–509.

Karremans JC, Van Schie HT, Van Dongen I, Kappen G, Mori G, Van As S, Ten Bokkel IM and Van der Wal RC (2020) Is mindfulness associated with interpersonal forgiveness? *Emotion 20*(2): 296–310.

Karssiens AEA, Van der Linden C, Wilderom CPM and Furtmueller E (2014) Embodied mind knowledge in leadership practice: Creating space in patterned thoughts and behaviors. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 23(3): 231–241.

King E and Badham R (2018) The wheel of mindfulness: A generative framework for second-generation mindful leadership. *Mindfulness*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0890-7. Epub.

Kristeller J (2004) Meditation: Multiple effects, a unitary process? In: Blows M, Srinivasan S, Blows J, Bankart CP, Delmonte MM and Haruki Y (eds.) *The relevance of wisdom traditions in contemporary society: The challenge to psychology*. Delft: Eburon, pp. 21–37.

Lange S and Rowold J (2019) Mindful leadership: Evaluation of a mindfulness-based leader intervention. *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation* 50: 319–335.

Lincoln YS and Guba EG (1985) *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Lippincott M (2018) Deconstructing the relationship between mindfulness and leader effectiveness. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 39(5): 650–664.

Liu Z, Venkatesh S, Murphy SE and Riggio RE (2020) Leader development across the lifespan: A dynamic experiences-grounded approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*. Epub ahead of print 2 February 2020. DOI: 10.1016/j.leagua.2020.101382.

Lundqvist C, Ståhl L, Kenttä G and Thulin U (2018). Evaluation of a mindfulness intervention for Paralympic leaders prior to the Paralympic games. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching* 13(1): 62–71.

Mahfouz J (2018) Mindfulness training for school administrators: effects on well-being and leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration* 56(6): 602–619.

Mumford MD, Zaccaro SJ, Harding FD, Jacobs TO and Fleishman EA (2000) Leadership skills for a changind world: Solving complex social problems. *Leadership Quarterly* 11(1): 11– 35.

Nübold A, Van Quaquebeke N and Hülsheger UR (2019) Be(com)ing real: a multi-source and an intervention study on mindfulness and authentic Leadership. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 35: 469–488.

Pircher Verdorfer A (2016) Examining mindfulness and its relations to humility, motivation to lead, and actual servant leadership behaviors. *Mindfulness* 7(4): 950–961.

Purser RE (2018) *Critical perspectives on corporate mindfulness. Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 15(2): 105–108.

Purser RE and Loy D (2013) *Beyond McMindfulness*. Huffington Post. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.

Purser R and Milillo J (2015) Mindfulness revisited: A Buddhist-based conceptualization. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 24(1): 3–24.

Reb J, Narayanan J and Chaturvedi S (2014) Leading mindfully: Two studies on the influence of supervisor trait mindfulness on employee well-being and performance. *Mindfulness* 5: 36–45.

Reichard RJ and Johnson SK (2011) Leader self-development as organizational strategy. *The Leadership Quarterly* 22: 33–42.

Roche M, Good D, Lyddy C, Tuckey MR, Grazier M, Leroy H, Hülsheger UR (2020) A Swiss army knife? How science challenges our understanding of mindfulness in the workplace. *Organizational Dynamics* 49: 1–9

Rostron A (2021) How to be a hero: How managers determine what makes a good manager through narrative identity work. *Management Learning* 1–22. doi.org/10.1177/13505076211007275.

Rupprecht S, Falke P, Kohls N, Tamdjidi C, Wittman M and Kersemaekers W (2019) Mindful leader development: How leaders experience the effects of mindfulness training on leader capabilities. *Frontiers in Psychology.* DOI:10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01081.

Salovey P and Mayer JD (1990) Emotional Intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 9(3): 185–211.

Shonin E and Van Gordon W (2015) Managers' experiences of Meditation Awareness Training. *Mindfulness* 6: 899–909.

Simonsen Abildgaard J, Nielsen, K, Dyrlund Wåhlin-Jacobsen C, Maltesen T and Bang Christensen K and Holterman A (2020) 'Same, but different': A mixed-

methods realist evaluation of a cluster-randomized controlled participatory organizational intervention. *Human Relations* 73(10): 1339–1365.

Simonsen Abildgaard J, Hasson H, Von Thiele Schwarz U, Tevik Løvseth L, Ala-Laurinaho A and Nielsen K (2020) Forms of participation: The development and application of a conceptual model of participation in work environment interventions. *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 41(3): 746–769.

Skoranski A, Coatsworth JD and Lunkenheimer E (2019) A dynamic systems approach to understanding mindfulness in interpersonal relationships. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 28: 2659–2672.

Stedham Y and Skaar TB (2019) Mindfulness, trust, and leader effectiveness: A conceptual framework. *Frontiers in Psychology*. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01588.

Sutton A, Williams HM and Allinson CW (2015) A longitudinal, mixed method of self-awareness training in the workplace. *Journal of Training and Development* 39(7): 610–627.

Svalgaard L (2018) The critical moment of transition: Staying with and acting on newly gained self-and social awareness. *Management Learning* 49(3): 278–294.

Thorndike EL (1920) Intelligence and its use. Harper's Magazine 140: 227–235.

Uhl-Bien M (2006) Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *The Leadership Quarterly* 17(6): 654–667.

Urrila L (2021) From personal well-being to relationships: A systematic review on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders. *Human Resource Management Review* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2021.100837.

Vich M, Lukeš M and Burian J (2020) Out of sight, out of mind? Exploring the long-term effects of Relational Mindfulness Training (RMT). *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science* 16: 162–171.

Vu MC and Burton N (2020) Mindful reflexivity: Unpacking the process of transformative learning in mindfulness and discernment. *Management Learning* 51(2): 207–226.

Vu MC and Gill R (2018) Is there corporate mindfulness? An exploratory study of Buddhist-enacted spiritual leaders' perspectives and practices. *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* 15(2): 155–177.

Yu L and Zellmer-Bruhn M (2018) Introducing team mindfulness and considering its safeguard role against conflict transformation and social undermining. *Academy of Management Journal* 61(1): 324–347.

Varela FJ and Shear J (2000) First-person methodologies: What, why, how? In: Varela FJ and Shear J (eds.) *The view from within: First-person approaches to the study of consciousness*. UK: Imprint Academic.

Walsh Z (2018) Mindfulness under neoliberal governmentality: critiquing the operation of biopower in corporate mindfulness and constructing queer alternatives. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 15(2): 109–122.

Wasylkiw L, Holton J, Azar R and Cook W (2015) The impact of mindfulness on leadership effectiveness in a health care setting: a pilot study. *Journal of Health Organization and Management* 29(7): 893–911.

White DE, Oelke ND and Friesen S (2012) Management of a large qualitative data set: establishing trustworthiness of the data. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 11(3): 244–258.

Paper 3

Leadership practices of mindfulness-trained leaders intending to serve the team

Abstract

Recent research proposes mindfulness training may help develop servant leadership. In this study we focus on how mindfulness training as a human resource intervention can foster servant leadership development by drawing from pre-intervention inquiry and post-intervention interviews with 62 organizational leaders who participated in a mindfulness intervention. Leaders reported engaging in newly acquired servant leader behaviors while integrating mindfulness into their leadership work which benefited themselves (self-awareness and self-care), their followers (relationship building, follower development and well-being), and their teams (culture). This study advances the literature on mindfulness and servant leadership by building a theoretical bridge between mindfulness-based human resource development and servant leadership, by identifying how mindfulness knowledge and learnings can be integrated to grow the leader holistically instead of providing training in specific skills, and by providing a conceptual framework that illustrates the possible mechanisms that build leaders' capacity for servant leadership.

Keywords: leader development, leadership development, mindfulness,

mindfulness intervention, servant leadership

Introduction

The human resource management literature recognizes the need to develop leaders who support their followers through modeling positive behaviors and building relationships among team members (Hu et al., 2022). In order to support followers, leaders must be aware of their followers' needs and interests and be willing to put their own needs aside for the benefit of others (Reb et al., 2015). Servant leadership is an other-oriented approach to leadership that emphasizes the leader's self-awareness, selflessness, and motivation to serve and support others (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). Mindfulness, "the awareness that arises through intentionally attending in an open, caring, and discerning way" (Shapiro & Carlson, 2017, p. 8), is a value-based contemplative practice and interpersonal phenomenon (Purser & Milillo, 2015; Skoranski et al., 2019), such as between leaders and employees, and could foster leaders' desire to engage in servant leadership (Reb et al., 2015). Mindfulness practice intrinsically involves contemplation directed towards internal and external phenomena (meditation), reflexive monitoring of one's mental states and actions (introspection), and making purposeful choices intended to serve oneself and others (ethical conduct; Purser & Milillo, 2015). The potential of mindfulness human resource interventions for developing servant leadership has been recognized in management literature (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Reb et al., 2015; Roche et al., 2020), yet the field is lacking empirical evidence to support this view. The servant leadership literature has provided little guidance on practices that positively impact individual's other-orientation, a key component of both servant leadership and mindfulness (Eva et

al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2019; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). To explore if and how human resource interventions might be a key to developing servant leaders, we, therefore in this study seek to empirically demonstrate the connections between mindfulness and servant leadership.

Literature indicates mindfulness and servant leadership are inherently linked (Reb et al., 2015). Mindfulness is viewed as a holistic approach to the human experience, as it encompasses and has consequences for the human functional domains of physiology, cognition, emotion, behavior, interpersonal relationships, spirituality, and the nature of self (e.g., Brown et al., 2016). In the organizational context, mindfulness and mindfulness training may affect interpersonal behavior, team functioning, and the quality of dyadic and workgroup relationships improved attentional and emotional processes, improved listening, collaboration and respect, better conflict management and modulating the emotional tone of the team and reduced emotional contagion (Good et al., 2016), all of which are key aspects of servant leadership (Eva et al. 2019). Despite the recognition that mindfulness-based human resource interventions and training programs could enhance ethics- and relations-oriented leadership (Roche et al., 2020), support the development of positive leadership behaviors that foster desirable employee outcomes (Arendt et al., 2019; Gonzales-Morales et al., 2018; Liang et al., 2016; Pinck & Sonnentag, 2018), and support holistic leadership development (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Roche et al., 2020), empirical research on mindfulness training for leadership development is limited. As servant leadership is a holistic approach to leadership (Sendjaya et al., 2008), it stands to reason that a holistic approach to development,

such as mindfulness, is required as genuine other-orientedness may be difficult to develop through traditional leader training (Eva et al., 2019; Lange & Rowold, 2019; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016). Thus, perhaps the answers to how we can develop servant leaders lies within the mindfulness research (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Reb et al., 2015; Roche et al., 2020).

To examine if mindfulness training can foster servant leadership development, we study the experiences of 62 organizational leaders who participated in an eight-week mindfulness intervention. Material was collected before and after the intervention to gain an understanding of the leaders' experiences, covering the pre-intervention presuppositions and post-intervention perceptions. The rich qualitative interview material allowed for openly investigating how leaders perceived mindfulness training to have affected their leadership practice, working closely with their teams of followers. Gaining a holistic insight into the experienced relational value of mindfulness learning for their leadership practice led us to, then, search for descriptions relating to servant leadership development. The unique data goes beyond the predominant focus of the servant leadership literature in espousing the importance of servant leadership (Eva et al., 2019; Hoch et al., 2018), rather it advances understandings of how mindfulness training strengthens leaders' desires to engage in servant leadership and how leaders use mindfulness in their leadership work to engage in servant leader behaviors.

In doing so, this study advances the literature on mindfulness and servant leadership development in three ways. First, we build a theoretical bridge between mindfulness and servant leadership by demonstrating their connections and

explicating how these literatures can strengthen each other and be used to develop leaders (e.g., Badham & King, 2021; Eva et al., 2019). Second, we challenge the notion of traditional leader development (e.g., Day, 2000; Day & Dragoni, 2015) by identifying how mindfulness knowledge and learnings can be integrated into *leader* and *leadership* development, to grow the leader holistically and to support and develop the followers and the work community in a sustained way. As a result of the in-depth exploration enabled by qualitative inquiry, we identified possible mechanisms (Warren et al., 2020)—practices that build leaders' capacity for servant leadership—in the leaders' accounts. Third, we provide a conceptual framework that illustrates the mechanisms and underlines the common ground between servant leadership and mindfulness-based leader development.

Theoretical background

Here, we discuss servant leadership and leader mindfulness interventions, and outline why these concepts are important for the development of other-oriented leadership. We review existing literature and propose how servant leadership and mindfulness-based leader development are intertwined: servant leadership as an intrinsically other-oriented, value-based leadership approach that is characterized by the leader's inherent motivation for personal development, and mindfulness as an interpersonal and value-based developmental practice that likewise has particular relevance for organizational leaders in their social role influencing employees and sustainable organizational outcomes on multiple levels. We also discuss holistic leader development as part of leadership development. Table 1 presents an overview of the literature review.

Table 1. Overview of the literature review

Perspective	Mindfulness training for leaders	Servant leadership development
Leader	Individual conceptualizations; The focus is on direct personal experience, awareness and attention to the present moment (e.g., Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). 'Individual-instrumental' approach (Badham & King, 2021); The focus is on the individual's well-being and functioning (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019; Lundqvist et al., 2019). 'Individual-substantive' approach (Badham & King, 2021); The focus is on the development of individual wisdom through mindful reflection and ethical consideration (e.g., Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015).	One first has an internal calling to serve and then comes to leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders need to understand and learn ways to replenish themselves to avoid mental fatigue and depletion caused by regularly engaging in servant leadership behavior (Liao et al., 2021). Servant leadership is not only about 'doing' the acts of service to others but also about 'being' (Sendjaya, 2015). Self-awareness and self-concept are core dimensions of servant leadership as the leader needs to understand who they are and what motivates them to serve and lead, and that way engaging in servant leadership becomes intrinsically motivating (Chen et al., 2015; Sarros & Sendjaya, 2002; Sendjaya, 2015).
Employee	'Interpersonal conceptualizations, e.g., 'interpersonal mindfulness' (Barnes et al., 2007), 'relational mindfulness' (Vich et al., 2020), 'social mindfulness' (Fazia et al., 2020); The focus is on the assumption that an individual's mindfulness should influence other people through prosocial attitudes and behaviors (Donald et al, 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019). Development of positive leadership qualities and behaviors that foster beneficial employee outcomes like well-being and performance (e.g., Lange & Rowold, 2019; Nübold et al., 2019; Schuh et al., 2019). Potentially effective for the development of genuine leader other-orientedness and servant leadership (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Reb et al., 2015; Roche et al., 2020).	Servant leaders put followers' needs before the needs of the organization or themselves (Sendjaya et al., 2008). A key component of servant leadership is being a steward of their employees, that is, being trusted with followers' well-being and growth (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Covenantal relationship marks a relationship by shared values, commitment, mutual trust, and concern for the welfare of the other (Sendjaya et al. (2008). Servant leaders focus on the follower's holistic development rather than their performance (Lemoine et al., 2021).

Community	'Collective conceptualizations, e.g., 'team mindfulness' (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018); The focus is on organizational development, while the individual's perspective has less emphasis (Badham & King, 2021). 'Collective-instrumental' approach (Badham & King, 2021); The focus is on how organizational performance could be enhanced with mindfulness. 'Collective-substantive' approach' (Badham & King, 2021); The focus is on interdependence, purposeful collective action and ethics-oriented organization and leadership, with less emphasis on the self-centred concerns of individuals. Mindfulness training may be offered for leaders in the hope that their learnings will "spill over" and improve the individual leaders' critical leadership capabilities and have beneficial organizational and team level effects (Hülsheger, 2015).	Servant leaders have an outward focus towards the community (Lemoine et al., 2019; 2021). Servant leaders aspire to create a servant culture within their team (Liden et al., 2014b). Servant leaders could influence the culture of the team by encouraging follower authenticity and value-based action through positive modelling (Madison & Eva, 2019).
Developmental process	Holistic development of the physiological, cognitive and attentional, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual qualities of an individual in relationship to the self and others (Kristeller, 2004). Practice-based approach consisting of formal and informal practice, ('way of being') requiring the individual practitioner's willingness and motivation to engage in the practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Reb et al., 2015).	Occurs as part of the continuous human developmental process that supports the self-concept and intention to be a servant leader (Phipps, 2010; Sarros & Senjaya, 2002). Transformative approach to life and work, 'way of being' (SanFacon & Spears, 2008).

Servant leadership

Servant leadership is a unique form of relational and moral leadership, as it primarily focuses on the development of others and has an outward focus towards the community, placing the leader's concern for the organization, or self, last (Eva et al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2019; 2021; Sendjaya et al., 2008). Meta-analytic studies have demonstrated that servant leadership can benefit the organization by bringing value for the individual employee, the community, and the leader themselves (e.g., Banks et al., 2018; Hoch et al., 2018).

First, a key component of servant leadership is being a steward of their employees, that is, being trusted with followers' well-being and growth (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Sendjaya et al. (2008) refer to a dimension of servant leadership, covenantal relationship, as a relationship marked by shared values, commitment, mutual trust, and concern for the welfare of the other. According to Lemoine and colleagues (2021), servant leaders focus on the follower's holistic development rather than their performance. Second, leadership exists both dyadically and across the team (Liden et al., 2014a). Therefore, servant leaders aspire to create a servant culture within their team (Liden et al., 2014b). Studies have demonstrated that servant leaders could influence the culture of the team by encouraging follower authenticity and value-based action through positive modelling (Madison & Eva, 2019). Third, according to the tenants of servant leadership, one first has an internal calling to serve and then comes to leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Notably, servant leadership is not only about 'doing' the acts of service to others but also about 'being' (Sendjaya, 2015). Therefore, self-awareness and self-concept is a core

dimension of servant leadership as the leader needs to understand who they are and what motivates them to serve and lead, and that way engaging in servant leadership becomes intrinsically motivating (Chen et al., 2015; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Sendjaya, 2015). Moreover, servant leaders need to understand and learn ways to replenish themselves to avoid mental fatigue and depletion caused by regularly engaging in servant leadership behavior (Liao et al., 2021).

While the literature on the outcomes of servant leadership is abundant (see Hoch et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Neubert et al., 2021 for meta-analyses), there is a lack of research on servant leadership development (Eva et al., 2019). Authors have posited that servant leadership development is required in organizations (e.g., Hunter et al., 2013). Some have provided how-to-guides to engage in servant leadership (e.g., Lemoine et al., 2021), and others have provided examples of programs (e.g., Eva & Sendjaya, 2013), yet a thorough analysis of method(s) to develop servant leaders is missing. The leadership development literature distinguishes two forms of development (Day, 2000). The aim of *leadership* development is to expand the collective capacity (leadership processes and social structures) to achieve effective leadership, while *leader* development focuses on developing the individual leader (Day, 2000; Day & Dragoni, 2015; Day et al., 2014). Thus, servant leader development would encompass intrapersonal development (self-awareness and discovering a motivation to serve), and servant leadership development would encompass learning the skills to be an effective servant leader (learning how to serve the followers and the community). An

effective servant leadership development intervention would need to address both holistically (Bragger et al., 2021).

Leader mindfulness interventions

Mindfulness is commonly defined as a state of attention to and awareness of events and experience in the present moment (e.g., Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Research within the Western medical and psychological domain since the late 1970s has mainly focused on mindfulness as an intra-individual psychological capacity (construct), or as an intentional activity (practice) to induce a mindful mental state (Reb et al., 2015). Practice-based mindfulness interventions have been designed for clinical and non-clinical audiences (e.g., mindfulness-based stress reduction or MBSR) (Brown et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Keng et al., 2011). Mindfulness interventions typically contain developmentally oriented activities built around the concept of mindfulness, including meditation and awareness practices, psychoeducational content, and self-reflection. Mindfulness and mindfulness practice are known to bring benefits related to an individual's health, well-being, functioning, and relationships (Reb et al., 2015).

Current literature provides understanding of mindfulness as an inter-individual phenomenon (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019) through references to *interpersonal* (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007), *relational* (e.g., Vich et al., 2020), and *social* (e.g., Fazia et al., 2020) mindfulness. Research indicates that mindfulness in relationships shows as prosocial affect such as kindness, empathy, and compassion (Donald et al., 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019). Interestingly, regulation of personal

distress enhanced by mindfulness has been found to determine how altruistically or kindly people respond to others (Skoranski et al., 2019; Donald et al., 2019). Resulting prosocial behaviors—that is, action intended to benefit others such as helping—, foster cooperation and cohesion among groups (Donald et al., 2019).

Research on mindfulness for leaders (for reviews, see Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2019; Urrila, 2021) and in workplace settings in general (for a review, see Eby et al., 2019) has tended to focus on measuring well-being- and performance-related outcomes of mindfulness interventions (e.g., Crivelli et al., 2019; Lundqvist et al., 2019). The expectation of the 'individual-instrumental approaches' for specific beneficial outcomes has brought about criticism towards the instrumental use of mindfulness in organizations as a shallow self-help technique (Badham & King, 2021; Purser, 2018). However, mindfulness practice involves the holistic development of the physiological, cognitive and attentional, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual qualities of an individual in relationship to the self and others (Kristeller, 2004). Consequently, 'individual-substantive approaches' that focus on mindful reflection, ethical consideration, and inner growth have gained ground, inviting exploration of the potentially transformative value of mindfulness in organizational settings (Badham & King, 2021; Goldman-Schuyler et al., 2017; Shonin & Van Gordon, 2015).

The assumption that an individual's mindfulness or mindfulness practice should influence other people through prosocial attitudes and behaviors (Donald et al, 2019; Skoranski et al., 2019) is interesting from leadership perspective (Schuh et al., 2019). Examining mindfulness and leadership more broadly from the

relational perspective, existing research links trait mindfulness with leader authenticity (Dietl & Reb, 2021), transformational leadership behavior (Lange & Rowold, 2018), and employee well-being and performance (e.g., Pinck & Sonnentag, 2018; Reb et al., 2019; Schuh et al., 2019). Mindfulness interventions have been shown to support transformational leadership behavior, reduce destructive leadership (Lange & Rowold, 2018), and support authentic leadership development (Nübold et al., 2019). Schuh and colleagues (2019) found that both leader trait mindfulness and mindfulness practice were positively linked with leader fairness via procedural justice enactment (the key leadership task of making decisions for the team), which subsequently reduced employee's emotional exhaustion (a key indicator of employee stress and well-being), and lead to enhanced employee performance. In a study by Pircher Verdorfer (2016), leader trait mindfulness was reported to predict servant leadership behaviors, namely humility, standing back and authenticity as perceived by followers.

Researchers and practitioners acknowledge that "'workplace mindfulness' has a collective dimension" (Badham & King, 2021, p. 538). Then, the focus of development shifts from individual to organizational. The 'collective-instrumental' approach to mindfulness in organizations focuses on how organizational performance could be enhanced with mindfulness (Badham & King, 2018). The 'collective-substantive' approach addresses interdependence, purposeful collaborative action and ethics-oriented organization and leadership, putting less emphasis on the self-centred concerns of individuals (Purser & Milillo, 2015; Roche et al., 2020). In enhancing employee awareness (Badham & King, 2021),

the organizational, group and supervisory support is significant. Skoranski and colleagues (2019) highlight that the examination of mindfulness as an experience that is shared between people is driven by empathy and compassion, the key components of mindfulness cultivated in interpersonal interactions. Mindfulness may have relevance as a holistic leadership development approach for organizational leaders in influencing employees and sustainable organizational outcomes on multiple levels. It has been suggested that mindfulness training may be offered for leaders, managers, and supervisors as a leader development program in the hope that their learnings will "spill over" and improve the individual leaders' critical leadership capabilities and have beneficial organizational and team level effects (Hülsheger, 2015). As an example, Gerpott and colleagues (2020) found that leader other-orientation can enhance social mindfulness and followers' other-orientedness, a key objective of servant leadership.

Development of servant leaders through mindfulness training

It has been proposed that mindfulness could complement traditional leadership training to develop servant leaders (Lange & Rowold, 2018; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Reb et al., 2015). Mindfulness training can support leaders in the continuous human developmental process inherent to servant leadership (Phipps, 2010). While the self-concept and intention to be a servant leader is one of the key characteristics of servant leadership (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), mindfulness interventions represent leader development efforts that focus on the holistic development of leaders instead of the mere acquisition of knowledge and skills and can thus support the development of leaders' self-views (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Mindfulness-based

development aligns with continuous human development and may thus support reaching the developmental stages required for servant leadership (Phipps, 2010). Further, servant leadership has been described as a way of being and a transformational approach to life and work (SanFacon & Spears, 2008). Notably, a key feature that distinguishes mindfulness from other types of development efforts is the role of regular formal and informal mindfulness practice instead of critical events (Reb et al., 2015). Importantly, mindfulness training is an invitation to mindful 'way of being' (Kabat-Zinn, 2011) that is a human state where one's thoughts and feelings shape one's intentions, attitudes, and actions (Karssiens et al., 2014).

In sum, servant leadership focuses on the development of others and has an outward focus towards the community (Lemoine et al., 2019; 2021). At the same time, self-awareness and self-concept are core dimensions of servant leadership as the leader needs to understand who they are and what motivates them to serve and lead (Chen et al., 2015; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Sendjaya, 2015). However, there is a lack of research on servant leadership development (Eva et al., 2019). The literature recognizes that mindfulness training could be a viable method to develop servant leaders on a sustained basis through the development of self-views and regular formal and informal mindfulness practice. Drawing from the interpersonal and substantive approaches to mindfulness, we assess mindfulness as a relational and value-based developmental practice that interacts at multiple levels in the organizational context (Badham & King, 2021; Hülsheger, 2015; Purser & Milillo, 2015; Skoranski et al., 2019). Research on mindfulness in organizations indicates

that leader mindfulness training can serve the leader, the employee, and the community. As Reb and colleagues (2014: 43) put it, "leaders who are fully present when interacting with the subordinates may derive a better understanding of their employees' needs which may allow them to more effectively support employees", suggesting that the leader's enhanced awareness and attention in the interpersonal context may result in selfless leadership behavior. Thus, mindfulness training should be assessed as a potentially viable method to develop genuine other-orientedness and servant leadership, but currently, empirical research on the linkage between the two is lacking (Pircher Verdorfer, 2016; Reb et al., 2015; Roche et al., 2020).

Methods

This study examines leaders' experiences of an eight-week mindfulness intervention with a qualitative research design, drawing from pre-intervention written materials and post-intervention interviews to capture the leader's perspective. The content of a first-person description is always directly linked to the lived, conscious experience of a human who experiences it as subjectively relevant and for which the subjective self, the first person, can provide an account (Goldman-Schuyler et al. 2017; Varela & Shear, 1999). Our aim was to capture the leaders' account of their mental events, principally the motivations and intentions directing their behavior (Goldman-Schuyler et al. 2017; Varela & Shear, 1999).

We framed this study with servant leadership as servant leadership themes emerged more naturally from the data than alternate leadership theories. The

follower-perspective seemed significant in many of the interviewed leaders' experiences. "Servant leadership is distinct from other value-based leadership approaches in terms of its overarching motive and objective" to serve followers (Eva et al., 2019, p. 114; Zhang et al., 2012; see Lemoine et al., 2019 for differences between the servant, transformational, ethical, and authentic leadership theories).

The qualitative approach allowed for an open exploration of the mechanisms of mindfulness training. Mechanisms are tendencies, "the consequences of people engaging with the resources of a program or intervention in a certain context" which could potentially bring about outcomes (Warren et al. 2020. p. 3). Typically, research on mindfulness in workplace settings (e.g., Vu et al., 2022) takes a positivistic approach. However, it is likely that mindfulness and mindfulness practice involve effects and processes taking various shapes and forms which cannot be captured by statistical survey studies (Choi & Leroy, 2015; Reb et al., 2015). Moreover, measuring changes in pre-defined behaviors with a quantitative design or a pre-post qualitative analysis was not purposeful as no pre-determined servant leadership development was intended. Therefore, it was meaningful to explore how the leaders described the relevance of mindfulness training for them in their leader role, how they applied the learning, and how they perceived the application of mindfulness might generate beneficial outcomes.

Research setting

The first author took responsibility for organizing the delivery of the interventions and informed the participants about the research project and data collection

procedures and obtained their informed consent. Training was coordinated and conducted by and experienced mindfulness trainer. Participants were recruited by the organization's human resource departments.

Intervention.   Five eight-week mindfulness interventions were organized in 2019, one for each participating organization. Each intervention consisted of six 90-minute group sessions delivered at an approximately 1.5-week interval. The purpose of the intervention was to increase participants' knowledge of mindfulness and introduce mindfulness practices. The group sessions included theory, guided mindfulness practices, self-reflection, and discussion. The content was tailored for the leader audience, for example, there was a discussion on leading a team. The participants received guidance for independent practice and had access to a mobile application featuring 16 mindfulness meditation recordings, including body-scanning and (self-)compassion.

Participants.   The sample of this study consists of 62 organizational leaders (56 female, 6 male) who participated in a mindfulness intervention offered to them by their organizations, five Finnish organizations across different industries. Twenty-two participants worked in health, 17 in insurance, nine in forestry, ten in information technology, and four in production. A 'leader' was defined as a manager or supervisor who had direct reports. On average, the participants had 17 direct reports. Their experience in leadership positions varied between one and 30 years (average 10 years). Their ages varied between 26 and 63 years (average 45 years). 52 informants were Finnish, 10 had other European nationalities. All participants actively participated in the intervention. Participation in the

intervention was voluntary, and participants were not paid for participation in the research.

Data collection

The data used for the analysis comprised of 62 written pre-intervention tasks and semi-structured post-intervention interviews. Data collection took place between January and November 2019, with the written pre-tasks completed before the intervention commenced. We asked the participants to write a self-reflective text about their recent experience and their expectations for personal development and from the mindfulness training. The lengths of the written tasks were typically one to two pages of typewritten text. After the intervention ended (maximum three weeks), participants were interviewed. The first author asked open-ended questions from the participants about their experiences of mindfulness training, including how they understood and practiced mindfulness, how they viewed their development as a leader, and if and how they viewed mindfulness could support their leadership. There were no questions about 'servant leadership'. The questions followed a structure which allowed freedom and flexibility for the participants to describe their personal experience in the way that was meaningful for them. Giving examples was encouraged. The interview duration varied between 26 and 76 minutes (average 48 minutes). 39 interviews were conducted face-to-face and 23 remotely.

Data preparation and analysis

The first author transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim. Transcripts were downloaded into the NVivo software. The first author immersed oneself in the data to familiarize oneself with the content. Notes were taken continuously with materials read several times. Regular discussions between the authors concerning the emerged themes throughout the process provided a deeper understanding of the findings.

We analyzed the leaders' descriptions of their practices of applying mindfulness, allowing themes to naturally emerge from the data, of which, servant leadership themes emerged. In the coding process, themes and sub-themes were identified iteratively. Open coding gave a holistic understanding of the data. We found that followers' well-being was a key priority for many leaders, and many interviewees said that they wanted to bring the newly-acquired mindfulness learning to their team. A research question was formed that included an already established construct, servant leadership. To distill the meaning of what is in the data, we utilized a systematic approach by Gioia and colleagues (2012) that was suitable for qualitative and inductive research that facilitates new concept development. In the thematic content analysis we classified the raw data into categories. The informant-centric terms and codes presented as first-order concepts and the researcher-centric themes presented as second-order themes demonstrate the connections between the data and the emerging concepts, while the aggregate dimensions answer the research question on the theoretical level (see Figure 1) (Gioia et al., 2012).

Based on the findings, a conceptual framework was developed, which contains processual elements indicating how mindfulness training influenced servant leadership behaviors (see Figure 2). As attention to trustworthiness, i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), is a key principle in establishing qualitative rigor and especially important when dealing with large qualitative data sets (White et al., 2012), in this study, we have established rigor through the systematic organization of the study and iterative analysis of data, following the guidelines proposed by White and colleagues (2012).

Findings

First, the findings on pre-intervention leadership challenges are presented to provide an understanding of the context in which the interviewed leaders worked. After that, the post-intervention servant leadership practices are discussed in detail in three sections focusing on the self, the follower, and the team.

Pre-intervention leadership challenges

Pre-intervention leadership challenges were reported in the written tasks before the mindfulness program started. The leaders predominantly experienced struggles with demanding workloads, difficult relationships with followers, and challenges with team functioning, all of which influenced how they engaged in leadership.

Firstly, the leaders reported that they struggled to manage a *demanding workload* amidst constant changes in the work environment, which negatively impacted their ability to engage in positive leadership behaviors directly at their followers, 'servant leadership' [1]. While servant leadership behaviors seemed to be

a key priority by most of the leaders (i.e., unprompted many discussed wanting to support their followers), as the leader's well-being was compromised, they erred on the side of protecting their own resources, rather than engaging in servant leadership (similar to the conservation of resource theory; Eva et al., 2019). Leaders recognized that they often felt inadequate, overwhelmed, demotivated, and stressed out by negative events, such as lack of support and issues with staffing, which had flow-on effects on how they lead, as exemplified by this leader:

> I must lead a team of seven people, but I do not really have time for them. I am working in several projects and … have more than enough to do … I tend to be very nervous and always stressed. … It feels all too much because everybody wants something from me. … I cannot listen to my team, especially to all the tiny issues my team has. (E4)

Secondly, many leaders discussed difficulties in their *relationships with followers*, both in accepting followers' shortcomings and frustration at their own ability to develop followers' skills – which are key elements of servant leadership (Sendjaya, 2015). Let aside lack of presence and interconnectedness and not being able to dedicate enough time for the followers, there were accounts of frustration with follower performance. For example, this leader recognized the limitations of her ability to accept followers and develop their strengths, instead defaulting to a performance-focused position:

> I have tried to see the people in the work community neutrally, but I … often feel frustration and anger at their incapability … I am fact- and performance-focused, and the area of development for me clearly is in people leadership, facilitating insights and motivating them. I would like to be more present … and interested in people and better understand how they think. How could I be more approachable? (A2)

Thirdly, leaders discussed challenges related to *team functioning*. This included conflicts within the team, a lack of collaboration, and team members'

commitment to team goals. Many leaders wanted to encourage a positive working environment where they could motivate and inspire responsibility-taking and commitment among followers. However, they felt powerless amidst the engrained negative culture. This gap made some leaders question their follower-focused motivation to lead, as exemplified by this leader:

> [I am] trying to prevent conflict situations between some individuals and trying to get them to see more positive than negative … I'm not sure if I'm up for the task of managing 13 people's conflict of interests … I [am thinking] "grow up", "get over yourselves" which is even a bit mean. I'm generally a very empathetic person, … now I sometimes feel that people are complaining for no good reason. (A10)

All three of these pre-intervention themes illustrated that many of the leaders had a motivation to serve their followers, however, due to demanding workloads, troublesome relationships with followers, and overall team functioning, engaging in servant leadership was still a bridge too far. There seemed to be a will, but the workable strategies and tools to engage in servant leadership were missing.

Leaders' descriptions of applying mindfulness in their leadership work

Analysis of the post-intervention interviews identified 23 servant leadership behaviors across six themes that the leaders actively engaged in due to mindfulness learnings, occurring on three levels of leadership: the self, the follower, and the team. Figure 1 summarizes the themes and sub-themes.
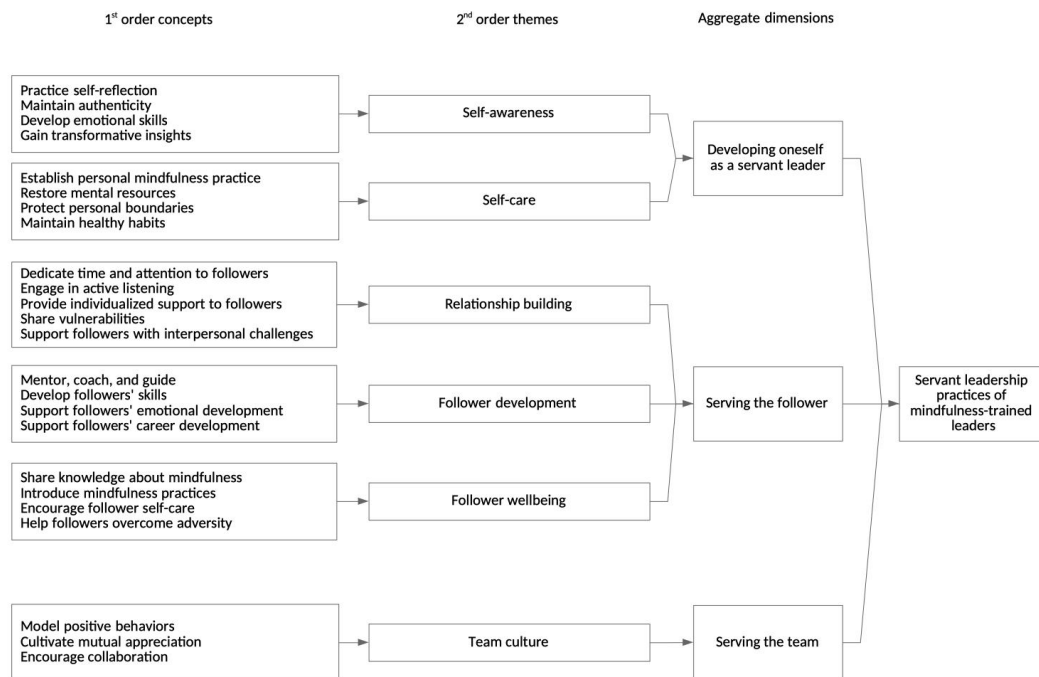
Figure 1. Data structure for the servant leadership practices of mindfulness-trained leaders

Practices for developing oneself as a servant leader

Leaders used mindfulness to focus on self, so that the leader has regular motivation and capacity to engage in servant leadership behaviors. This is consistent with the tenants of servant leadership (e.g., Greenleaf, 1977). Leaders viewed mindfulness as a holistic personal development approach entailing the key themes of self-awareness and self-care.

Self-awareness. Related to the leader's self-awareness and self-concept of 'being' a servant leader (Sendjaya, 2015), most of the interviewed leaders interested in applying mindfulness in their leadership appeared to be on a quest for self-development and enhanced awareness of the self and one's social context. They

were curious about themselves and their intentions as a leader. According to most participants, mindfulness was experienced to have raised self-awareness through *practicing self-reflection,* that is, consciously taking the time to think about one's mind's content and actions. For instance, this leader reflected:

> This makes you think about your own, like observe your own behavior and in a way your leadership. It's not about what your team or followers would think or how they think you should act … It's more like reflecting on the personal side of it, privately. (A2)

An extension of the leader's self-awareness and growth is understanding their authentic self (Sendjaya, 2015). Many leaders brought up the theme of authenticity (confidence to be themselves; van Dierendonck, 2011), arguing that mindfulness had been helpful in understanding and *maintaining their authenticity* in the workplace. For instance, this leader explained that she had gained confidence and trust in herself through mindfulness, which had proved useful working with other, strong-minded people:

> I feel that self-appreciation has increased … I can do what feels good for me … my own thinking has got stronger with mindfulness, I trust my own views and feelings, at least I don't undermine them. That's been really important, because … there are always others with a different view and who try to persuade you to take their view. (B18)

The interviewed leaders had experienced *emotional development.* They had learned to become more aware of their different emotions and values and to pay more attention to positive emotions, such as gratitude, joy and self-compassion. Many interviewees had also learned emotional self-regulation and attained skills to detach from, and gain a more objective or neutral stance to, an unpleasant emotional experience. For instance, this leader described a conscious way she had learned in mindfulness training to overcome a moment of irritation:

> I was like 'this is too much', many things started to irritate me. … So, I … sat there in the coffee room, I was like 'here I am on the river bench … not in the rough waters but … just watching for a while'. … When you manage to calm yourself down, it's easier to continue [the conversation] with your arguments rather than with 'this irritates me'. (A8)

It was common that the interviewed leaders described mindfulness training as an internal experience that had caused *transformative insights*, that is, lasting changes regarding how one viewed oneself and one's life's purpose (similar to the theme of transcendental spirituality in the Sendjaya et al., 2008, servant leadership framework). For example, this leader had learned valuable lessons in mindfulness training: there is a risk that life passes by without really noticing it, and that one can actively influence their own life through conscious choices:

> It's this awareness that hit me hard in the training when … I was left thinking, 'oh no, it would be horrible to live this life and somehow [realize] it has just kind of passed by' … So, that has stopped me occasionally to think and prioritize what is important. [This learning] has reminded me, and this is probably a cliché, … that this is my life, and I can make it as difficult or as good as I can. (B17)

Self-care. A typical statement of insight was related to taking care of oneself to take care of followers. The leaders reported experiences of becoming aware of the meaning and importance of their own well-being and needs related to one's quality of life and acting upon those needs through better self-care strategies. Overall, it was common that leaders had *established a personal mindfulness practice* that suited their schedules and level of comfort with mindfulness. Many reported having regular formal meditation practice. Others said they had developed an informal mindfulness practice, which often involved taking short breathing breaks, using reminders to be present, moving from one physical place to another with awareness, consciously marking a transitioning from one virtual meeting to another, or walking in nature with awareness. For instance, this leader had integrated various

mindfulness practices into his day to be better able to cope with the demands of the work and private sides of his life:

> Breathe. Respond. That helps me a lot. … This meditating thing. Also, I am very grateful that I can have the app until the rest of my life. … We spend a lot of time with a mind wandering off. … I noticed that I really do that a lot, unfortunately my team members do that. So now I try to be at the meeting more focused, be more in the moment … I have this long car drive home, … 45 minutes to adjust to the day. (A7)

Most interviewed leaders who had to constantly deal with adversity and challenges with followers and customers said that mindfulness training enabled them to consciously maintain and *restore mental resources*, dominantly entailing stress management and resiliency development. Like for many others, for this leader learning to stop was one of the key insights:

> I think that stopping is the thing, like thinking if this could be done in a different way which would be less burdening … So [because of the training] I understand better what may be going on in my brain, what causes it to go into overdrive, and that it is really important to stop more in the everyday … (B21)

Additionally, many interviewed leaders reported that, due to mindfulness, they had consciously started to *protect their personal boundaries* more in regard work tasks or hours, and, in several accounts, towards demands from one's followers, as exemplified by this leader:

> I have now concentrated on one thing: … I silence the land line and the cell phone and… … so that I can get an important task done without being interrupted. And of course, I feel that my brain works better … So, I have strong faith in mindfulness right now, that it'll improve managing my work, and that I am the one who makes conscious choices, now this, now this, and maybe I will say 'no' more. (B7)

Even though self-sacrificial servanthood motivates servant leaders, Sendjaya and colleagues (2008) highlight that servant leadership does not imply a lack of self-respect. Quite the contrary, it has been suggested that servant leaders need to understand and learn ways to replenish themselves to avoid mental fatigue and

depletion caused by regularly engaging in servant leadership behavior (Liao et al., 2021). Curiously, many leaders linked mindfulness practice with other ways to take care of oneself. Mindfulness had helped them develop and *maintain healthy habits* for work, sleep, nutrition, and physical exercise, and a few reported that mindfulness had helped them to either quit or reduce smoking. This leader explained how she felt mindfulness had helped her with the decision to go swimming before work:

> At the same time [with mindfulness course], I've had this own project to do more sports and, in fact, … I think it's because of mindfulness that I've, in a way, given myself the permission to spend time on me two hours three times per week. … Somehow, before, I've thought that I can't go, because it'll take more time in the morning to get to work if I go to the swimming pools, that I'll be at work so late. (A10)

Practices for serving the follower

Many leaders found that mindfulness had changed their experience of how they lead others. They understood that without understanding who they are (self-awareness) and having the capacity (self-care), they could not trust themselves to fully support their employees, a key insight for servant leaders (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Interviewed leaders recognized that mindfulness skills were required as a precursor to support followers in the day-to-day leadership work and improve the quality of leader-follower relations, which are reflected in the themes of relationship building, follower development, and follower well-being.

Relationship building.   Leaders discussed how mindfulness had affected the quality of their relationship with their followers. As stated by many interviewees, being aware and caring of other people was seen as the cornerstone of good leader-

follower relations. This appeared to be a circular process, which strengthened the leader-follower relations. This was in line with Sendjaya and colleagues' (2008) statements about covenantal relationship.

Through mindfulness training, many leaders understood that being truly present and *dedicating time and attention* to the followers conveyed caring and interest, and increased interconnectedness. For this leader, resolving her own stress was a key to opening to her followers:

> I think it helped me a lot … to be a leader, because if you are like me, often exploding and behaving like that, I think it …gives your team this…unconfidence… maybe they feel that they cannot come to be with questions or they feel that I'm stressed all the time. And I can see that they are coming more, I'm taking more time for them, I stepped out of my projects, at least a bit …Before, I was not there, I was … occupied the whole time, and I think that helped me a lot and that was really the best outcome from this mindfulness for me as a team leader. (E4)

Servant leaders put followers' needs before the needs of the organization or themselves (Sendjaya et al., 2008), an intention which the leaders felt mindfulness to have strengthened. It was common that the leaders put aside the urges of their egos in interactions with followers through a conscious effort of creating space for the follower to have a say and feel heard. Many found mindfulness practice to support *active listening*, especially in difficult one-on-one discussions and guiding team members to make independent decisions (Lemoine et al., 2021). For instance, this leader described the significance of mindfulness training for her ability to listen to understand her team members:

> I've had to learn not to offer ready answers but rather let the people come up with those answers themselves, so it's been about the skill to listen, the skill to be present and letting your own thoughts be and focus on listening to others' thoughts, also those that they do not say out loud straight away. (C15)

Providing individualized support as a demonstration of a leader's mindfulness skills was seen as valuable in interactions with followers. For instance, this leader believed mindfulness learnings helped her adopt a follower's viewpoint and thus offer more individualized support:

> Well, from the leadership perspective [mindfulness helps] when you learn to monitor your own coping and stress levels a little, it will inevitably be reflected in how you are able to help others, too, and kind of better understand the other's situation. (D1)

Some of the interviewed leaders reported how they had *shared vulnerabilities* more openly because of mindfulness training because they valued the relationship and wanted to strengthen mutual trust. For example, this leader told how he had learned to turn his difficult experiences into a leadership strength, trusting his openness would strengthen team relationships and trust:

> I really lay myself on the line … I show my weaknesses, I talk about the past … burnout cases … So maybe they dare to trust me because of that. I hadn't understood that before the course. I got some new team members and was like … 'let's go out walking', there I told my own story, we began to know each other … I told all kinds of things …, even a bit too much. … It was easy to go on, then the people shared something, too. (D2)

Many leaders found that mindfulness techniques gave them tools to *support followers with interpersonal challenges,* and that way helped build strong relationships, a characteristic of servant leaders (Liden et al., 2008). Interviewees said they had passed on mindfulness techniques in one-on-one meetings and in the middle of heated situations to calm down employees and help them change perspectives. For instance, this leader described how she had applied mindfulness learnings to talk two team members through an argument:

> When they told me about it, they told two completely different versions… and I found it really confusing. But then I thought about what had been discussed on the course.

… I explained that in this kind of situations people often see the situation in a different way, … and that there are two differing viewpoints here, neither of them right nor wrong. … Then we talked quite a lot about this. (D4)

Follower development. The interviewees saw mindfulness to have more profound influences on how they interreact with, lead, and develop followers holistically. Some interviewees viewed that they had acquired knowledge and concrete tools or techniques to share with followers or implicitly apply to develop followers. This started with recasting how they coached their followers, through to specific skill, emotional, and career development.

The interviewed leaders often discussed integrating mindfulness learnings in their *mentoring, coaching and guiding* practices to better focus on the follower's holistic development rather than their performance (Lemoine et al., 2021). For instance, one leader described how mindfulness, which to her represented 'one step back -thinking', could be applied in the organization to help followers look at issues from novel perspectives:

I see [mindfulness] as a tool [for my followers] to take to their own teams … It's rather like 'hey think about this in a different way' or 'let's stop for a moment', not having to stop and breathe and count, but in a way bring this 'one step back' -thinking, so that's where I see the mindfulness themes can benefit. (A5)

Many leaders believed that through mindfulness, they could facilitate *followers' skill development* needed for productive working (e.g., minimizing the effect of distractions or multi-tasking). For instance, this leader strongly felt that mindfulness could help her expert team members better concentrate on the cognitively demanding work tasks:

People are a lot more productive when they can, every now and then, be more present and aware … There is a lot of hassle, [my team members] can't concentrate on some

new guidance for instance, so [mindfulness] would help many people as the day-to-day is so demanding these days, … and we should somehow bring it more. It's great that us supervisors got [the training], next the experts need it. (C10)

Some leaders found that mindfulness training offered them a chance to *support followers' emotional development*. For instance, immediately after the mindfulness training, one leader had implemented a practice of describing one's emotional state — a 'check-in moment'— which started every team meeting to increase followers' levels of awareness of their own and each other's emotions. Another leader shared with a team member what she had learned in mindfulness training about accepting one's emotions:

> Something was bothering her, teenagers making a mess, it made her anxious. So, I said to her that I also have a teenage boy at home and yes, his room is a chaos, [but] half of it is done if he's placed his tableware on the draining board even if not inside the dishwasher – I don't have to go to his room. … She was like 'maybe I should think of it that way' … Idea being, why worry about everything, bang your head to the wall? (B2)

Mindfulness was also mentioned as a method to support followers in long-term *career development.* For instance, one leader explained how she saw mindfulness as a profound developmental approach to enhance especially young employees' self-knowledge in a way that could help them cope and succeed throughout the long careers:

> I would take [mindfulness training] up as a self-knowledge course … like, how to make people understand that this can prolong your career, to invest in yourself … It is a question of how to ensure one stays capable for the next 40, 50 years. (D3)

Follower well-being.   Overall, the interviewed leaders conveyed that taking care of follower well-being and responding to their followers' psychological needs was becoming core to their leadership work, arguing that employee and organizational performance was more likely when followers had higher levels of well-being (Eva

et al., 2019). Many of the interviewees described having witnessed various issues with employee coping, at times resulting in burnout, and having experienced such hardship personally. Thus, increasing followers' understanding of mindfulness, introducing mindfulness practice, encouraging follower self-care, and helping followers overcome challenging situations were usually brought up in the leaders' accounts as they intended to apply mindfulness support follower well-being.

A major theme that arose from the interviews was promoting follower well-being through mindful practices. Several interviewees started by *knowledge sharing of mindfulness* with their team members to increase shared understanding of the important topic. Typically, leaders said they wanted to take time in a weekly or monthly team meeting to *introduce mindfulness practice* to followers, typically by engaging in a formal mindfulness practice via the available mobile application. Aligned with the motivation of servant leaders to put the employee first (e.g., Sendjaya et al., 2008), this leader, for instance, emphasized that she wanted to attend the training in the first place to be able to provide her team the opportunity to benefit from mindfulness, leading her to without hesitation both share the mindfulness knowledge and experiment with the practices together with the team members:

> I want to take it to my team because … some of them are burdened and looking for tools that would help deal with [stress], and [the trainer] said we can do the practices also with the team and utilize all the learnings. … So, starting from the very first training session, I have introduced the theory to my team, and we have done practices with the app. (C4)

Many leaders realized that mindfulness could be a way for them to *encourage follower self-care*, such as taking time off work tasks and improving work-life

balance. For example, one leader viewed mindfulness as a preventive method to build resilience:

> To learn how to relax, to learn how to take time…not even at the workplace but at home, as well … And, just to take time out for themselves. … I think the testing times are ahead. … I think that mindfulness will come more into play next year when we start to go through this, because it's going to be affecting a lot of people's personal lives, not only work, but it's also to do with their personal life. (E10)

Many times, interviewees understood that having acquired mindfulness learnings and useful tools to deal with various workplace challenges, they were in a key position to apply those learnings to *help followers overcome adversity.* For instance, this leader explained that mindfulness training had provided her tools that her followers did not have, to solve a demanding situation which, she recognized, could seriously risk follower well-being:

> [Mindfulness] surely helps in the close work community, and I have better means to … solve some difficult situations, like how I respond to them or how I help the employees for example in this situation that is currently on, which supports the employees so that they don't get drowned and will stay capable and can go to work in the first place. (B14)

Practices for serving the team

Many of the leaders felt that mindfulness could benefit the culture of their team, not just their one-on-one interactions. Their desire was to create a positive working environment that is characterized by trust, appreciation, inspiration, and motivation, which is echoed in the theme of team culture. This aligns with the research on how servant leaders create a servant culture within their team (Liden et al., 2014b).

Team culture.   The interviewed leaders generally saw themselves as role models who influence other people. Many interviewees felt that by *modeling positive behaviors,* they could positively influence the culture of the team. Leaders leveraged mindfulness to address the hectic work pace and attempt to create a calm working environment. For instance, this leader recognized that as a leader his presence had an influence on the work culture, and he viewed mindfulness as a personal tool that could enable him to consciously act as a positive role model:

> Presence of oneself and others, [I] pay more attention to it … many times people are not mentally present, they are on autopilot mode. … It begins from leadership, I mean if the leader is present and focused, one can communicate that also to others, how everyone should change their routines and practices and how that would then become easier for everyone. (E5)

Many leaders believed that mindfulness had helped them put more emphasis on positive attitudes and *cultivating mutual appreciation* in their team leadership work. For instance, this leader said that mindfulness training had worked as a reminder:

> We had [mindfulness meeting] on Valentine's Day and … I remembered … this 'positive roast' teaming technique and was like 'that's a brilliant idea', so for Valentine's I did this, had everyone in my team praise a colleague. And in fact, this kind of thing had not happened for a while. … I gathered this is linked to [mindfulness] I … have thought about these things more. (A2)

Finally, it was important for many of the interviewed leaders to guide their followers towards the common goal. Leaders believed that mindfulness offered opportunities for smarter working and helped develop a team that worked better together through *encouraging collaboration*. For instance, one leader planned to involve followers in ideating mindful work practices to reduce the brain burden of the entire work community. Another leader had started to encourage her team

members to participate more actively and had already seen her team members collaborate more and take the initiative to resolve matters:

> We have this kind of co-working, in a way more like sharing and they really reach out to also support me, it's like, not all on my responsibility, but they ideate and bring information … So they are not like, 'oh, that's the supervisor's job and we won't comment or consider it', it's more that they come really eagerly … to help out and then we solve it together. … I somehow see that we have even more of it now. (B18)

The same leader highlighted the responsibility of organizational management to align the value of well-being with the action of providing resources such as mindfulness training:

> It is of course up to organizational management, how they enable, and it is surely about values, like what is being valued. … It would be good if management took responsibility of this, as I see a lot of ethical burden in this work community … and the work is psychologically [and] cognitively burdening, so with mindfulness learnings we would achieve … peace of mind and calmness in the day-to-day situations. (B18)

It was common that the leaders discussed the long-term potential of mindfulness to serve the entire organization. Many highlighted the importance organizational support to provide resources, and to increase acceptance of mindfulness and integrate it into organizational values and practices.

Table 2 provides descriptions of the second-order themes, and exemplary quotations.

Table 2. Second-order themes and exemplary quotations

Theme	**Description**	**Exemplary quotations**
Developing oneself as a servant leader		
Self-awareness	Leaders come to understand their qualities, emotions, and behaviors, as well as motivations, goals, and values, and who they are as part of the larger context,	*The biggest benefit that comes from [mindfulness], and has already come, is really the stopping and kind of reflecting, like 'okay this went like this', 'this I could think in another way', and taking distance to*

	through practicing self-reflection, maintaining authenticity, develop emotional skills, and gaining transformative insights.	*everyday topics ... so this is the thing leaders like myself get from this.* (A5)
		I am very compassionate towards others, ... but self-compassion, that's difficult. [It was] eye-opening to understand [through mindfulness learning] that if I were someone else, I would have a totally different attitude [towards myself]. How come you are so hard on yourself in everything? ... no one demands that or gives that feedback ... It is only self-critique. ... The biggest realization in this training: Could I be more lenient towards myself? (B12)
		[Mindfulness] has kind of helped me out of the normal rat race ... it's been even so big that... you are here, you live here, not like the work week passes and you only wait for the weekend, or vacation. ... If I feel like I need rest, or if I feel bad, I can be still for a while to gain strength, not push it. You let yourself feel ... I mean, when you change your attitude to life with this [mindfulness], then it is quite radical, I didn't quite expect anything like that. (A6)
Self-care	Leaders develop the capacity to take care of their physical, mental, and social well-being, through establishing a personal mindfulness practice, restoring their mental resources, protecting their personal boundaries, and maintaining healthy habits.	*When I start feeling anxious or irritated or something, I find the breath, and the breath is the takeaway for me, I find it when I go to bed. When something waiting ahead causes this horrendous anxiety so that I feel my heart pounding in my ears, then with the breath I get that anxiety and heart rate to lower.* (B13)
		I am getting a little tired, a little frustrated, let's say it's a stressful phase right now, so [mindfulness] increases my tolerance and patience, to take all this, to live this through without drowning. ... There are hectic situations, resource shortage, ... team members' wishes, ... so you put all that into perspective in a different way, like, you don't throw more petrol to your own feelings and tiredness. (C14)
		Then all of a sudden I realized that ... I need the peace to work ... somehow I've thought that it's great to always keep the door open and in a way be always available and all that, but now I realize that it is not great, in fact, if you then don't do well yourself, and if you are always available at the expense of your own well-being ... when you can sometimes close the door ... after all, if there is an acute issue then people can get in of course. (B22)
Serving the follower		
Relationship building	Leaders proactively develop their one-on-one relationships with	*Focus on presenter, a person I talk to, my team members, they all deserve attention*

	people who follow them, through dedicating time and attention to followers, engaging in active listening, provide individualized support to followers, sharing their own vulnerabilities, and supporting followers with interpersonal challenges.	*and focus. ... I have tried this before, but mindfulness amplified the whole thing. ... I am more aware of my actions, my well-being at the very moment, important was kind of how emotions play out, how I behave in meetings, especially in one-to-one discussions ...* (A7)
		With these [mindfulness] practices, presence, listening, these type of things, you can give enormous resources for the work community, and the employees feel important when they can really come talk to you and they are truly being listened to. (B21)
		Don't treat others the way you yourself want to be treated. Rather how they themselves want to be treated.... I believe the worklife is definitely going towards the direction where the challenges are in people's own thoughts and coping ... Like Brene Brown has said, in the past worklife you needed the biceps, today you need the brain, in the future you need the heart. ... So I think mindfulness and the hearts meeting each other could be the combination. (D2)
Follower development	Leaders proactively support their followers' professional development in a holistic way, through mentoring, coaching, and guiding, develop followers' skills, supporting followers' emotional development, and supporting followers' career development.	*Leadership is a lot about raising questions and coaching ... One should not hurry or go ahead of things, but rather stop, observe and allow the time for the interaction situation in that moment, and when you want to guide the other person to a certain direction it does not happen instantly, so with mindfulness you can learn patience.* (A2)
		We have started one unit meeting with [mindfulness], and in the future probably more, I just have to remember to bring this more. ...Here, we really need to be able to stop, like really. ... [My followers] are open to this and they want to do a good job. ... Everyone knows how challenging it is ... To stop to and give [the customer] the time, even when there are a million things going on. (B10)
		So, I'm just saying that how powerful this [mindfulness] can be in a group, your influence to the group. And of course, the more mindless the leader, the more difficult things are getting. I have ... example with another team member who actually... I was not doing more than just coaching and a little bit of supporting in that direction that... you know, basically sharing with the person what I know, and, I could see the difference. (E1)
Follower well-being	Leaders proactively support their followers' physical, mental and	*I hope I can give these learnings to my team members, it is really the most important*

	social well-being, through sharing knowledge about mindfulness, introducing mindfulness practices, encouraging follower self-care, and helping followers overcome adversity.	*thing, to get them some help. Of course there are some who are interested and know about it ...but to give the benefits for the others, too. The breathing practices are such that you notice the benefits immediately ... so I thought we approach this through the practices first, and then I can also share some of the learnings.* (C13)
		I want to bring what I learned into the team also when I see that somebody in my team is struggling ... I'm asking them these questions. How do you feel now ... to bring them down to help them in that situation. (E4)
		In the future, when someone comes to the workplace really nervous or so ...I think it's important to be able to react to the people's situations in the right way, like investigate their current state a little bit, when they come to me, so that I could say the right things to calm them down and see that now I need to calm this person down before we can proceed anywhere from this situation. (B15)
Serving the team		
Team culture	Leaders build a healthy and productive working culture among their group of followers, through modeling positive behaviors, cultivating mutual appreciation, and encouraging collaboration.	*In a way every leader is a model example, and if mindfulness in some way helps focus better and respond in a calm manner, reflect upon matters, give this kind of model that I don't say anything immediately but wait 'till next day, it can benefit the entire team.* (A2)
		In that meeting we will go over this [mindfulness], so it's easier to make this a longer-lasting thing. ... Everyone can do some pre-work like list what we could do and what mindfulness could mean to us, and we can discuss and choose our focus areas, like how we could ... for instance improve our team's collaboration, own well-being and the team's well-being, and then monitor that on a weekly basis. (E3)
		Mindfulness supports individuals' working, and with it you can also improve .... for instance collaboration, there are so many different kinds of people, so with mindfulness you can develop how they communicate, and support collaboration, so I think becoming aware of all this you can recognize the things that should be improved and learned. (A3)

Discussion

We examined the experiences of 62 mindfulness-trained leaders as evidence of how servant leadership behaviors were developed through mindfulness training. The pre-intervention assessment revealed that leaders face several barriers to implementing an other-oriented leadership approach. The post-intervention interviews demonstrated that by integrating mindfulness knowledge and learnings into their leadership, leaders can circumvent these barriers. We identified leadership practices that the leaders adopted to lead and develop themselves, and to serve their followers and teams. Interestingly, the leaders keenly brought the newly acquired mindfulness learnings and practices to followers in one form or another, even when they did not have prior experience or concrete idea of how mindfulness can be used in leadership. Our observations change the way we think about leader mindfulness interventions and servant leadership development, because they illustrate that the development of genuinely other-oriented leadership builds through the multi-level, mindful pathways of continuously applying practices of leading and developing oneself and others. The contribution of our study to literature on mindfulness and servant leadership development is threefold.

Theoretical contributions

First, our study builds a theoretical bridge between mindfulness and servant leadership development. The mindfulness literature has demonstrable evidence that mindfulness training encourages participants to engage in a holistic practice of paying attention with a caring intention to become aware of oneself (one's thoughts,

feelings, sensations, and behaviors) and one's interpersonal relationships (Shapiro & Carlson, 2017; Skoranski et al., 2019). The prior servant leadership literature has theoretically proposed that developing a deep self-awareness is a key to servant leadership development and engaging in sustainable follower-focused leadership (e.g., Sendjaya, 2015). We contribute to the currently under-researched area of servant leader development (Eva et al., 2019) by showing how mindfulness training seems to strengthen the leader's awareness of their motivations and behaviors, and those around them. The strong practice-base is a key distinguishing feature of mindfulness training (Reb et al., 2015). Providing mindfulness training to masses of employees is often not an option, nor the only way to promote mindfulness in organizations (Hülsheger, 2015). Instead, positive transformation of teams, organizations and societies can occur through development of individual-level awareness of one's values, motivations, and goals (Neal, 2018). Our study provides detailed understanding of the ways how mindfulness-trained leaders can integrate mindfulness learning in their leadership work in one-on-one individual events with followers as well as for groups of people, both to support their well-being and to develop them professionally. Leaders saw mindfulness as something concrete that they could apply in their day-to-day leadership practices to help team members unwind from work and, ultimately, to improve their well-being and growth. Leaders reported that they strengthened their motivation and capacity to serve their followers (Greenleaf, 1977) because their newfound self-awareness 'tapped into' their pro-social orientation and afforded them the space to act upon it. When the leader becomes aware of the ongoing situation, their thoughts, and emotions, they bring that awareness into their interaction with followers. By raising awareness of

others' personalities, desires, needs, and strengths more clearly, leaders see followers as an end in themselves rather than a means to an end of organizational performance (Lemoine et al., 2021; Sendjaya, 2015).

While mindfulness is useful in informing servant leadership development, the theoretical bridge is a two-way street, with servant leadership research (Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011) being able to inform the growing research on mindfulness in the context of leader-follower relations (e.g., Reb et al., 2015). The servant leadership literature acknowledges that servant leadership exists both dyadically and across the team (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2014a). While it has been theorized that mindfulness training could affect, not only intra-individual functioning, but also interpersonal behavior, dyadic and workgroup relationships, and team functioning (e.g., Good et al., 2016; Pircher Verdorfer, 2016), empirical research on mindfulness has focused mainly on the *intra*-individual influences and only recently seen the application to *inter*-individual processes (Skoranski et al., 2019). This study provides evidence of how mindfulness training for leaders materializes at both the intra-individual and the inter-individual levels in daily work. By examining the application of mindfulness at an inter-individual level through a servant leadership lens, the caring attitude (Shapiro & Carlson, 2017) and mindful way of being and seeing associated with mindfulness are manifested as leadership behaviors (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Karssiens et al., 2014). This was demonstrated through our findings, as the leaders' mindfulness practice at work tended to take the informal, 'off-the-meditation-seat' form, being embedded in the

leaders' perceptions, motivations, intentions, and actions, as leaders applied mindfulness to support and develop their followers.

Second, we challenge the notion of traditional leader development (e.g., Day, 2000; Day & Dragoni, 2015) by demonstrating how and where mindfulness training can be used to grow the leader holistically. Adding to the limited understanding of the potential of mindfulness to support leadership development (Lange & Rowold, 2019; Roche et al., 2020), we argue that mindfulness is a way to develop leaders who genuinely want to put their followers first without being a formal servant leadership development training program. Scholars tend to agree that leaders influence employees and organizational outcomes on multiple levels (Good et al., 2016; Hülsheger, 2015; Leroy et al., 2018). However, how leader mindfulness training could potentially lead to the supportive, servant form of leadership on multiple organizational levels has not been closely examined by prior research. Our study extends existing knowledge significantly by analyzing the multi-level leadership practices of mindfulness-trained leaders in the context of leading a team of followers.

At an intra-individual level, an understanding of mindfulness develops the self and can provide leaders mental headspace, and a technique for "understanding the nature of our own minds and bodies, and for living life as if it really mattered." (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 284), that is, the resources to engage in leadership. Regarding leading and developing oneself, we found that leaders view mindfulness as a personal development method covering multiple aspects of human functioning, lending itself to *self-awareness* and *self-care*. For instance, self-reflection is a

practice that can facilitate self-awareness. Examining the results from a *leader development* lens (Day, 2000), a key insight for most interviewed leaders was that to take care of others' needs, they first needed to meet their own (they could not give from an empty cup). It was evident from the pre-intervention challenges that it was difficult for the leaders to engage in follower-focused leadership behaviors because of demanding workloads, difficult relationships, and problems with team functioning. Our study demonstrates that mindfulness training may allow leaders to reconceptualize their relationship with themselves, their workday, and their relationships with followers, to create a better balance to give them that space to engage in servant leadership. By reflecting on their work practices, the leaders were able to foster the self-care and growth needed to develop more holistically as a leader in order to serve others (Sendjaya, 2015). Leader mindfulness training and practice supported leaders in becoming more other-oriented as it tapped into genuine feelings of wanting to support their followers instead of supporting followers because it was within their job description.

At the collective level the focus of development shifts from individual to organizational (Badham & King, 2021; Eva et al., 2021). Based on our findings regarding serving the followers, mindfulness-trained leaders tend to engage in servant leadership behaviors, such as *relationship building*, *follower development*, and *follower well-being*. For instance, sharing vulnerabilities could cultivate trust and interconnectedness in leader-follower relations. Our findings show that mindfulness also helps create a positive *team culture*, as leaders more actively engage in team-level practices, such as encouraging collaboration. Thus, from a

leadership development lens (Day and Dragoni, 2015), our study demonstrates that mindfulness gives leaders tools to focus on the development and well-being of their followers (Liden et al., 2008).

Third, our conceptual framework (see Figure 2) illustrates the mechanisms how leader mindfulness training develops servant leadership. Our framework extends existing servant leadership models (e.g., Sendjaya et al., 2008) by teasing out how leaders can use mindfulness to enhance the self, followers, and the team. Specifically, mindfulness training may offer tools to respond (albeit not remove) to the challenges of the modern leadership environment and be applied to support followers, teams, and possibly even the entire organization. This is a developmental process that involves a fundamental shift in perspective for leaders to "view his or her moment-by-moment experience with greater clarity and objectivity" and realize "an ever-increasing capacity to take the perspective of another" (Shapiro et al., 2006, pp. 377-378). This study adds to the prior, largely theoretical, attempts (Good et al., 2016; Shapiro et al., 2015) to explain how mindfulness practice fosters positive change and transformation in organizations.
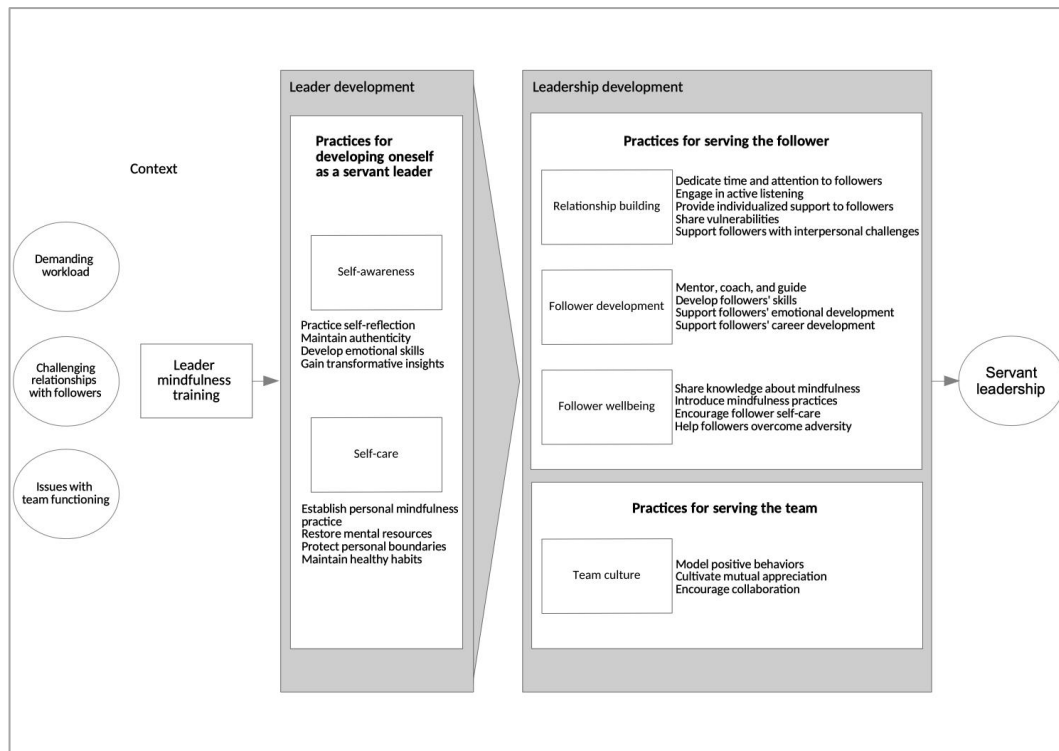
Figure 2. Conceptual framework of strengthening servant leadership with leader mindfulness training

Directions for future research

Based on the knowledge gained in this study, we suggest multiple directions for future research. First, to understand how and why mindfulness training develops servant leadership, future research is recommended that examines mindfulness as a potential mediating mechanism of servant leadership where mindfulness practice translates the effects of personality and motivations into servant leadership behaviors. Second, future research may focus on second-person views, such as those of the followers, on how they perceive the leader to have changed or display mindfulness (or servant leadership). Third, while our study provided insights into the leader's role in bringing mindfulness to the team, future longitudinal research

is required on the antecedents and development of team mindfulness (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

Practical implications

Our study provides valuable information for HR managers and development professionals evaluating and selecting leadership training materials. For HR managers, by investing in mindfulness training for leaders, they invest in their entire organization. As demonstrated in the findings, mindfulness training creates a trickle-down effect, where leaders actively engage their followers in mindfulness practice. Despite the benefits, the stigma connected to mindfulness is real, as detected in the participants' language and how they describe their fears of engaging in mindfulness training. To rid mindfulness of the woo-woo stamp and make the most of what mindfulness has to offer for leadership, awareness should be raised in organizations. Specifically, HR managers need to communicate the empirical research on mindfulness as an impactful, holistic, and accessible leader self-development approach that can develop leadership by influencing how leaders think and feel about their followers and themselves as leaders, as well as change behaviors, and thus positively affect the quality of leadership (Urrila, 2021).

Our study also has implications for mindfulness and leadership coaches. There is a need for mindfulness training tailored for leader audiences to strengthen leaders' abilities to support and develop their followers. Such training should contain leader-specific content, engage them in self- and social awareness through self-reflection practices that strengthen the capacity for introspection, develop

personal and relational skills overlooked by traditional leadership training, and help cultivate workplace attitudes such as acceptance and kindness. Moreover, this kind of training should be a forum to discuss leadership intentions, personal leadership philosophies, and be an incubator for positive leadership practices. In addition, leadership coaches need to integrate mindfulness into their coaching training and practice (Hall, 2015). The learnings might be applied in one-on-one or group settings through formal practices, listening and inquiry, and embodying mindfulness.

Finally, our study has implications for the individual leader. For leaders, it is important to engage in mindful practices, and there is now an abundance of apps (e.g., Insight Timer, UCLA Mindful) and websites (e.g., mindful.org) to assist with the process. The main thing to remember is not to set expectations for a specific outcome but instead intend to connect with yourself and others with an attitude of open, caring attention (Shapiro et al., 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, we found that mindfulness-trained leaders engage in servant leadership behaviors by integrating mindfulness knowledge and learnings into their leadership, making servant leadership work for themselves, their followers, and their teams. However, leaders face several barriers that they need to circumvent to implement a servant leadership approach. We found that raising awareness of the self and others through mindfulness is a resource for leaders that helps them engage in supportive and caring behavior towards followers. Our research implies that

inter-individual mindfulness involves actively engaging in the mindful way of being (Kabat-Zinn, 2011), which also seems to be a key to servant leadership, as someone's ability to be mindful in relationships (such as leader-follower) shows in how they act in the varying, dynamic real-life situations (Skoranski et al., 2011). Our research also highlights that mindfulness training is a way to develop leaders who put their followers first, without being a formal servant leadership development training program. To build on this research, we encourage organizational behavior scholars to continue the examination of mindfulness-based human resource interventions, as they may offer tools to respond to the challenges of the modern leadership environment and be applied to support followers, teams, and possibly even the entire organization.

References

Arendt, J. F. W., Pircher Verdorfer, A. and Kugler, K. G. (2019). Mindfulness and leadership: Communication as a behavioral correlate of leader mindfulness and its effect on follower satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00667

Badham, R., & King, E. (2021). Mindfulness at work: A critical re-view. *Organization*, 28, 531-554. https//doi.org/10.1177/1350508419888897

Banks, G. C., Gooty, J., Ross, R. L., Williams, C. E., & Harrington, N. T. (2018). Construct redundancy in leader behaviors: A review and agenda for the future. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 29(1), 236-251.

Bragger, J. D., Alonso, N. A., D'Ambrosio, K., & Williams, N. (2021). Developing leaders to serve and servants to lead. *Human Resource Development Review,* 20(1), 9-45.

Brown, K. W., Creswell, D., & Ryan, R. M. (2016). Introduction: The evolution of mindfulness science. In K. W. Brown, J. D. Creswell & R. M. Ryan, R.M. (Eds.), *Handbook of Mindfulness: Theory, Research and Practice* (pp. 1-6). New York: The Guilford Press.

Chen, Z., Zhu, J., & Zhou, M. (2015). How does a servant leader fuel the service fire? A multilevel model of servant leadership, individual self-identity, group competition climate, and customer service performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 100(2), 511-521.

Choi, E, & Leroy, H. (2015). Methods of mindfulness: How mindfulness is studied in the workplace. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins, P. W. B. (Eds.), *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, research, and applications* (pp. 67-99). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Day, D. V., & Dragoni, L. (2015). Leadership development: An outcome-oriented review based on time and levels of analyses. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior,* 2, 133-156.

Day, D. V., Fleenor, J. W., Atwater, L. E., Sturm, R. E., & McKee, R. A. (2014). Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 25, 63-82.

Dietl, E., & Reb, J. (2021). A self-regulation model of leader authenticity based on mindful self-regulated attention and political skill. *Human Relations,* 74(4), 475-501.

Eva, N., Robin, M., Sendjaya, S., van Dierendonck, D., & Liden, R. C. (2019). Servant Leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 30, 111-132.

Eva, N., & Sendjaya, S. (2013). Creating future leaders: An examination of youth leadership development in Australia. *Education + Training,* 55(6), 584-598.

Eva, N., Wolfram Cox, J., Tse, H. M., & Lowe, K. B. (2021). From competency to conversation: A multi-perspective approach to collective leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 32(5), 101346.

Fry, L., & Kriger, M. (2009). Towards a theory of being-centered leadership: Multiple levels of being as context for effective leadership. *Human Relations, 62*(11), 1667-1696.

Gerpott, F. H., Fasbender, U., Burmeister, A. (2020). Respectful leadership and followers' knowledge sharing: A social mindfulness lens. *Human Relations, 73*(6), 789-810.

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2012). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods, 16* (1), 15-31.

Gonzales-Morales, M. G., Kernan, M. C., Becker, T. E., & Eisenberger, R. (2018). Defeating Abusive Supervision: Training Supervisors to Support Subordinates. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 23*(2), 151-162.

Good, D. J., Lyddy, C. J., Glomb, T. M., Bono, J. E., Brown, K. W., Duffy, M. K., Baer, R. A., Brewer, J. A., & Lazar, S. W. (2016). Contemplating mindfulness at work: An integrative review. *Journal of Management, 42*(1), 114-142.

Goldman-Schuyler, K., Skjei, S., Sanzgiri, J., & Koskela, V. (2017). "Moments of waking up": A doorway to mindfulness and presence. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 26*(1), 86-100.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. New York: Paulist Press.

Guthrie, K., & Jenkins, D. (2018). *The role of leadership educators: Transforming learning.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Hall, L. (2015). Mindfulness in coaching. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds.), *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, research, and applications* (pp. 283-408). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hu, J., Zheng, X., Tepper, B. J., Li, N., Liu, X., & Yu, J. (2022). The dark side of leader–member exchange: Observers' reactions when leaders target their teammates for abuse. *Human Resource Management*, 61(2), 199-213.

Hülsheger, U. R. (2015). Making sure that mindfulness is promoted in organizations in the right way and for the right goals. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* 8(4), 674-679.

Hoch, J. E., Bommer, W. H., Dulebohn, J. H., & Wu, D. (2018). Do ethical, authentic, and servant leadership explain variance above and beyond transformational leadership? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management,* 44(2), 501-529.

Hunter, E. M., Neubert, M. J., Perry, S. J., Witt, L., Penney, L. M., & Weinberger, E. (2013). Servant leaders inspire servant followers: Antecedents and outcomes for employees and the organization. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 24(2), 316-331.

Hunter, J. (2015). Teaching managers to manage themselves: mindfulness and the inside work of management. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds.), *Mindfulness*

in Organizations: Foundations, research, and applications (pp. 355-382). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2011). Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps. *Contemporary Buddhism,* 12(1), 281-306.

Karssiens, A. E. A., Van der Linden, C., Wilderom, C. P. M., & Furtmueller, E. (2014). Embodied mind knowledge in leadership practice: Creating space in patterned thoughts and behaviors. *Journal of Management Inquiry,* 23(3), 231-241.

Kramer, G., Meleo-Meyer, F., & Turner, M. (2008). Cultivating mindfulness in relation: insight dialogue and the interpersonal mindfulness program. In S. Hick & T. Bien (Eds.), *Mindfulness and the therapeutic relationship* (pp. 195-214). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Liang, L. H., Lian, H., Brown, D. J., Ferris, D. L., Hanig, S., & Keeping, L. M. (2016). Why are abusive supervisors abusive? A dual-system self-control model. *Academy of Management Journal,* 59(4), 1385-1406.

Liu, Z., Venkatesh, S., Murphy, S. E., & Riggio, R. E. (2020). Leader development across the lifespan: A dynamic experiences-grounded approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leagua.2020.101382

Lange, S., & Rowold, J. (2019). Mindful leadership: Evaluation of a mindfulness-based leader intervention. *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation,* 50, 319-335.

Lange, S., Bormann, K. C., Rowold, J. (2018). Mindful leadership: mindfulness as a new antecedent of destructive and transformational leadership behavior. *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation,* 49, 139-147.

Lee, A., Lyubovnikova, J., Tian, A. W., & Knight, C. (2020). Servant leadership: A meta-analytic examination of incremental contribution, moderation, and mediation. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* 93(1), 1-44.

Lemoine, G. J., Eva, N., Meuser, J. D., & Falotico, P. (2021). Organizational performance with a broader focus: The case for a stakeholder approach to leadership. *Business Horizons,* 64(4), 401-413. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.10.007

Lemoine, G. J., Hartnell, C. A., & Leroy, H. (2019). Taking stock of moral approaches to leadership: An integrative review of ethical, authentic, and servant leadership. *Academy of Management Annals,* 13(1), 148-187.

Leroy, H., Segers, J., van Dierendonck, D., & den Hartog, D. (2018). Managing people in organizations: Integrating the study of HRM and leadership. *Human Resource Management Review,* 28, 249-257.

Liao, C., Lee, H. W., Johnson, R. E., & Lin, S-H. (2020). Serving you depletes me? A leader-centric examination of servant leadership behaviors. *Journal of Management,* 47(5), 1185-1218.

Liden, R. C., Panaccio, A., Meuser, J. D., Hu, J., & Wayne, S. J. (2014a). *Servant leadership: Antecedents, processes, and outcomes*. Oxford Handbooks Online.

Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Liao, C., % Meuser, J. D. (2014b). Servant leadership and serving culture: Influence on individual and unit performance. *Academy of Management Journal,* 57(5), 1434-145.

Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Zhao, H., & Henderson, D. (2008). Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment. *Leadership Quarterly,* 19, 161-177. https://doi.org.10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.01.006

Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Meuser, J. D., Hu, J., Wu, J., & Liao, C. (2015). Servant leadership: Validation of a short form of the SL-28. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 26(2), 254-269. https://doi.org.10.1016/j.leaqua.2014.12.002

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Madison, K., & Eva, N. (2019). Social exchange or social learning: A theoretical fork in road for servant leadership researchers. In S. Sendjaya (Ed.), *Leading for High Performance in Asia: Contemporary Research and Evidence-Based Practices* (pp. 133-158). Singapore: Springer.

Neal, J. (2018). An overview of the field of transformation. In J. Neal (Ed.), *Handbook of Personal and Organizational Transformation* (pp. 3-46). Cham: Springer.

Neubert, M. J., de Luque, M. S., Quade, M. J., & Hunter, E. M. (2021). Servant leadership across the globe: Assessing universal and culturally contingent

relevance in organizational contexts. *Journal of World Business*, 101268. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2021.101268

Nübold, A., Van Quaquebeke, N., & Hülsheger, U. R. (2019). Be(com)ing real: a multi-source and an intervention study on mindfulness and authentic leadership. *Journal of Business and Psychology,* 35, 469-488.

Phipps, K. (2010). Servant leadership and constructive development theory: How servant leaders make meaning of service. *Journal of Leadership Education, 9(2), 151-170.*

Pinck, A. S., & Sonnentag, A. (2018). Leader Mindfulness and Employee Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Transformational Leadership. *Mindfulness,* 9, 884-896.

Pircher Verdorfer, A. (2016). Examining mindfulness and its relations to humility, motivation to lead, and actual servant leadership behaviors. *Mindfulness,* 7(4), 950-961.

Purser, R., & Milillo, J. (2015). Mindfulness revisited: A Buddhist-based conceptualization. *Journal of Management Inquiry,* 24(1), 3-24.

Reb, J., Sim, S., Chintakanda, K., & Bhave, D. P. (2015). Leading with mindfulness: Exploring the relation of mindfulness with leadership behaviors, styles, and development. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds.), *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, research, and applications* (pp. 256-284). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roche, M., Good, D., Lyddy, C., Tuckey, M. R., Grazier, M., Leroy, H., & Hülsheger, U. R. (2020). A Swiss army knife? How science challenges our

understanding of mindfulness in the workplace. *Organizational Dynamics,* 49, 1-9

SanFacon, G., & L. Spears (2008). *Holistic servant leadership*. The Spears center for servant leadership.

Sendjaya, S. (2015). *Personal and organizational excellence through servant leadership: Learning to serve, serving to lead, leading to transform*. Springer.

Sendjaya, S., Eva, N., Butar-Butar, I., Robin, M., & Castles, S. (2019). SLBS-6: Validation of A Short Form of the Servant Leadership Behavior Scale. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 156(4), 941-956.

Sendjaya, S. & Sarros, J. C. (2002). Servant leadership: It's origin, development, and application in organizations. Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 9(2), 57-64.

Sendjaya, S., Sarros, J. C., & Santora, J. C. (2008). Defining and measuring servant leadership behaviour in organizations. *Journal of Management Studies,* 45(2), 402-424.

Shapiro, S.L., Carlson, L. E., Astin, J. A., & Freedman, B. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology,* 62, 373-386.

Shapiro, S. L., Wang, M. C., & Peltason, E. H. (2015). What is mindfulness, and why should organizations care about it? In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds.), *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, research, and applications* (pp. 17-41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shapiro, S. L., & Carlson, L. E. (2017). *The art and science of mindfulness: Integrating mindfulness into psychology and the helping professions*. Washington, DC: American Psychology Press.

Shapiro, S. L., Siegel, R., & Neff, K.D. (2018). Paradoxes of mindfulness. *Mindfulness,* 9(6), 1693-1701.

Skoranski, A., Coatsworth, J. D., & Lunkenheimer, E. (2019). A dynamic systems approach to understanding mindfulness in interpersonal relationships. *Journal of Child and Family Studies,* 28, 2659-2672.

Urrila, L. I. (2021). From personal well-being to relationships: A systematic review on the impact of mindfulness interventions and practices on leaders. *Human Resource Management Review*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2021.100837

van Dierendonck, D. (2011). Servant Leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management,* 37, 1228-1261.

Yu, L., & Zellmer-Bruhn, M. (2018). Introducing team mindfulness and considering its safeguard role against conflict transformation and social undermining. *Academy of Management Journal,* 61(1), 324-347.

Varela, F. J., & Shear, J. (1999). First-person Methodologies: What, Why, How? *Journal of Consciousness Studies,* 6(2-3), 1-14.

Vu, T.-V., Vo-Thanh, T., Chi, H., Nguyen, N. P., Nguyen, D. V., & Zaman, M. (2022) The role of perceived workplace safety practices and mindfulness in maintaining calm in employees during times of crisis. *Human Resource Management*. https://doi.org.10.1002/hrm.22101

Warren, E., Melendez-Torres, G. J., Viner, R., & Bonell, C. (2020). Using qualitative research to explore intervention mechanisms: findings from the trial of the Learning Together whole-school health intervention. *Trials*, 21(1), 774. doi: 10.1186/s13063-020-04688-2

White, D. E., Oelke, N. D., & Friesen, S. (2012). Management of a large qualitative data set: establishing trustworthiness of the data. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 11(3), 244-258.

Zhang, H., Kwong Kwan, H., Everett, A. M., & Jian, Z. (2012). Servant leadership, organizational identification, and work-to-family enrichment: The moderating role of work climate for sharing family concerns. *Human Resource Management*, 51(5), 747-767.

---

[1] None of the leaders directly mentioned 'servant leadership' by name as servant leadership was not discussed in the course, nor an intended outcome of the program. The themes of servant leadership reported emerged from the data analysis. However, for consistency of terminology for the reader, we have used the umbrella term of 'servant leadership', rather than variations of other-oriented, follower-focused, people-first leadership.