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Mindfulness and its role in leader development

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Abstract

Developing leaders and leadership capacity is more important than ever before, and as mindfulness begins to gain attention among organisational psychology and behaviour scholars (Allen & Kiburz, 2011), there is immense value in examining mindfulness and its contributions to leader development (Murphy & Johnson, 2011).

Organisations are placing more focus on leader development approaches that are alike and similar to mindfulness (Baron & Cayer, 2011; MacDermott, Kidney & Flood, 2013). Yet there is limited theory on the impact mindfulness has on leaders and their development (Dane, 2011), despite the plethora of growing research on the subject (Roche, Luthans & Haar, 2014; Hall, 2013; Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova & Sles, 2013). Research on the role mindfulness plays on leader development is therefore useful and will contribute meaningfully to the progress of theory in leader development.

To explore the question of mindfulness and its role in leader development in South Africa, twelve transcribed interviews with leaders in the private sector were studied adopting a thematic analysis that generated results presented in the form of six themes. These results suggest that there is a lack of a clear definition of mindfulness; that mindfulness has a profound impact on the perceived development of leaders, and that mindfulness could play a role in developing leaders in South Africa.

Keywords: Mindfulness, leader development

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the research problem

1.1. Introduction and aim of this research

There has been an explosion of interest in mindfulness in the world, which is prevalent in today's media coverage, in bestselling books and in the abundance of online resources (Mindfulness All-Party Parllimentary Group (MAPPG), 2015). Headspace, a mindfulness application developed in 2010, has over two million active users in 150 countries around the world (Barol, 2015). Since recently, every year 500 peer-reviewed scientific journal papers are published on mindfulness, while developments in the medical and psychology fields are illuminating the mechanisms and benefits of mindfulness (Mindfulness All-Party Parllimentary Group (MAPPG), 2015).

It is understood that mindfulness aims to nurture an open and accepting mode of response that deliberately confronts challenges, obstacles, difficulties and discomfort (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Yazdani & Tune, 2013; Siegel, 2009). Researchers also know that although mindfulness provides many benefits (Dane, 2011), mindfulness as it is understood today still requires more of an evidence base to comprehend how mindfulness impacts and can be offered in different environments and to different population groups outside of the health sciences, for example, leaders (Roche, Luthans, & Haar, 2014). There is limited theory on the impact of mindfulness on leaders and their development (Dane, 2011), therefore the role of mindfulness in the leader development process is yet to be fully discovered and defined.

In today's ever-increasing competitive and global environment, the organisation must be able to adapt to survive and succeed (Reichard & Johnson, 2011). At the forefront of organisations are their leaders, and to equip these leaders, organisations are turning to formal training and development. The cost of formal organisational training is in excess of \$130 billion worldwide (Leonard, 2014), however formal leader development initiatives do not yield a strong return on investment as they do not adequately prepare leaders for the challenges of the current business environment (Avolio, 2009). The development of effective leaders is a key concern in organisations of all types, and despite advances made over the past 25 years, the field of leadership development is still relatively complex (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Strum, & McKee, 2014).

This research explores the role of mindfulness in the development of leaders in the South African context and proposes that mindfulness has a role to play in developing leaders, because the known benefits of mindfulness help to progress and enhance the content of leader development, or rather, what leaders need to acquire and cultivate in their

development. The research objectives are to identify if leaders in South African businesses today consider mindfulness as being important for their development. Specifically in South Africa, mindfulness could help leaders acknowledge cultural diversity through greater awareness and cultivate better communication skills.

This research area is important for several reasons, especially the following;

- There is a great financial and time cost associated to developing leaders (Leonard, 2014),
- Leadership-development programmes mostly fail or do not realise desired outcomes (Leonard, 2014; Dalakoura 2010),
- Executives tend to fail rather than succeed in their new leadership roles (The Riddle, 2009),
- And, globally as well as in South Africa, there is significant urgency surrounding the delivery of results that leaders face today (Inman, 2015; Baron & Cayer, 2011).

A significant sum of money is spent on developing leaders, thus it is vital that we ascertain whether this money is well spent and how we can improve on the return of this investment. American companies spend more than \$70 billion annually on leadership development training and worldwide this figure is \$130 billion (Leonard, 2014), yet most leader-development programmes fail because they overlook the context leaders operate in, i.e. leaders cannot translate their learnings into their real world, mind-sets are underestimated and there is a failure to measure results (Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, 2014). The Center for Creative Leadership (2009) found that between 38% and 50% of executives in new leadership positions fail outright in the first 18 months, despite having demonstrated that they have developed the appropriate high intelligence, initiative and business savvy necessary to Succeed (Riddle, 2009).

There is an urgency to develop leaders in South Africa if the National Development Plan 2030 goals are to be realised; and the risk of non-delivery on these imperatives is high. In addition, with an estimated South African GDP growth of 1.5% for 2015 and only 1.6% for 2016, which will materially impact South African prospects, more than ever the nation requires leaders to coordinate efforts and lead the country to a more prosperous future (Inman, 2015). Focusing on leader development is therefore important as corporate South African organisations have been found to be more profitable with good leadership (Mayer & Louw, 2010).

Therefore the scope of this research is in leadership and development, and is important because in business and today's global economy there is a drive for efficiency and sustainability (Baron & Cayer, 2011) which leaders are at the helm of. Individual leaders are burdened with this task to drive organisations towards a sustainable and more productive future, hence having a better understanding of what plays a role in developing leaders is important. Mindfulness may play a role in developing leaders to manage the tasks they are faced with and to deliver results. It is important to note though, that with the rapid growth of interest in mindfulness, there are misrepresentations of it being the cure for all ailments (Dane, 2011; D'Alton, 2015). In fact, suggesting that mindfulness is the panacea to all of life's difficulties is unethical (D'Alton, 2015) and there has been a tendency to overstate the benefits of mindfulness. For leader development, if mindfulness plays a role in serving leaders to become more productive, the ethics surrounding the motives for mindfulness should potentially be considered. .

1.2. Leader development and the state of leader development in South Africa

Leaders have a critical role to play in an organisation's ability to adapt and survive, especially since they operate in dynamic fields of complexity that exist in a context characterised by uncertainty and frequent crises (Baron & Cayer, 2011; Taylor-Bianco & Schermerhorn, 2006). A good leader is many things - a source of positive energy and growth, a decision maker in the face of complex challenges and pressure, an engineer of collaboration, and someone who must have the ability to tap into and unlock the intelligent abilities of employees (Baron & Cayer, 2011; Roche et al., 2014). Ultimately, leadership has been found to be the critical factor in the success or failure of an organisation (Garg & Ramjee, 2013). It is no wonder then, that leadership development is one of the top human capital priorities of executives today (Gurdjian et al., 2014).

Formal leader development programmes today give little attention to the personal development process that leaders go through (McDermott, Kidney, & Flood, 2013) (Dalakoura, 2010), because they are often generic, one-size-fits-all models that include static and anonymous measurement tools and feedback mechanisms. Examples of these include 360 degree feedback, coaching, networking opportunities, action learning, written assignments, case study analysis, computer simulations, classroom learning and leadership training (Dalakoura, 2010; McDermott et al., 2013). More and more research (Baron & Cayer, 2011) indicates that the most effective way to develop leaders is through a tailored and individual-focused approach which is centred on self-awareness and basic psychological and psychosocial development (Church, 2014; McDermott et al., 2013). In

reviewing the literature, including self-awareness and psychological or psychosocial tools does not form part of the content for most current leader development initiatives.

According to Kamoche (2011), Africa remains relatively under-researched in the fields of management, organisation studies, human resources and international business. In the last two decades the challenges of managing people in organisations in Africa has started to receive critical treatment. The need for leadership theories that are consistent with the social-cultural realities in Africa are a continuing literary theme, while the South African National Development Plan 2030's executive summary indicates that strong leadership is needed and can help drive development in a socially cohesive way (Kamoche, 2011; The Presidency, 2012). Considering the under researched fields and the need for leadership theories consistent with the realities from a cultural perspective in Africa, research on enhancing leader development in a South African context will potentially contribute to these fields.

1.3. Mindfulness in the current literature

Mindfulness has become a popular concept in the corporate world, and this is evident where organisations like Google (Pickert, 2014), Genentech, the US Army, the University of Cape Town Business School (Kahn, 2014), Apple, Nike, Procter & Gamble (Huffington, 2013) and General Mills (Gelles, 2012) have implemented mindfulness programmes. Research demonstrates that these and other mindfulness-based interventions are yielding benefits for organisations (Hall, 2013; Pickert, 2014). The different types of mindfulness practices and the well-known benefits of practicing mindfulness are set out in the literature review of this paper.

Although academics have paid attention to the concept of mindfulness, especially in the medical research field, research on mindfulness in the field of management sciences is limited, in particular as to whether it is at all related in any way to leadership development (Roche et al., 2014). The research focus has previously been mostly on health and wellbeing that study mindfulness as a practice and/or a personal trait. Therefore there is inadequate research on the role of mindfulness on leaders and their development (Dane, 2011).

1.4. The need for this research

As mentioned above, this research contributes meaningfully to the leadership field of study because there is an urgency to develop competent leaders in South Africa and currently leader development is complex, costly and mostly ineffective in the way it is delivered today (Leonard, 2014; Dalakoura 2010; Riddle, 2009; Inman, 2015; Baron & Cayer, 2011). In addition, this study will contribute to leadership research because there

are unanswered questions around how some leaders handle the unprecedented change, complexity and stress they face in their work better than others (Roche et al., 2014). Organisations spend significant amounts of time and money on developing leaders who can survive in today's corporate climate because research supports that leadership development and the success thereof directly affects an organisation's performance (McDermott et al., 2013) yet today's leadership development programmes are proving to be ineffective. Understanding how best to develop leaders is therefore something we care about more and more (Church, 2014). Ultimately there is a need for research in the field of leader development as a gap exists between *investing* in leader development and *actual* leader development. A new potential contribution to leader development may be the practice and enhancement of mindfulness in leaders based on the known benefits of mindfulness in the health sciences and in the limited research on leadership and management. There is also a need to research mindfulness and its role in the leadership field, as there are recommendations in the latest studies on mindfulness to conduct further research into the relationship between the benefits of mindfulness like self-awareness, elements of authenticity, as well as self-regulation and leader effectiveness (Day et al., 2014; Reb et al., 2014; Taylor-Bianco & Schermerhorn, 2006).

This research will thus contribute to the development and understanding of mindfulness and its role in developing leaders in South Africa.

1.5. Structure of this research

This study has seven chapters, with Chapter 1 being an introduction to the research. In Chapter 2 the literature on mindfulness and leader development is reviewed, in Chapter 3 the research question is presented highlighting the purpose of the research, and in Chapter 4 the chosen methodology to answer the research question is presented. The results of the research are presented in Chapter 5, and these are discussed in Chapter 6. The research is concluded in Chapter 7, with some limitations of the study as well as suggestions for future research being incorporated.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The current literature and theory on mindfulness and leader development is reviewed in this chapter. The content of leader development is discussed specifically in the South African context, as well as the definition and known benefits of mindfulness,. Finally, the connection between leader development and mindfulness is reviewed with a focus on the need for this research.

Leader development and mindfulness in organisations appear to be constructs that are overly complex and withinadequate understanding (McDermott et al., 2013; Dane, 2011). Therefore, their relation to, and with each other seems to be unclear with limited academic sustenance. In this chapter mindfulness and leader development will be defined and a motivation presented for why this research is important in the global and South African context.

2.2. Leader Development Theory

Academic literature and theory on the definition of leader development, what the content of leader development is and leader development in South Africa is discussed below.

2.2.1. Defining Leader Development

Developing leaders, their leadership skills and effectiveness evolves over time; this evolution is referred to as development trajectory (Day et al., 2014). Being able to develop and test models of developmental trajectories is of great importance to many fields in the social and behavioural sciences, especially leader development (Day & Sin, 2011). To understand the current theory and research on leadership development and its development trajectories it is important to consider the differences and similarities between leader development and leadership development, as they are often used interchangeably but have different meanings. Leader development focuses on the individual and the skill set individuals should have to lead effectively (Day et al., 2014), while leadership development engages every individual in an organisation and focuses on building organisational qualities that develop the relationships between individuals that will add value to the organisation (Dalakoura, 2010). Leader development is therefore one aspect of leadership development (McDermott et al., 2013) and this research will only focus on leader development.

Harms, Spain & Hannah (2011) defined leader development as “a process that involves changes in the perceptions, motivations, competencies and patterns of behaviour of individuals in leadership positions in order to help them function in their roles more

effectively” (p. 497). Self-awareness is a fundamental skill for leader development as becoming self-aware allows for self-regulation (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Self-regulation is the process whereby leaders regulate their activities towards a broad range of long and short term goals and includes self-management activities. Leadership identity and self-regulatory activities are essential for leader skill development, and one way of cultivating these is through guided reflection (Harms et al., 2011). Based on these insights, leader development initiatives ought to include content that develops leaders’ ability to self-regulate by enhancing and cultivating self-awareness.

According to McDermott et al. (2013), leader development is viewed at the individual level as being the expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in a leadership role and to work through leadership processes (McDermott et al., 2013). Reb et al. (2014) supported this two level notion, saying that “Leadership can be seen as not situated in the leader but takes place in a dynamic interaction between leader and follower, supervisor and subordinate, unfolding in a specific organisational context, so leadership is grounded in the relationship” (p. 8). Leaders therefore need to learn to interface and form relationships with others while simultaneously dealing with their current context. Leader development initiatives may also need to include content that encourages this ability. This is supported by the notion that an increasingly popular approach to understanding the content of leadership development is a focus on the development of leader member exchange quality; that is, the quality of interaction between leaders and others, and how leadership development practices enable the creation of social capital in organisations (Day, et al., 2014).

I googled the term leadership styles on 6 November 2015, and received over 31 million hits. This illustrates that leadership styles is a difficult construct to define. This is supported by Gregoire and Arendt (2014) who suggest that the understanding of leadership styles is situational and depends on the individuals involved. In their review of 100 years of literature on leadership, Gregoire and Arendt (2014) summarise that the current writings on leadership suggest that it is a very complex process that is not easy to define or describe, but, learning appears to be an underlying, necessary component to effectiveness as a leader.

Authentic Leadership is built on self-awareness and development, which are constructs of learning. Therefore, for this research one leadership style is focused on when considering the content of leader development and that is Authentic Leadership. The reason for this is because organisations could more fully realise elevated levels of

sustained performance when leadership is grounded in authenticity (Gardner, Coglisser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011).

Authentic leadership is a values-based leadership style that is relatively new (Gardner et al., 2011). Reb, Narayan and Chaturvedi (2014) argued that “Authentic leaders are emotionally intelligent, which concerns an individual’s ability to perceive, understand and recalculate their own and sometimes even others’ emotions” (p. 19). Authentic leaders lead in a way that honours their own unique identity and style and therefore have high awareness of themselves, others and their context, as well as being optimistic, hopeful, trusting and positive (Gardner et al., 2011; Reb et al., 2014). Authentic leadership therefore has dominant qualities which are to honour the importance of the interaction between leaders and followers, the ability to be self-aware and regulate their emotions as well as be aware of and care for others. Thus for this research, authentic leadership is the leadership style that is referred to when considering the content of leader development.

Leader development is therefore defined as a continuous process in gaining and enhancing the skill set necessary to be an effective authentic leader, specifically looking into the leader’s personal development process with a focus on intrapersonal development, precisely how the leader relates to themselves and their thoughts, and how this affects their leadership ability and capacity and their impact on others.

2.2.2. The content of Leader Development

Successful leadership cannot be discussed without reference to leader development (Hallinger & Walker, 2013), as leaders are influential in determining the fate of their organisations through their decisions, strategies and influence on others (Dinh et al., 2014). Large sums of money and many hours of time are invested in the training and development of leading employees (Grobler & Bruyn, 2011), yet although the academic literature offers a broad range of leadership theories that inform the *content* of leader development training, comparatively little attention has been paid to advancing *theories* of leader development (Day & Sin, 2011).

Advancing theories of leader development focus on modes of leadership that are orientated towards the engagement of complex challenges that do not have conventional solutions and are new to the leader (Nicolaidis & McCallum, 2013). Adaptive leadership is one such mode of leader development focus, which is oriented towards leading through complex challenges and requires leaders to develop new ways of knowing, doing and being. This approach to leadership requires the leader to “bear intense resistance to change and personal attacks, without losing a sense of the bigger picture or

jeopardising the emerging vision” (p. 4). These insights come from the analogy of the leader moving from the dance floor to the balcony (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2014), i.e. on the dance floor, the leader is involved in interpersonal relationships and the on-goings within the origination and by going to the balcony a leader is able to gauge the gaps between goals and current performance and can explore the current state of the organisation as a bigger picture. In addition, from the balcony leaders can rediscover their sense of purpose and reorient themselves when they feel overwhelmed, uncertain and confused; they take perspective in the moment (Heifetz et al., 2014). Moving to and from the dance floor and the balcony are the actions leaders must take to deal with complex challenges. These actions, like reorienting the self and gaining perspective, may be related to being self-aware in the present moment, developing the self to be more aware and engaging in self-regulating behaviours. Being on the dance floor is the metaphor for building and maintaining meaningful relationships with others. The content for leader development might then be that which develops adaptive tools in the leader. That which enable to leader to have both the ability and the capacity gage with others on the dancefloor and to be self-aware and self-regulate on the balcony.

There has been a change in focus associated with studies of leader development towards understanding and enhancing developmental processes, where development is considered both multi-level and longitudinal (Day et al., 2014). This is not surprising considering that static, short term or point in time leader development interventions produce only a 66% probability of achieving desired outcomes (Avolio, 2009). Organisations need different, more cost effective and adaptive strategies for their leader development programmes (Reichard & Johnson, 2011), with intrapersonal and interpersonal processes being central to a leader’s development over time (Day et al., 2014).

Through their examination of leader development content, like factors including experience, skills, personality, self-development, social mechanisms, 360 degree feedback, self-other agreement and self-narrative, Day et al. (2014) found that leadership development represents a dynamic process involving multiple interactions that persist over time. In their review of 25 years of research and theory in leadership and leader development, the authors found that some of the key content of leader development includes:

- Metacognitive processing (i.e. knowledge of one’s cognitive processes) to be a relevant skill for creative problem solving. Skill development depends on learning as people interact with their environment. This is reinforced in their research

where identity, metacognitive and self-regulation processes are crucial to the refinement of knowledge structures and the information processing abilities associated with leadership expertise.

- Self-development such as mastery orientation facilitates leader self-development. “This refers to greater self-efficacy, conscientiousness, openness to experience and intellectual maturity” (p. 66).
- Experiences that create optimistic views of others and empathy for the suffering of others are strongly related to outstanding leader performance.
- Creating positive learning environments where cultural communication competence is encouraged facilitates high quality relationships in diverse leader member partnerships.
- Strong leader-identity functions as a “within-person, time-varying covariate of leadership effectiveness” (p. 77).

In line with the above, when reviewing authentic leadership and what developing into an authentic leader involves, Day et al. (2014) found that this content entails:

- An ongoing process of gaining self-awareness and establishing open, transparent, trusting and genuine relationships amongst both leaders and followers.
- Developing into an authentic leader requires stressing the importance of emotions, and other-directed emotions motivate authentic leaders to behave in ways that reflect self-transcendent values.
- Authentic leaders can gain self-knowledge, gain clarity of both self-concept and person-role merger by constructing, developing and revising the personal narratives they construct about themselves. By continuously revising and updating these self-narratives through written journals or other similar techniques, self-awareness interventions and programme effectiveness can be enhanced.

All of this content is necessary for developing leaders, specifically authentic leaders.

In their study on validating the measure of authentic leadership, Walumbwa et al., (2008) presented a multi-dimensional authentic leadership construct that is made up of four factors. The first is self-awareness, which refers to how a leader shows and understands their own strengths and weaknesses and the nature of the self (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). When leaders are self-aware they gain insight into the self through exposure to others and by being mindful of their impact on other people (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The second is relational transparency, where a leader presents their authentic self rather than a distorted self (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). The third is balanced processing, which shows that the leader objectively analyses all relevant information before making decisions and solicits challenging views that contradict their own (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Finally, internalised moral perspective refers to an internalised and integrated way of self-regulating that is guided by a leader's internal moral standards and values, not organisational and societal pressures (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011).

Therefore Day et al. (2014) in their review of 25 years of leadership theory and leader development literature, and Walumbwa et al. (2008) in their study of authentic leadership development and validation, found that the content of leader development and authentic leader development is centred on self-awareness. Closely following self-awareness comes the next three elements; strong leader-identity (Day et al., 2014) or relational transparency (Walumbwa et al., 2008), balanced processing (Walumbwa et al., 2008) or creating positive learning environments where cross cultural communication happens, and an internalised moral perspective (Walumbwa et al., 2008) or metacognitive processing (Day et al., 2014). Self-awareness and adaptive skills are thus the foundational dimensions of a leader's development (Church, 2014).

This literature is in line with Reb et al. (2014) and Gardner et al.'s (2011) definitions of an authentic leader that informs leader development. Ultimately, authentic leaders must lead in a way that honours their core values, beliefs, strengths and weaknesses (Gardner et al., 2011). Being self-aware allows the leader to know and manage their strengths and weaknesses, as well as know what their core values and beliefs are. Self-awareness seems to be the primary construct in effective authentic leader development. Self-awareness may enable the leader to have a strong, transparent identity, the ability to objectively process information to make good decisions and the ability to self-regulate. To support this, a leader's effectiveness in awareness positively impacts followers' well-being (Reb et al., 2014).

2.2.3. Leadership and leader development in South Africa

In reviewing some of the current theory and research on leading in South Africa, most of the references refer to management in South Africa. According to Kamoche (2011),

Africa remains relatively under-researched in the fields of management, organisation studies, human resources and international business. In the last two decades the challenges of managing people in organisations in Africa have started to receive critical treatment, and the need for management and leadership styles and motivation theories that relate to the social-cultural realities in Africa are an on-going subject in the literature.

The anxiety that arises from South African organisations faced with huge competition is remarkably consistent, and employees feel emotions such as fear, stress, denial, anger and lack of enthusiasm. If these emotions are not correctly handled and channelled they can have a negative impact on the whole company (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003). South Africa has diverse cultures and traditions, and until recently the way of doing business in successful organisations has been to treat each culture with caution, care and understanding (Mangaliso, 2001). South African managers face a major challenge in managing cross-cultural conflict based on diversity characteristics and the socio-historic influences of apartheid (Mayer & Louw, 2010). In addition to this challenge, requirements where compliance is expected without question and the leader is required to be more directive goes against the grain of African culture, particularly if carried out by junior (younger) members of the community (Mangaliso, 2001). In South Africa cross-cultural conflicts occur because of differences in value constellations and/or priorities, clashing identity aspects and racial ascriptions fuelled by the various societies' pasts (Mayer & Louw, 2010). Value differences play an important role in cross-cultural conflicts, specifically punctuality, flexibility, open-mindedness, communication, honesty, integration, acceptance, tolerance and power play (Mayer & Louw, 2010). An Afrocentric managerial approach is thus warranted and is a potential source of competitive advantage. Knowing this, research into African workers' relational existence that might inform leadership styles is promising (Kamoche, 2011).

Leaders today are faced with many challenges, including managing diversity amongst multiple generations of employees, each with their own particular set of demands (Grobler & Bruyn, 2011). In South Africa there are additional challenges for leaders, such as acknowledging different cultures in the organisational context. Leaders in South Africa therefore need to incorporate content into their development skills that help with leading in diverse and culturally varied circumstances.

Having discussed some of the leader development literature, this research now turns to mindfulness. Following that, the study will consider how mindfulness has been applied to leader development.

2.3. Mindfulness theory

For centuries mindfulness has been promoted as part of Buddhist and spiritual traditions, however in the Western world mindfulness is a more recent phenomenon that largely began in the 1970s (Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011). Interest in mindfulness has grown over the past 30 years, and today it is in the early stages of becoming mainstream (Siegel, 2009) in the corporate world as many global organisations like Google (Pickert, 2014), Apple and Nike (Huffington, 2013; Trisoglio, n.d.) have implemented and are seeing the benefits of mindfulness programmes for their employees. Yet there are still relatively few high quality studies on mindfulness (Heuman, 2014), and the role of mindfulness in leader development outside the psychological and health fields is not greatly understood.

2.3.1. The definitions of mindfulness

It has been suggested that there are many uncertainties surrounding the practice of mindfulness, with hundreds of poor-quality studies on mindfulness practice (Ospina, M. B., Bond, K., Karkhaneh, M., Tjosvold, L., Vandermeer, B., Liang, Y., . . . Klassen, T. P. et al., 2007). Just five years later in 2012, 477 peer reviewed, scientific journal articles about mindfulness were published (Pickert, 2014). This illustrates a huge increase in the interest of mindfulness. In each of these studies, mindfulness is defined and the literature highlights that there are many definitions of mindfulness, with both similarities and differences (Dane, 2011). To summarise and consolidate these definitions, Dane (2011) compiled the table shown below of the contemporary definitions of mindfulness used in research today:

Table 1: Definitions of Mindfulness

Source	Definition of Mindfulness
Brown, Ryan, and Creswell (2007, p. 212)	“A receptive attention to and awareness of present moment events and experience.”
Epstein (1995, p. 96)	“Bare attention in which moment-to-moment awareness of changing objects of perception is cultivated.”
Hanh (1976, p. 11)	“Keeping one’s consciousness alive to the present reality.”
Harvey (2000, p. 38)	“A state of keen awareness of mental and physical phenomena as they arise within and around [oneself].”
Herndon (2008, p. 32)	“Being attentively present to what is happening in the here and now.”
Kabat-Zinn (2005, p. 4)	“Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”
Lau et al. (2006, p. 1447)	“A mode, or state-like quality, that is maintained only when attention to experience is intentionally cultivated with an open, non-judgmental orientation to experience.”
Nyanaponika (1972, p. 5)	“The clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception.”
Rosch (2007, p. 259)	“A simple mental factor that can be present or absent in a moment of consciousness. It means to adhere, in that moment, to the object of consciousness with a clear mental focus.”
Thondup (1996, p. 48)	“Giving full attention to the present, without worries about the past or future.”
Weick and Sutcliffe (2006, p. 518)	“Eastern mindfulness means having the ability to hang on to current objects, to remember them, and not to lose sight of them through distraction, wandering attention, associative thinking, explaining away, or rejection.”

Dane (2011) found that these definitions are cohesive and correspond to each other through three common themes. These are:

- 1) An inherent state of consciousness that can be assessed at the trait level.
- 2) Characterised by present moment awareness without rumination of the past or thoughts about the future.
- 3) The present moment awareness is on external and internal phenomena; what is happening in you both physically and mentally as well as what is happening in the environment around you.

To add to the complexity of definitions, Avey, Wernsing and Luthans (2008) highlighted the process aspect of mindfulness, noting that this practice moves an individual from being embedded in thinking to being able to step outside of that thinking and observe it. Reb et al. (2014), meanwhile, stated that mindfulness is the opposite of mindlessness (p. 6), and therefore is an attention-related construct. Indeed, there are a number of attention-related constructs such as absorption, flow, mind wandering, counterfactual thinking, prospection and fantasising, and mindfulness differs from these in that it is considered the highest construct on the breadth of attention scale because of the degree of present moment orientation it necessitates (Dane, 2011; Avey et al., 2008). Current conceptualisations of mindfulness in psychology point to two essential elements of mindfulness: awareness of one's moment-to-moment experience nonjudgmentally and acceptance (Keng et al., 2011). What this confirms is that there are many definitions of mindfulness, all of which refer to mindfulness as a state of consciousness in present moment awareness (Avey et al., 2008; Dane, 2010; Reb et al., 2014).

The Western conceptualisation of mindfulness emerges from the Eastern practice of meditation. In this research, mindfulness meditation is defined as an array of practices of focused attention where one sustains attention on the present moment and the changing sensations of the breath, monitors discursive events as they arise, disengages from those events without affective reaction, and redirects attention back to the breath, resulting in a cultivation of awareness, acceptance and non-judgment (Ospina et al., 2007; Zeidan et al., 2011). It is important to note that the Western conceptualisation of mindfulness differs from the traditional Buddhist teaching in that the former is independent of a specific circumscribed philosophy, ethical code or system of practice (Keng et al., 2011). The Western take on mindfulness has less emphasis on the non-self and impermanence, and it is viewed as a form of awareness that encompasses all forms of objects in a person's internal and external experience (Keng et al., 2011).

Some common techniques of mindfulness meditation are Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), *Vipassana* meditation, Zen Buddhist meditation, and other mindfulness meditation practices. MBSR was conceived of and functions as a public health intervention and came into being in 1979 (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). It was originally designed by Dr Jon Kabt-Zinn, the Professor of Medicine Emeritus and creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. It was designed as a group programme to treat patients with chronic pain and today is prescribed to reduce morbidities associated with chronic illnesses like cancer (Ospina et al., 2007; McCown, Reibel, & Micozzi, 2010),).

MBCT is a psychosocial intervention for recurrent depression and was designed specifically to help people who suffer repeated bouts of depressions to help prevent reoccurrence of that depression (Kuyken, W., Watkins, E., Holden, E., White, K., Taylor, R. S., Byford, S., . . . Dalgleish, T. et al., 2010). It was developed by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale from the Oxford Mindfulness centre in the 1990s as a method for preventing relapse in patients with clinical depression and is based on Kabat-Zin's MBSR programme (Ospina et al., 2007). Based on the MBSR programme, MBCT is a combination of a mindfulness framework and the principles of cognitive therapy. It takes the form of eight weekly classes, plus an all-day session held at around week six. A set of guided meditations accompany the programme, so that participants can practice at home once a day, six days a week, throughout the course (Ospina et al., 2007).

Vipassana is known as insight meditation and is the oldest of the Buddhist meditation techniques (Ospina et al., 2007). This is a mindfulness meditation technique that involves bringing one's attention to present-moment sensations and experiences in an accepting and non-reactive way (Szekeres & Wertheim, 2014). *Vipassana* is a way of self-transformation through self-observation. It focuses on the deep interconnection between mind and body, which can be experienced directly by disciplined attention to the physical sensations that form the life of the body, and that continuously interconnect and condition the life of the mind. It is this observation-based, self-exploratory journey to the common root of mind and body that dissolves mental impurity, resulting in a balanced mind full of love and compassion (Ospina et al., 2007; Szekeres & Wertheim, 2014). Since the time of Buddha, *Vipassana* has been handed down, to the present day, by an unbroken chain of teachers. Although Indian by descent, the current teacher in this chain, Mr. S.N. Goenka, was born and raised in Burma (Myanmar). While living there he learnt *Vipassana* from his teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, who was at the time a high government official. After receiving training from his teacher for 14 years, Mr. Goenka settled in India

and began teaching *Vipassana* in 1969. Since then he has taught tens of thousands of people of all races and all religions in both the East and West. In 1982 he began to appoint assistant teachers to help him meet the growing demand for *Vipassana* courses (Ospina et al., 2007).

Zen Buddhist meditation is known as *Zazen* and is a well-known form of meditation that employs techniques that originated in Japan several thousand years ago (Ospina et al., 2007). It is a meditative discipline that is typically a religious practice and in general is a means of insight into the nature of existence. *Zazen* aims at disregarding intrusive thoughts while controlling body posture (Faber et al., 2015).

In Ospina et al.'s (2007) report, they included a table of the characteristics of Mindfulness Meditation, which is set out below:

Table 2: Characteristics of some mindfulness meditation practices (Ospina et al., 2007)

Meditation practice	Main Components	Breathing	Attention	Spirituality/ belief	Training	Criteria for Success
Mindfulness meditation						
<i>Vipassana</i>	Cultivation of a “mindful” attitude Seated posture	Passive Nasal	Attention is focused on the breath (first on the inhalation and exhalation, then shifted to rims of the nostrils) or on bodily sensations	No specific spiritual or religious beliefs required	No specific training period given Session should last no longer than one can comfortably sit Novice meditators no longer than 20 min	Proper technique determined by experienced meditator or by self-evaluation
Zen	Specific seated postures (lotus or half-lotus), positioning of hands, mouth and tongue Eyes half closed and focused on point on floor	Active Inhale through nose, exhale through mouth and nasal only Many breathing patterns	Attention focused on counting of breath, on a <i>koan</i> or “just sitting.” Breath counted by one of three methods No attempt to focus on single idea or experience	No specific spiritual or Religious beliefs required; however, attitude of no purposefulness is essential	No specific training period given Sessions may last from several minutes to several hours	Successful practice determined by experienced teacher; specific personal experience of the true nature of reality
MBSR	Cultivation of a “mindful” attitude Prescribed postures. Seated meditation. Body scan (supine posture). Hatha yoga postures	Active (diaphragmatic breathing) and passive	Seated meditation: attention focused on breath as it passes edge of nostrils or on rising and falling of abdomen Body scan: attention focused on somatic sensations in the part of the body being “scanned.” Hatha yoga: attention focused on breath and the sensations that arise as different postures are assumed	No specific spiritual or Religious beliefs required; however, strong commitment and self-discipline are essential	Taught in an 8- week course involving weekly 2-3 hr classes and 45-min sessions at home 6 days a week with homework exercises. After course, practiced daily for 45 min Group instruction by an experienced MBSR practitioner	Successful Meditation requires the technique be taught by an teacher experienced in mindfulness meditation; achievement of successful health outcomes
MBCT	Based on MBSR program. Cultivation of “decentered” or “mindful” perspective. Seated meditation Body scan	Passive	Seated meditation: attention focused on breath as it passes edge of nostrils or on rising and falling of abdomen Body scan: attention focused on somatic sensations in the part of the body being “scanned”	No specific spiritual or religious beliefs required	Taught in an 8-week course involving weekly 2-hr classes and 45- min sessions at home 6 days a week with homework exercises Program taught in 2 main components: (1) teaching of mindfulness, (2) learning to handle mood shifts Group instruction by an experienced practitioner of mindfulness meditation	Successful meditation requires the technique be taught by an teacher experienced in mindfulness meditation; successful prevention of depressive relapse as determined by clinical evaluative

This table highlights that mindfulness techniques aim to cultivate an objective openness to whatever comes into awareness; they require that attention be paid to an explicit awareness of sensations and the breath is used to keep the meditator engaged with the present moment while logical and conceptual thinking is discouraged (Zeidan et al., 2011; Ospina et al., 2007). MBSR, MBCT and other interventions that teach mindfulness use less meditation-orientated techniques and are considered to be a family of mindfulness-orientated interventions (Keng et al., 2011). To this end and for this research, mindfulness is not referred to as meditation or a meditation practice specifically, but rather as an actual engagement with a discipline of inward focus and takes on many forms (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

What the tables and literature indicate is that there is no single specific definition or practice regime for mindfulness. General descriptions of mindfulness vary from investigator to investigator and there is no consensus on the defining components or processes (Ospina et al., 2007). Although many studies assess mindfulness, they vary greatly in content and factor structure, so there is a lack of agreement on the meaning and nature of mindfulness (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). One key aspect that adds complexity to the definition debates is that mindfulness derives from Eastern wisdom traditions, such as Buddhism. As it has a short history in Western science, therein lies the challenge in defining, operationalising and quantifying it (Keng et al., 2011). Mindfulness may also vary from moment to moment within a person, and there is evidence of individual differences in mindfulness that suggest it is a state-level construct that can be assessed at a trait level (Allen & Kiburz, 2011; Dane, 2011).

Based on the challenges in defining mindfulness it is not surprising that there is confusion within the literature. According to the definitions above, mindfulness is either a state of consciousness at the trait level, where one is aware of the present moment and of what is happening inside and outside of them (internally and externally), i.e. keeping one's consciousness alive in the present moment which is the present reality (Hanh, 1976; Dane, 2011); or it is paying attention to the present moment without judgment and with acceptance (Dane, 2011; Reb et al., 2014; Avey et al., 2008; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Keng et al., 2011). Sometimes mindfulness is referred to as being both about paying attention and having present moment awareness at the same time (Keng et al., 2011; Reb et al., 2014). There is also confusion around whether the present moment awareness must be internal, external or both, or to whatever arises in one's consciousness at the time. Mindfulness is also used and operationalised in different ways, so it is sometimes defined

as a state, a trait or an intervention (Siegel, 2009), for example how Szekeres and Wertheim (2014) claimed that mindfulness is non-reacting, i.e. it is an action rather than a state of mind.

It seems that some definitions omit that mindfulness is about purposefully paying attention on the present moment, and some definitions omit that mindfulness is about awareness without judgment (Dane, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). For this research the most common operational working definition of mindfulness is used: 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; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). This definition is not specific about a kind of mindfulness practice or if and when awareness and attention should be focused internally or externally, but rather on that which emerges through the purposeful act of paying attention.

2.3.2. The Benefits of Mindfulness

The benefits of mindfulness are well documented in medical and psychological research, but less so in management science research (Roche et al., 2014). Some examples of clinical research can be found in Himmelstein, Hastings, Shapiro and Heery (2012), who found that their participants experienced an increase in subjective well-being, an increase in self-regulation, an increase in awareness and developed an accepting attitude toward mindfulness. Chiesa and Serretti (2009) also found that MBSR training was able to reduce stress, ruminative thinking and trait anxiety, as well as increase empathy and self-compassion in healthy people. In their review of empirical studies on the effects of mindfulness on psychological health, Keng et al. (2011) concluded that mindfulness brings about various positive psychological effects, including increased subjective well-being, reduced psychological symptoms and emotional reactivity, and improved behavioural regulation (p. 1041). In a randomised controlled trial, Pipe, Bortz, Dueck, Pendergast, Bucha and Summers (2009) found that a four-week mindfulness meditation course reduced self-reported stress symptoms among nursing leaders.

In management sciences there is less well documented literature on mindfulness, but what is available is in line with the findings of the psychological field. For example, Hulshegar, Alberts, Feinholdt and Lang (2012) found that participants in a mindfulness intervention group experienced significantly less emotional exhaustion and more job satisfaction than participants in the control group. Roche et al. (2014), meanwhile, found that mindfulness was negatively related to various dysfunctional outcomes leaders experience, such as anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion and cynicism.

In a review of this literature, the benefits of mindfulness are plentiful, but not consistent. A clear and common benefit across the literature is improved self-regulation or the ability to self-regulate, which reduces reactivity or gives one the ability to choose how to react, giving more response flexibility (Keng et al., 2011; Himelstein, et al., 2012; Roche et al., 2014; Ismail et al., 2013; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Dane, 2011; Brown et al., 2007; Baron & Cayer, 2011).

A positive affect (Reb et al., 2014) is also a clear benefit and is referred to as a positive state of mind (Keng et al. 2011), positive coping or being (Roche et al., 2014; Sears, Kraus, Carlough & Treat, 2011; Brown & Ryan, 2003), or experiencing positive emotions (Leroy et al. 2013).

Mindfulness benefits individuals in that it improves relationships and enables the mediators that improve relationships. This is a clear benefit as per Seigel (2009) and Dane (2011), and interpersonal relationships improve where mindfulness enhances the capacity for those relationships (Brown et al., 2007) through clearer communication, a reduction in workplace conflict and the ability to handle workplace tension (Ismail, Coetzee, Toit, Rudolph, & Joubert, 2013).

The ability to reduce and manage stress is a dominant benefit across the literature (Keng et al., 2011; Hall, 2013; Brown et al., 2007). This is clear from the research results where the ability to manage and see a reduction in work stress is apparent (Leroy et al., 2013), as is an ability to better react to stressful situations (Ismail et al., 2013).

The ability to focus, make better decisions and increase awareness, like improved attention (Zhang & Wu, 2014), metacognitive awareness (Keng et al., 2011; Himelstein et al., 2012); purposefulness (Leroy et al., 2013), improved decision making and strategic thinking abilities (Hall, 2013), could be grouped as benefits that enhance productivity.

To summarise, the benefits documented in the research that apply to leader development can be grouped as:

- Self-regulation and self-awareness – Heightened emotional intelligence (Hall, 2013), greater self-awareness (Himelstein et al., 2012), greater social awareness (Himelstein et al., 2012), improved self-management (Brown & Ryan, 2003), validated behavioural regulation (Keng et al., 2011; Himelstein et al., 2012)
- Positivity – an increase in positive emotions (Roche et al., 2014)
- Improved relationships –improved quality of interpersonal relationships (Dane, 2011).

- Stress management – An increase in the ability to manage stress (Keng et al., 2011; Ismail et al., 2013; Leroy et al., 2013), less emotional exhaustion, greater job satisfaction (Hulsheger et al., 2012), reduced rumination (Keng et al., 2011), reduced burnout (Ismail et al., 2013), better coping capabilities (Sears et al., 2011)
- Productivity - Higher productivity, improved function of attention (Baron & Cayer, 2011), improved decision making and strategic thinking abilities (Hall, 2013), a heightened ability to focus (Zhang & Wu, 2014), enhanced creativity (Hall, 2013), enhanced leadership efficacy (Roche et al., 2014)

The benefits of some of the research on mindfulness across the medical, health, social sciences and management fields of research are summarised in the table below:

Table 3: The benefits of mindfulness-based studies and interventions

Authors	Benefits
Baron & Cayer, 2011, p. 10	Helping to recognise one's cognitive, affective and operative patterns and the ability to suspend these patterns in favour of a more direct contact with reality in the here and now.
Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 11	Self-regulated behaviour and positive emotional states. Declines in mood disturbances and stress.
Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007, p. 17-18	Decentred perspective, reductions in emotional reactivity, quicker recovery, greater tolerance for and acceptance of unpleasant states, more effective affect regulation, facilitated equanimity, enhancing immunological resistance, promoting relaxation and greater tolerance, enhanced executive functioning, better self-regulation, greater autonomy, enhanced relationships capacities.
Burke, 2006, p. 5-6	Less heart disease, less tumours, less hospitalisation, less mental disorders, less infectious diseases.
Dane, 2011, p. 2	Increase physical and mental health, interpersonal relationship quality, and behavioural regulation.
Hall, 2013, p. 16-17	Improvements in physical and mental health, increased ability to be resilient and manage stress. Heightened emotional intelligence, improved decision-making and strategic thinking abilities, a heightened ability to focus and enhanced creativity.
Hulsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt and Lang, 2012, p. 11	Promotes job satisfaction, helps prevent burnout in terms of emotional exhaustion.

Ismail, Coetzee, Toit, Rudolph, & Joubert, 2013, p. 4	Mindfulness reduces workplace tension, allows for clearer communication, and enables one to show more appropriate reactions during stressful situations and to handle workplace conflict.
Leroy et al., 2013, p. 240	Reduce symptoms of work stress. Reduce illness symptoms, experienced negative effect, and rumination. Experience positive emotions, coping capabilities, and purposefulness in life.
Peters et al., 2015 p. 881	Reduced aggression via lower levels of anger rumination.
Pipe et al., 2009 p. 6	Caring and nurturing the self.
Roche et al., 2014, p.477-488	Increased response flexibility, such as receptiveness to resiliency and positivity, enhances a person's positive reflective choices and positive functioning.
Reb & Narayanan, 2014, p.5-7	Well-being, reduces chronic pain, increases immunity, reduces anxiety, and increases psychological well-being and positive affect, structural changes to the dorsolateral prefrontal area of the brain
Sears, Kraus, Carlough, & Treat, 2011, p. 2-3; 5	Pain management, immune function, changes in brain areas associated with emotion, positive reappraisal coping, preventing a relapse of depression and changes in quality of thought.
Siegel, 2009, p. 137	Well-being in brain function, mental activity and interpersonal relationships.
Himmelstein et al., 2012, p. 236	Increase in subjective well-being, increase in self-regulation, increase in awareness.
Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011, p. 1050	Increases in sense of spirituality, self-compassion, positive states of mind, decreases in rumination, trait anxiety, risk of depressive relapse, posttraumatic avoidance symptoms, perceived stress and overall psychological distress. Increases metacognitive awareness (the ability to re-perceive or decentre from one's thoughts and emotions and to view them as passing mental events rather than to identify with them or believe thoughts to be accurate representations of reality). Buffer against decreases in working memory capacity during high stress periods. Improved behavioural self-regulation and values clarification.
Zhang & Wu, 2013 p. 25	Improved attention and decision making.

It is important to note that mindfulness is not a solution for all ailments (Dane, 2011). Some research has highlighted limitations in the studies of its affects, as well as the direct and indirect costs associated with being mindful and the doubts research participants have raised in practicing mindfulness and the outcomes generated. These doubts included cognitive and physical challenges, difficulty finding the time and motivation to practice mindfulness outside guided sessions, and questions about the efficacy of mindfulness and the self-efficacy needed to engage in it (Dane, 2011; Sears et al., 2011).

A 2007 meta-study of meditation conducted by the US Association for Health and Research Quality (Ospina et al., 2007) found only moderate evidence for the benefits of mindfulness meditation, and stated that the scientific evidence for these benefits is not as solid as claimed. While mindfulness has received much attention in recent years, it appears as if the evidence to support the benefits of mindfulness practices remain unequivocal.

2.3.3. Mindfulness in the leadership field

Day et al. (2014) stated that “the overall development process for the leader can be informed by different theories, and can be measured in a variety of ways...” (p. 79). There have been many developments in the theory and content of leader development, and to prepare leaders, organisations are focusing on development opportunities that include increasing self-awareness, building skills and identifying actions and methods for improvement (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). This is not surprising considering self-awareness is a core personal skill that underpins leader development (McDermott et al., 2013). The study of mindfulness is also beginning to garner attention among industrial-organisation psychology and organisational behaviour scholars (Allen & Kiburz, 2011). Hence there is also a transition in the field of organisational development towards approaches that share much of the same spirit, means and aims as mindfulness (Baron & Cayer, 2011). Exploring the role of mindfulness in leader development may show a connection to what kinds of leadership skills and/or leadership development progressions are mediated and promoted by mindfulness.

Leroy et al. (2013) found that mindfulness is important for the reduction of negative symptoms of burnout and for strengthening the personal resources of work engagements, and that mindfulness is a meaningful antecedent of authentic functioning which is a precursor of work engagement (p. 245). Mindful awareness also emphasises impartiality, thereby minimising a person’s habitual reactions and encouraging thoughtful responses (Giluk, 2009). Mindfulness and job satisfaction have a significant positive correlation (Ismail et al., 2013), i.e. mindfulness has a positive effect on workplace

challenges like burnout, engagement and responding rather than reacting. In their study on burnout, Ismail et al. (2013) observed that in order for intrapersonal strategies to be successful, employees should be taught how to become more aware of the interaction between their internal physical and psychological states, and that one way of achieving this awareness is by enhancing employees' mindfulness. Intrapersonal strategies are focused on factors situated in the immediate personal environment of employees, therefore as mindfulness relates to a process that happens within, it can be labelled an intrapersonal strategy.

Leader development researchers have also argued that developmental interventions based on increasing self-awareness may be effective at mitigating the negative effects of subclinical personality traits (Harms et al., 2011). Subclinical traits represent a middle ground between normal traits and clinical traits that are used to diagnose psychological pathologies; they are traits that may cause severely negative outcomes in particular circumstances, such as when leaders interact with others. Mindfulness cultivates greater self-awareness and may mitigate the risk of negative outcomes and be related to leader development in this way.

Awareness of one's cognitive processes, self-regulation, self-awareness, creating positive environments and building quality relationships are all benefits of mindfulness, as presented above. Considering that self-awareness, better behaviour regulation and improved quality in relationships are necessary skills to learn in leader development and are the same as the outcomes and benefits of mindfulness practice, there is merit in questioning whether mindfulness has a role to play in leader development.

2.4. The need for this research

In their review of the theoretical and empirical literature on leader and leadership development published over the past 25 years, Day et al (2014) found that although there have been significant contributions to understanding leader development, nothing much has changed and there is much more that needs to be learned. Furthermore, developing leaders and leadership capacity is more important than ever before (Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Day, 2014).

In addition to the above self-development for leaders is a cost effective way for organisations to develop leaders, potentially resulting in a competitive edge (Day et al., 2014). Self-development would form part of an intrapersonal leader development initiative (Ismail et al., 2013; Day et al. 2014). As noted earlier, mindfulness is an intrapersonal practice and considering organisations invest billions each year on leader

development without yielding a return on that investment, research on mindfulness and its role on leader development is useful (Avolio, 2009; McDermott et al., 2013).

Mindfulness is defined as the awareness that comes from paying attention on purpose (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), and in the many benefits documented above, cultivating self-awareness is a benefit that results from mindfulness. If mindfulness cultivates self-awareness and if self-awareness is fundamental to the development process of a leader, then it is fair to hypothesise that mindfulness has a role to play in leader development.

Other reasons why mindfulness may have a role to play in developing leaders is that it enables leaders to learn how to handle distressing situations (Keng et al., 2011), it lessens the effects of workplace stress (Giluk, 2009), it allows leaders to engage in more goal-directed behaviour (Keng et al., 2011) and to be more conscientious and compassionate at work (Thompson & Waltz, 2007), it improves interpersonal relationships at work and it mitigates burnout (Ismail, Coetzee, Toit, Rudolph, & Joubert, 2013).

Keng et al. (2011) found that mindfulness practices enable individuals to go through a process called exposure, whereby intentionally attending to experiences in a non-judgmental and open manner, a person may undergo a process of desensitisation. In this way, distressing sensations, thoughts and emotions that would normally be avoided become less distressing. This is a process of experiential acceptance that has shown to mediate workplace stress and improve the ability to control attention and therefore monitor conflict, which is the ability to prioritise attention among competing cognitive demands/tasks. Self-reported mindfulness that is high is associated with the ability to engage in goal-directed behaviour when emotionally upset (Keng et al., 2011). Through attending to information contained in the present and creating space between emotions and reactions to them, clarity and self-regulated functioning are improved (Allen & Kiburz, 2011). With focused attention on the role at hand, individuals may thus perform more effectively (Dane, 2011). Seeing as many new executives fail initially, researching the effects of mindfulness and its role in performance for leaders is useful.

Thompson and Waltz (2007) found in their studies on mindfulness meditation and trait mindfulness that a positive relationship between everyday mindfulness, agreeableness and conscientiousness exist, which supports the notion of a relationship between the cultivation of mindfulness and the development of greater compassion. Mindfulness may also have broader effects such as more external awareness at work, more positive relationships at work and increased adaptability (Giluk, 2009). Conscientiousness (one of the big five personality traits (Giluk, 2009)) is one of the strongest predictors of a variety

of work outcomes, including job performance in all jobs, training performance and counterproductive work behaviour. As there is a strong correlation of conscientiousness with mindfulness, mindfulness may benefit work outcomes and is very important in the long term process of leader development (Giluk, 2009).

Mindfulness and various mindfulness-based treatment interventions have also shown to improve mean scores in reports of trait mindfulness, demonstrating that mindfulness is amenable to change through training, i.e. mindfulness can be taught and become a part of life that is incorporated into role performance (Dane, 2011; Allen & Kiburz, 2011). In a study conducted in the banking industry of South Africa, it was found that mindfulness could be a source of employer value proposition and may provide a valuable tool to manage high burnout levels of employees within the workplace (Ismail et al., 2013).

Individual leader development occurs in the context of ongoing adult development (Day & Sin, 2011), with training providing proven approaches to solve known problems, but the challenges facing contemporary leaders are too complex and ill-defined to be successfully addressed through short-term training development initiatives (Day et al., 2014). This implies that developing leaders occurs over the long term and requires complex training initiatives, therefore there is an argument that mindfulness may have a place in these training initiatives.

Based on this review of the literature it is proposed that mindfulness has a role to play in developing leaders in South Africa, as mindfulness develops the skills that leaders should learn and cultivate to solve the complex problems and challenges they face today. The work-specific outcomes of mindfulness have been largely unaddressed (Leroy et al., 2013), but this is changing due to the growing attention on mindfulness. This research could form part of that change.

Chapter 3: Research Question

3.1. The purpose of this research

The topic of mindfulness and its role in leader development in South Africa is relatively new. The current theory and literature on both mindfulness and leader development provides limited information on the relationship between these two constructs and if mindfulness has any effect on leader development.

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between mindfulness and leader development, and if the role that mindfulness plays is in developing leaders. This research is specific to the South African context because there is a dearth of research in this area and because of the need for better leader development in the country.

3.2. The research question

To explore the role that mindfulness plays in leader development in South Africa.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This research explores the role that mindfulness plays in leader development. In this chapter I motivate for the use of a qualitative approach to address this issue. First the methodology is described, following which the data collection and data analysis processes are explained. The chapter concludes with the assumptions and limitations of the research.

4.1. Choice of Methodology

The research question - To explore the role that mindfulness plays in leader development in South Africa - is exploratory in nature because it aims to discover something about the role mindfulness plays in leader development. The research question does not present a problem nor does it ask for a quantifiable answer to a problem, but rather it enquires if there is a trend in views on mindfulness and leader development. The answer to the research question is therefore based on the thoughts and perceptions of the research participants, which is why a qualitative research approach was adopted.

A qualitative research methodology was selected for this study as it uncovers thoughts and opinions about the research question, it allows for ideas to develop theory, and it encourages further research (Turner, 2010). This qualitative approach seeks to understand a particular phenomenon, in this case mindfulness, from the perspective of those experiencing it, in this case South African leaders (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2014). This research is exploratory in nature because the research question is broad and is not yet fully defined or answered by the current literature. In addition, mindfulness as a practice is a relatively new phenomena to be researched in the management sciences (Heuman, 2014). Exploratory studies are usually conducted by reviewing academic literature, interviewing the subject 'experts' and conducting interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2012), which is the research approach followed in this study.

4.2. Thematic Analysis

The qualitative method adopted for this research was a thematic analysis, which is a flexible and useful research tool that provides a rich and detailed account of data by identifying, analysing and reporting themes within a body of text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The characteristics of thematic analysis (TA) according to Braun, Clarke and Terry (2014), Vaismoradi et al., (2014), and Anderson (2007), are:

1. A TA is a method for identifying, analysing and interpreting patterned meanings of themes in a qualitative data set and is a descriptive

presentation of qualitative data. It applies to this research in that the data for analysis are interview transcripts that need to be presented in a meaningful way.

2. In the TA method, researchers familiarise themselves with data and develop an organic and gradual process of coding, which enables theme development. Themes can be assessed using a set of criteria. For this research themes emerged from the familiarisation with and coding of the interview transcripts.
3. A TA gives a rich overall description of meaningful data in a data set. This applies to the analysis and presentation of the interview transcripts in that meaningful results, not a data summary, must be drawn from a large set of data.
4. A Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) is limited to textual data, such as interview transcripts, and is a form of a TA. A TCA is an objective way of analysing qualitative data as the researcher's stance is impartial. This applies to this research in that the analysis was not based on the characteristics or nature of the interviewees, but rather on the content of the participants' responses.
5. A TCA analytically examines interview text data, which are narrative materials from the interviewees' life stories, and breaks this text into relatively smaller units of content and then submits them to descriptive treatment by identifying themes.

A thematic analysis was appropriate for this research because it matched the criteria of this research in that the study was exploratory and a new and under-researched area was being investigated. A TA was used here to examine new qualitative data on the way leaders in South Africa practice mindfulness and contextualise their reality. In a TA or when working with participants whose views on the topic are unknown, a rich overall description of the data set is given (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using a TA was therefore the appropriate approach because it offered a more accessible form of analysis for this research topic.

This research explores a new idea and is therefore not bound to theory. The chosen qualitative methodology, TA method and research design were appropriate because the interview questions were broad and open-ended as they related to the context and development journey of the interviewees. The researcher was interested in understanding the perspectives of the subjects regarding how they experience

mindfulness and how it relates to their ability and experience of leading in a South African context.

As stated previously, the effect of mindfulness on leadership development is relatively unknown, especially in the field of management sciences (Roche, Luthans, & Haar, 2014), therefore this method was most suitable for the research topic.

The two topics that were explored in the interviews were mindfulness and leader development according to the personal context of the interviewees. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to explore what the interviewees' personal experiences and perceptions of the relationship between their mindfulness practice and their leader development.

One of the advantages of using TA is that it is flexible, but the researcher ensured that she was disciplined in how she used this method in order to make the correct choices in deduction. Firstly, all of the assumptions are made explicit and the limitations of the research are made clear. Secondly, the process followed is openly described. Finally, the transcribed interviews were verified by each participant after the interviews in order to add to the reliability of the data.

4.3. Population

The population for this study was senior leaders in South African business with significant organisational responsibilities, e.g. senior managers and/or executives, Chief Executive Officers, business owners, partners, Managing Directors and other C-suite executives. In addition to this, these leaders had all participated in various leadership experiences and leader development programmes throughout their careers.

4.4. Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis when studying the interview responses was the single leader, as biographic and experiential information was collected about the leaders in each interview and provided the basis of analysis. Relevant themes were attached to the leaders' understanding of their leadership development to date and their mindfulness and/or similar meditation practices, as well as the relationship between these two.

4.5. Sampling method and size

There is no sample frame for all senior leaders in business, therefore a non-probability sampling method was used in the form of purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. The researcher's judgment was used to select the sample based on whether they had a mindfulness practice. Subsequent senior leaders were identified by earlier sample members by referral (Saunders et al., 2012). The sample was made up of 13 senior leaders in South African business today and was heterogeneous (varied) with diverse

characteristics. In these 13 interviews patterns emerged to represent key themes, however the number of interviews conducted were not enough to reach data saturation, which is the stage where additional data collection provides fewer insights into the research question and topics (Saunders et al., 2012). Although there is repetition and saturation for some themes, other themes are unique and only relate to the responses of one or two participants.

4.6. Participants

The research participants making up the sample were 13 senior leaders in South African businesses. Each leader had been exposed to mindfulness, had a self-proclaimed mindfulness practice, and formally agreed to take part in this research study.

The interviews were agreed to by the participants in the form of signed official consent forms and anonymity was ensured. All interviews were conducted on the telephone and recorded using Cisco WebEx, an online meeting collaboration application. Interviewees dialled a conference bridge number and used an access code to join their interview, which was recorded. Some interviewees required assistance from me to dial into the interview which I did by calling the interviewee before the interview. The nature of each interview was similar in that they all started with an introduction and disclaimer and continued in a relaxed fashion. The participants were encouraged to give a narrative of their experience with mindfulness and the impact of mindfulness practice on their lives.

Each interview was transcribed and sent back to the participant for verification and for that participant to add any other insights or information they deemed necessary. A brief description of each participant is given below. Anonymity was assured and participants are referred to as interviewees.

Interviewee 1

Date and time: 14 August 2015. Duration: 1 hour 6 minutes

The interviewee was a 37 year old, white male. He was the managing director of a digital agency employing over 300 people. The agency's head office was based in Johannesburg with satellite offices in Cape Town and London.

He had been practicing mindfulness for two years. This participant described his practice as initially being focused attention and meditation for 20 minutes every second to third day and for short periods throughout the day, but now his practice is driven by an application named *HeadSpace* which he uses as a guide when he practices mindfulness daily in the gaps in his diary.

Interviewee 2

Date and time: 17 August 2015. Duration: 1 hour 7 minutes

The interviewee was a 30 year old white female who was the vice president for project finance in a global bank.

Interviewee 2 had been practicing mindfulness for one year. She practices in her yoga classes four times a week as well as five to six times throughout the day using a mindfulness awareness technique.

Interviewee 3

Date and time: 18 August 2015. Duration: 59 minutes

The interviewee was a 31 year old black male, and the chief of staff and chief risk officer for a global retail and business bank.

Interviewee 3 had been practicing mindfulness for approximately 20 years. He practices on an ad hoc basis when he feels the need. His practice is to walk or stare at an image.

Interviewee 4

Date and time: 17 August 2015. Duration: 56 minutes

The interviewee was a 49 year old white male who was a director of the corporate and commercial department of a leading South Africa-based law firm.

Interviewee 4 had been practicing mindfulness for six years. His practice is to meditate for 30 minutes each morning and 10 minutes each evening every day. He attends mindfulness retreats for up to 10 days each year.

Interviewee 5

Date and time: 27 August 2015. Duration: 53 minutes

The interviewee was a 68 year old white male and the CEO of a leading private game reserve.

Interviewee 5 had been practicing mindfulness for approximately 10 years. His practice consists of eight minutes of meditation a day and extensive theory and research.

Interviewee 6

Date and time: 30 August 2015. Duration: 1 hour 12 minutes

The interviewee was a 46 year old white male and the Director of Project Finance for a biofuel energy company.

Interviewee 6 had been practicing mindfulness for approximately 15 years. He does a 20 minute meditation every third day where he observes his thoughts and describes the process as becoming detached from the thoughts he has.

Interviewee 7

Date and time: 1 September 2015. Duration: 1 hour and 6 minutes

The interviewee was a 35 year old white male and the Director of South Africa's leading eCommerce website.

Interviewee 7 has been practicing mindfulness for five years. He has an irregular practice where he does daily 10 minute meditations when he feels the need to.

Interviewee 8

Date and time: 2 September 2015. Duration: 1 hour

The interviewee is a 45 year old black male and the Group Executive for Sales and Marketing at a South African bank.

Interviewee 8 had been practicing meditation for approximately 13 years. This interview was not included as the participant stated in the interview that he had not heard of mindfulness before, despite accepting the invitation to take part as a leader with a mindfulness practice.

Interviewee 9

Date and time: 3 September 2015. Duration: 40 minutes

The interviewee was a 37 year old white female and the Sales Operations Manager for an internet service provider.

Interviewee 9 had been practicing mindfulness for approximately two years but her practice had stopped. In those two years she practiced for 10 minutes each day using a guided mindfulness meditation and in a yoga practice. She has completed the MBCT six week course.

Interviewee 10

Date and time: 7 September 2015. Duration: 48 minutes

The interviewee was a 57 year old black male and the Chairman of a systems integration company.

Interviewee 10 has been practicing mindfulness for many years. He mentioned breathing and mediation practice.

Interviewee 11

Date and time: 7 September 2015. Duration: 40 minutes

The interviewee was a 37 year old white male and the Managing Director of a global trading logistics and distribution company.

Interviewee 11 had been practicing mindfulness for approximately three years. He practices mindfulness informally throughout the day as well as 30 minute meditations each morning.

Interviewee 12

Date and time: 8 September 2015. Duration: 55 minutes

The interviewee was a 32 year old white male and Partner in a management consulting firm.

Interviewee 12 had been practicing mindfulness for approximately four years. His practice is to sit and meditate for approximately 20 minutes each morning and follow a guided 'head-space' application session for 20 minutes.

Interviewee 13

Date and time: 10 September 2015. Duration: 22 minutes

The interviewee was a 31 year old white male and the Managing Director of an online short-course company.

Interviewee 13 had been practicing mindfulness for approximately 10 years. His current practice is to wake at 5am each morning and do a 30 minute mindfulness meditation as well as a 30 minute meditation in the evening. He also keeps his cell phone off from 7pm each evening.

4.7. Interview design

The research interview is one of the most important qualitative data collection methods and involves a way of questioning that differs in the degree of emphasis of culture, the choice of study scope and the information the researcher is seeking (Qu & Dumay, 2011). These are also referred to as standardised open-ended interviews (Turner, 2010).

The research question is to explore the role that mindfulness plays in leader development in South Africa. In each interview there was a standard list of questions which linked the research question to the interview protocol. The questions were asked in the same way but not in the same order. The wording of the questions allowed for open-ended responses enabling the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they wanted to. The open-ended questions also allowed for the researcher to ask probing questions to follow up on the participants' responses or inquire further. Each participant fully expressed his or her own viewpoint and coloured these views with examples of their real experiences.

The research questions were prepared and worded in such a way as to encourage the participants to use their own terms particular to the research topic. The questions were neutral and avoided evocative and descriptive wording that might have influenced the answers. The questions were worded clearly and no 'why' questions were asked, rather the participant was asked to give reasons for their answers, to give examples or to elaborate further. The intention of each question asked was to trigger honest and open responses.

Knowledge about the interviewees' positions and career biographies were gathered prior to the interviews. Each interview began with the researcher asking the participant to state whether they were comfortable with the interview being recorded and for the information of the interview to be used for research purposes only. All of the interviews were confidential. Each participant was then reminded to send through their signed consent form confirming their participation. After each interview, the transcripts were signed off by each participant.

4.8. Data Collection

Thirteen semi-structured, telephonic interviews were conducted to collect data. An interview guide was used to ensure that pre-determined interview questions could be asked relating to the identified interview topics, but the order in which they were asked varied according to the interviewees answering style and responses (Saunders et al. 2012).

The interviews covered a list of predetermined questions and associated open-ended questions all relating to mindfulness as an enabler for leadership development (see Appendix 1). The open-ended questions related to the participants' understanding of mindfulness, leader development, leadership success and mindfulness practice, finally linking mindfulness with leadership success. These questions were optimum because they were worded and asked in a way as to not be unanswerable, ambiguous, leading

or closed in any way. In order to best manage any possible negative effects of questioning in this way, the researcher asked broad and general questions first. The interview guide is Appendix 1. Each interviewee gave their own interpretation of the research question in their narratives. The interviews were therefore non-directive as interviewees were invited and encouraged to talk openly and widely about the topic at hand (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.9. Data collection process

The steps of the data collection process taken were:

1. All of the participants were introduced to the research via email invitation to take part in exploratory interviews. Once the participants accepted they were called so that the researcher could introduce herself and plan the interview time. A 60 to 90 minute meeting was booked for each telephone interview and dial-in details were sent through. Once the participants gave consent, the interview times were arranged. Each participant was sent a consent form to sign. (See appendix ** for the consent forms).
2. Permission was asked at the start of the interviews for them to be audio recorded and then transcribed into text for analysis for research purposes only.
3. The 13 interviews were conducted and the recordings of each were transcribed. Thematic analysis was employed in analysing the data and criteria were adopted to generate themes from the data. The thematic analysis of 12 of the 13 exploratory interviews yielded several themes. Each theme was identified using thematic analysis and the specified criteria of:
 - consistency and inconsistency with the literature where the data was interesting and meaningful;
 - where there was sufficient evidence;
 - where the theme was distinct from the other themes and was mutually exclusive;
 - where the theme was clear (had clarity).

The detail for these criteria is provided below. In the discussion the themes are illustrated using verbatim quotations from the interviews. As mentioned, all interviews were confidential, conducted over the telephone, and were unstructured.

4. Transcription documentation was sent through to each participant to be verified.

5. Once verified the transcribed interviews formed part of the data *corpus* and were used in the analysis.
6. In the 13 interviews the participants responded to the open-ended questions on mindfulness and leader development. They each shared their understanding of what mindfulness means to them, how they practice mindfulness, as well as how their mindfulness practice has impacted their lives, specifically their development as leaders. Ten of the 13 interviews were rescheduled and three of the 13 interviews were cut short to 45 minutes due to the participants' time constraints. One participant communicated in the interview that he did not have a mindfulness practice, despite confirmation that he did.

The data points were verified in the interviews with real life examples through respondent validation, i.e. the participant had to verify their statements with real life examples. Respondent validation was also used to ensure transferability, especially regarding questions around leader development. Each of the participants were asked to transfer their understandings of leader development and mindfulness onto their own personal stories of leader development. The respondent was asked to provide context after making statements relating to questions on mindfulness and its role in leader development.

4.10. Data analysis

Using guidelines and descriptions of thematic analysis from Clarke and Brume (2014) and Anderson (2007), the data analysis process outlined below was followed:

The step-by-step process of the data analysis was:

1. Using the steps for a thematic content analysis (Anderson, 2007), multiple copies of the interview transcripts were made in order to highlight interesting data that met the TA criteria and to identify different codes. These transcripts were read several times over.
2. Updated transcripts were printed including post interview notes after the participants reviewed their individual transcripts and made additional comments. These were read several times.
3. All descriptions (data) that were relevant to mindfulness and its role in leader development were marked manually and then grouped into distinct units of meaning.

4. The descriptions were separated and categorised when there was a noted change in meaning.
5. These categories were initial categories and were dynamically revised as the data were coded in this way. The interview transcript data were therefore grouped and regrouped in this way into similar or dissimilar categories.
6. The categories were grouped and re-grouped into dominant themes, of which several were chosen.
7. From these themes the results were written up.
8. Once the themes were established in the write-up they were compared to the literature on mindfulness and leader development.

Anderson (2007) and Braun et al. (2014) suggested that a TA, specifically a Thematic Content Analysis, follow the following steps:

1. Familiarise oneself with the data
2. Generate initial organic codes
3. Search for themes in the codes
4. Review the themes
5. Define and name the themes
6. Write up the results

These steps are outlined in the table below:

Table 4: A TA process

Process step	Description of the process
Becoming familiar with the data	Noting down initial ideas after each interview, listening to the interview, making several copies of the transcribed interviews, and reading and re-reading the transcriptions of each interview.
Generating initial codes	Coding interesting pieces of data across the whole data set and then collating these. Data that were relevant was highlighted.
Searching for themes	Grouping the collated codes to search for themes by breaking the highlighted data into units of meaning.
Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work with the coded data and then across the entire data set. The grouped codes were cut out and piled together to form initial categories, which is the start of finding the first themes.
Defining and naming themes	Clearly defining each theme and clarifying the story each theme tells. Categories are collapsed or sub-divided depending on meaning and overlap. Over time these themes are read and re-read until they make coherent sense in light of the entire data set.
Writing up the results	Selecting the rich data extracts that complement the themes, relating them back to the analysis and comparing them to the literature review.

4.10.1. Criteria for Themes

The below criteria were used when analysing the data. Data *corpus* refers to all the data collected, i.e. all the interview data, while a data set refers to the data from the *corpus* that are being referred to specifically or being used for a particular analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data sets may be specific interviews or specific answers to a question. Data items refer to individual pieces of data, such as an answer to a question, and a data extract would be a quote used in the final analysis.

In order to generate themes the following criteria were used:

- a. *Meaningful and interesting data that were consistent or inconsistent with the literature*

The themes had to be meaningful and interesting. The themes of this research represent a patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They capture something important about the interview responses relative to the question of

what the role of mindfulness in leader development is. The researcher determined whether a theme was meaningful, as prevalence was not the only feature of a meaningful theme. As this was a qualitative analysis, there was no rule of what proportion of the data set needed to display evidence of the theme for it to be considered a theme, and the meaningfulness of a theme was not dependent on quantifiable measures (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The theme is either be consistent or inconsistent with the literature on mindfulness, leader development and how these exist in the South African context. When a data set or data item was identified as being either consistent or inconsistent, it was labelled and coded accordingly.

b. Sufficient evidence

The themes had to be supported by real life examples from the interviewees. These examples are referred to in the analysis to sufficiently support the themes. Another way of determining sufficient evidence is to look at the frequency of mentions, i.e. how many times the participants referred to a concept or idea as well as how many participants referred to a similar concept or idea in the same way. When a theme is supported by more than half of the participants' responses then it can be deemed that there is sufficient evidence.

c. Distinct and mutually exclusive

A theme must not overlap with another, but must be distinct and exist separately from the other themes. Where themes are similar and overlap they are collapsed into each other. When themes are different they are subdivided.

d. Majority mentions and/or clarity. Saturation

A theme must apply to a significant amount or range of data. This means that it is important to note if the theme is mentioned and commented on throughout all the interviews, in one specific interview where it is meaningful, or in a small number of the interviews. This relates to saturation in that no new or relevant information emerges in the data. Clarity is not the same as the number of times a theme comes up, but rather the specificity that arises from the data set and data items.

These criteria enabled the researcher to present the data findings in a meaningful way.

4.11. Assumptions

The following assumptions were made:

- The respondents were honest and truthful in their responses and when giving real life examples to verify their answers.
- The participants had been and/or were practicing mindfulness.

4.12. Limitations

The limitations of this type of research design are:

- The participants in the sample achieved were not representative of South African demographics according to race and gender.
- Leaders were included from the private sector only as per the snowball sampling method. No participants were included from the public sector or from NGOs.
- The research quality was heavily dependent on the researcher's skills and interviewing technique, and her personal biases and idiosyncrasies may have influenced the research. I am a mindfulness practitioner and hold a view that mindfulness does play a positive role in the development of leaders. This bias may have been unconsciously communicated to the research participants.
- The interviews were in-depth and time consuming and some participants had time constraints which affected their interest and focus on the interview.
- The negative effects of convenience and snowball sampling may have meant that there was no difference in the interviewees' profiles as suggested interviewees may be like-minded. But, saturation was achieved with 13 interviews.
- The degree of researcher control was significantly low and replicability will be very difficult.
- Quantitative predictions cannot be made.
- There may have been threats to validity and reliability which are explored later.

Chapter Five: Results

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter the results of the thematic analysis of the interview data are presented. The criteria for identifying themes was applied throughout the analysis and is presented below.

5.2. Table of themes

Six unique themes were identified from the data analysis using thematic content analysis. These six themes are summarised in the below table. Originally more themes arose from the data analysis which were then collapsed and/or converged into broader clusters of themes. From those theme clusters the six dominant themes were clarified. In this chapter the themes are illustrated using verbatim quotations from the interviews.

Table 5: Summary of the six themes

Criteria	<i>Consistency and inconsistency with the literature where the data is interesting and meaningful</i>	<i>Sufficient evidence</i>	<i>Distinct and mutually exclusive</i>	<i>Clarity of the theme</i>
Theme 1: There are differences in the interpretations of mindfulness	There was some overlap in responses but little similarity. There are consistencies with the literature where mindfulness is referred to as cultivating awareness, being present and becoming conscious	More than half of the participants defined mindfulness differently	This theme does not overlap with others and exists on its own without the other themes	All participants could clearly articulate a definition of mindfulness
Theme 2: Participants experienced three dominant benefits of mindfulness with profound impact	The mentioned benefits are increased productivity, the ability to respond rather than react and better quality relationships consistent with the literature	More than half of the participants referred to the three dominant benefits in similar and different ways or contexts	This theme is separate and different	All participants gave examples of real life experiences when claiming the benefits of their mindfulness practice
Theme 3: Mindfulness and Stress	This theme was clearly presented using the rating scale and stress was referred to throughout the interviews. Stress management is mediated by mindfulness in the literature	All 12 participants claimed they were stressed using a rating scale out of 10. Almost all participants ranked themselves higher than 8/10	This theme is distinct because it refers to what participants were going through when they found mindfulness	All participants gave examples of real life experiences when claiming they were stressed
Theme 4: Participants experienced mindfulness as important for leader development	Each participant responded in the same way. Self-awareness as a leadership skill and content for leader development is consistent with the literature. valuing people less so, and empathy lacks consistency	All 13 participants responded that mindfulness is very important for leader development	This theme is similar to the benefits of mindfulness but is distinct and mutually exclusive because it refers to leader development specifically	Each participant spoke of their own personal leader development and gave examples of how mindfulness has helped cultivate the necessary skills
Theme 5: Mindfulness is a personal journey and requires practice	The participants responded similarly and referred to their practice as personal and private which is void from the literature	Over half the participants referred to this in a similar way	This theme is separate and different	Participants spoke of their own feelings toward the perceptions others may have of their practice
Theme 6: Participants perceived mindfulness as a useful tool for leaders in South Africa because of cultural differences	Consistent with the literature	All participants referred to culture and mindfulness in the same way	This theme is separate and different	Participants gave real examples of managing culture difference in their world of work

5.3. Theme 1: There are differences in the interpretations of mindfulness

There was limited consistency in the participants' interpretation of mindfulness, as each gave a different definition when asked to explain what mindfulness means to them. This is reflected in the comments from each of the participants below. Half of the participants spoke of mindfulness as awareness and being aware of the self, others and the environment, and four of the participants spoke of mindfulness as being present. Besides this, there was no clear consistency.

5.3.1. Mindfulness is awareness

Participants frequently defined mindfulness as awareness:

Interviewee 1: The challenge with your research is that mindfulness can mean so many things to so many people, but for me it's about taking stock and perspective. If you can be self-aware and be honest about your real ability and then see perspective, and know that you don't have to beat yourself and get down about yourself. (Line 304 to 307)

Interviewee 2: An awareness of the impact of yourself and others on the environment, it's dealing with things as they come up in a responsible manner, in a compassionate and empathetic manner (Line 59 to 61).

Interviewee 3: When you say mindfulness the first thing that comes up is a consciousness and appreciation of differences...It's a combination of being alert and aware, and also being able to employ that consciousness. (Line 47 to 51)

Interviewee 4: ...a greater awareness of things that are happening but also in a tense, slightly below the surface level. For me, being more mindful means you pay more attention to things, but inwardly and outwardly. So that you over time you develop the ability to see both circumstances as they are unfolding, and also your own tendency to keep interpreting. (Line 54 to 58)

Interviewee 5: Mindfulness and spiritual awareness, they're quite close. Understanding the consequences of your actions in the perspective of others, getting an understanding of your consequences to the wider environments that you operate in. (Line 26 to 28).

Interviewee 6: Mindfulness is about being aware of patterns, patterned responses, typical emotions that come up when certain triggers occur, being aware of feelings and thoughts (Line 80 to 82).

5.3.2. Mindfulness is being present

Half of the participants also frequently referred to mindfulness as being present:

Interviewee 1: For me it is just being present. (Line 66). Mindfulness for me in a business context is just about trying to appreciate the moment now. I think if you can do that, which is an exceptionally challenging thing to make a habit of, if you can do it, it gives you perspective. And if you get perspective you realise that not much of the shit that you do matters, and that's a good thing (Line 75 to 78)

Interviewee 7: Mindfulness has to do with being present in the moment that you're living in. Being conscious of your surroundings and how you're feeling. It's about doing things intentionally. I have a view that if you are able to operate mindfully you end up operating with a greater sense of peace, presence and calm. (Line 45 to 48)

Interviewee 8: Being mindful is being conscious and being careful about what is happening around you. Really being courteous and applying one's mind carefully when things happen. It is being conscious and present in the moment. (Line 46 to 48)

Interviewee 11: Through mindfulness you learn how to tune into the present moment with whatever is there. It helps to deal with circumstances outside of your control. (Line 120 to 121)

Interviewee 13: My experience of that is that it's a very inefficient use of mental capacity, whereas a more efficient use of it, and where you get a lot great return for the effort you've put in is when you put all of your energy in one place. For me that's mindfulness. Being fully immersed in the situation you find yourself in. (Line 60 to 63)

5.3.3. Mindfulness is a means of becoming more conscious

Seven participants also referred to mindfulness as a means to being and becoming more conscious:

Interviewee 3: When you say mindfulness the first thing that comes up is a consciousness and appreciation of differences. These differences could be anything from appearance to cultural background. One step further is that it's one thing to have that consciousness but it's another to act on it. It's a combination of being alert and aware, and also being able to employ that consciousness. The context will be human engagement. (Line 47-51)

Interviewee 5: The mere fact that you're doing this study is an indication that the world is seeking a greater consciousness but in fact what we're seeking is to return to what we had. (Line 240-241)

Interviewee 6: Reading a lot can engender some mindfulness in a person, because it's always an aspect of consciousness that is being dealt with in the book. It allows you to realise your perspectives and consciousness can differ from one narrator to another. (Line 104 -106)

Interviewee 7: I think it feels like it's an evolution of our consciousness... I think we can live better lives and be more engaged with the people around us if we're more mindful. (Line 328; 333)

Interviewee 9: Consciously making sure that you're sitting in the moment, not judging thoughts, just let them pass through your mind. It's a concerted effort to be mindful.... Otherwise you're not conscious, your life just carries on and you don't stop and think to be mindful..... Half the battle is being conscious - if you're not conscious of something you can't work on it. It's difficult to work on something that you're not aware of.... Because they are more conscious and aware of their thoughts. (Line 47-48; 66; 207-208; 317)

Interviewee 10: And sometimes the things we observe are not real, that reality only exists in consciousness..... Realising that I am as a being can exist in this world of material but I'm also able to move away from it and spend time into this other world, the consciousness, meditate, understanding world. (Line 112; 186 - 188)

Interviewee 12: It's a practice that can take on many different expressions to help and individual be more conscious in the world (Line 17 - 18).... I see mindfulness as a means to cultivate that consciousness, I don't think there is a higher priority in the world. (Line 251-254)

5.4. Theme 2: The perceived benefits of mindfulness and their impact

The participants highlighted a variety of benefits of mindfulness and verified those benefits by describing the impact of their mindfulness practice. The most common of these benefits are centred on productivity, efficiency, focus and performance. Secondly, the ability to respond rather than react was cited as the second most frequently mentioned benefit. Finally, mindfulness improves the quality of relationships for some participants.

5.4.1. Mindfulness enhances productivity

Four participants clearly described the impact of mindfulness as enhancing their productivity and improving performance, and productivity was mentioned by over half the participants:

Interview 2: The benefits of mindfulness are increased productivity.....and at the end of the day I think it's about being able to deliver on the things you need to deliver on. Being mindful and conscious of how you are able to go about doing that. Putting boundaries in place so that you're able to do so. (Line 399; 400-403)

Interviewee 3: Quickly you realise your performance improves when you have no physical and no mental obstacle. (Line 104)

Interviewee 5: Become more effective. More and more we are applying meditation and calmness and we discover we get better business performance. If we could move to a more mindful (business) model we believe we would get better results. Things run easier and more efficiently and you become more effective. (Line 348; 404-406)

Interviewee 11: Focus - whatever I've learnt through mindfulness I know the brain is super powerful to focus on certain things, but it's not made to jump from one thing to another. If you look how we work today - social media, emails and all that - it is very counterproductive for the brain. If you're aware of the process and those limitations it can really help to focus and prioritise. (Line 137-141)

When verifying the above responses by asking for real life examples, participants shared that the impact of mindfulness, which is a part of the same theme, came out as the following:

Interviewee 3: It's allowed me to paint a far clearer context with regards to the tasks that I have, and who I can mobilise to execute on these tasks. (Line 319)

Interviewee 7: When I'm with people trying to be more conscious about being present, not thinking ahead and not planning my answers. It allows me to isolate my focus during the course of the day when I get it right. (Line 322-323)

Interviewee 11: I would say it positively influenced how I could focus on separate elements in a project or problem - a less scattered mind and destructive thoughts. (Line 27-28)

Interviewee 12: The major impact is one of severe reduction of complexity in my world, than if I were to not have that level of accuracy in the present moment. A very specific example: when I'm able to approximate the level of consciousness that I achieve in my mindfulness practice in everyday life, together with my colleagues who also find this of value, we can cover extremely complex territory - like a shareholder in our business and the trades relating to it, the pricing and timing associated with it in short conversations (about 15 minutes). Because there is much less ego, less jostling, there's an answer that's in the conversation that just needs to be noticed and acted on. (Line 99-109)

5.4.2. Mindfulness enables one to respond rather than react

The second most frequently benefit was that mindfulness enables the participants to respond rather than react, therefore allowing for better decision making and an ability to manage anxiety and stress. This was referred to by all participants but most clearly by six:

Interviewee 3: The principal benefits of mindfulness for a leader is being able to understand the variables at hand. It's not always people but all variables. Once someone has a decent understanding of the moving parts of the situation, they're in a better place to make educated decisions. (Line 398-400)

Interviewee 4: What mindfulness does is allows you to create space in allowing things to happen and observing them, and from there seeing your own tendency to be reactive, but realising that in that space of things happening there's more choice in the way you respond. It is being able to bring fuller attention to there on situations, and how you react to them, and helping you to fashion your responses rather than being blindly led by ingrained patterns. (Line 59-63)

Interviewee 6: It's created a bit of distance between my personal anxieties, my senses of my own inadequacies, it's allowed me to see those as thoughts. (Line 266-267)

Interviewee 9: I did find that it ground me a lot more, I stressed a lot less. Your perception of things and how you react to things changes because you become more aware of your thoughts and your feelings. And you are more in control before you react. I feel that I physically off-load my potential reactions and stress levels by practicing mindfulness. You're able to stop yourself and think before you react. It stops me raising my stress level, from a brain perspective it means I don't go into the limbic fight or flight mode, I'm still engaged with my cognitive and my prefrontal cortex is still engaged. I'm still able to make rational as opposed to irrational decisions. (Line 170-172; 154; 117-120)

Interviewee 11: Presence, which also involves not jumping to conclusions or getting all worked up. Able to deal with stress: it could be just driving to work or a few a longer working hours, not only the big work stress. (Line 135-137)

Interviewee 13: I can tell you that overall stress management and clarity of thought is infinitely better. (Line 46)

When verifying these responses by asking for real life examples, some participants shared that the impact of mindfulness came out as the following:

Interviewee 1: my temper went to near-zero. I think I lost my temper twice in a year, and the violent episodes of me losing my temper (slamming desks etc.) went away entirely. That was because I managed to put some space in between my emotional response to something and actually responding physically. It was absolutely because of the mindfulness training... I was getting the highest peer reviews in the business at the time. And that came on the back of a really tough time and my journey with mindfulness. There was definitely a high correlation between my journey of mindfulness and my management style, and then getting a positive feedback loop thereafter. I would argue that there's deep causation there and definitely high correlation..... It's simply a matter of not losing my temper. It's that simple. And again, I was able to do that because I've become more mindful of how I do things and I can put a gap between emotional reaction and physical reaction. It really does boil down to that. (Line 203-206; 440-444; 478-480)

Interviewee 2: I can respond how I choose to. That empowers you to respond in a different way to your natural emotional response. It allows me to detach myself a little from situations of conflict - I don't get as emotionally entangled. I don't flare up as easily or get as much of a temper as I used to. I can deal better with the stress.... Usually I would get so riled up about that and fight fire with fire. But

these days I come from a place of trying to make the situation work or get the work done, rather than responding the other way. (Line 141; 171-173; 183-185)

Interviewee 3: The first impact is that it's given me a sense of comfort in the decisions I make. When I pull the trigger it's generally because I'm comfortable and I've thought it through, and I haven't employed an irrational mind in the process. (Line 175-177)

Interviewee 6: Much less prone to being under the force of anxiety. I would feel it but it wouldn't agitate me and I couldn't agitate other people. It was like an anchor of calm somehow. I would say the big beneficial effects in a corporate environment is that I have become calmer and a bit more centred. (Line 217 to 218).

Interviewee 4: At times less stressed, but not always. At a level it has made me less anxious..... Being able to have that and to say that you can sit back a little bit before you respond, and think about what is the most skilful way to do so, that's been a big benefit of the mindfulness process., I dealt with a particularly difficult negotiation a few weeks back where the counter parties were incredibly personal in the way they were addressing things, I found that in that scenario I was able to prevent myself from responding at the same level, and to try to impose my ego on them.... They were disparaging me to my client but only for the purpose of trying to get an advantage in the deal. I was able in that scenario to sit back and take it calmly, not that I was inside because you know you still feel the stress and the anxiety. But I was far more able than I would have been a couple of years ago to be less affronted by that and more focused on the actual deal and staying on topic. (Line 163-164; 272-274; 278-288)

Interviewee 9: At the moment I'm studying a difficult course and I'm struggling with time and volume of work. I have a challenging job, so it's very stressful. Am I freaking out and going over the edge? No not really. I can only do what I can, I'm trying my best to prioritise, and that's where mindfulness has made me think. Instead of running around and causing myself unnecessary stress, falling ill and not being able to think properly, my attitude has become that I'm going to give it a try, try and prioritise as best I can and what will be will be. It doesn't mean I try less or more, it just means I'm not going to stress myself out about it. I'm going to get on with it and do what I can. That's how mindfulness has helped me. (Line 250-259)

5.4.3. Mindfulness improves the quality of relationships

Finally, four participants indicated that mindfulness positively impacted the quality of their connections with others:

Interviewee 2: The benefits of mindfulness are increased productivity, less aggression, more connection with other people.... You form better relationships with especially those people who are being aggressive because you don't play into what they are offering. It almost feels as if there's a bit more respect. (Line 399-400; 189)

Interviewee 3: The second impact is the quality of the relationships that I've developed with people. I tend to find that I've become the consultant of choice, not because of my knowledge, but rather because of my approach to people's questions and requests. That's within the work space and my private life. (Line 181-183)

Interviewee 4: What I have found is that doing the practice and being more up front about it, I think it has enabled me in a number of situations to deepen my relationships with colleagues. And that may be because they feel some resonance with the fact that one is practicing and they understand why you do it, also because you're more prepared to listen and share, and to relate on a non-superficial level... (Line 199-202)

Interviewee 7: ...I feel... more connected to the people around me. (Line 161)

5.5. Theme 3: Mindfulness and Stress

Participants articulated that they were very stressed when they found their mindfulness practice. In the interviews they were asked to illustrate what they were going through at the time that they began practicing mindfulness. In each interview the participants were asked to rate their stress levels on a scale from 1 to 10 at that time, with 1 being completely at ease and relaxed and 10 being at the point of extreme stress. In the responses to these questions, as well as at other points in the interviews, almost all of the participants found mindfulness when they were extremely stressed and/or feeling high amounts of stress.

5.5.1. Participants' stress ratings

The clearest indications of self-reported stress are in the ratings of stress levels, with an average stress level of 10/10. Below are the ratings of eight participants who responded directly to the question:

Interview 1: 11/10 (Line 174)

Interview 2: 8/10 (Line 112)

Interview 3: 11/10. (Line 142)

Interview 4: 8/10 (Line 137)

Interview 5: 20/10 (Line 37)

Interview 6: 8 or a 9 (Line 146; 148)

Interview 11: 7/10 (Line 7)

Interview 12: 9/10 (Line 86)

5.5.2. Participants accounts of their stress

The participants described their self-reported stress in the following ways:

Interviewee 1: It was a very critical moment, I think I was probably about three milliseconds away from a breakdown. ...then I started reading more and more about it and that happened to be a form of mindfulness where you stop and take stock and think about the moment you're in right now. I've had intellectual influences that never really caught fire and then my emotional velocity forced me to crash into this metaphysical wall and by necessity I had to be mindful otherwise I would have probably had a pretty bad breakdown. (Line 116-117; 119-123)

Interviewee 2: I really want to have a career that is nourishing and before giving up on banking and finance, I'm going to try and see if there is a way to be different in this industry... those are two examples of before my mindfulness practice where you feel completely overwhelmed to no were I'm not so emotionally invested so I can offer more or fight back a little more and try to get wheat our client needs. (Line 100-101; 386-388)

Interviewee 3: It's almost like you're staring at the answer but you don't want to accept the answer. The denial builds up into a resistance and the resistance manifests itself as stress. (Line 146-148)

Interviewee 4: By the time I got to 2008/9 I had been working incredibly hard and taking a lot of stress on different fronts. I got to a stage where there was a realisation that I needed to find something that was going to help me keep these things in perspective. I realised that ultimately in order for me not to get sucked in and simply sit on that wheel (that I think most people do for their entire careers), in order for me not to do that I needed to find a different way and approach, and a way to keep everything in perspective. Mindfulness was a big part in terms of going down that path. (Line 112-133)

Interviewee 5: Stress! (Line 35)

Interviewee 6: (I was) going to therapy to resolve depression.... work was also very stressful, I had a tough job with a demanding boss. (Line 98; 149)

Interviewee 7: It wasn't a wonderful couple of weeks and I was feeling like my mind was racing because it had no answers, and because of this it keeps on racing to try and find new questions. I could feel myself spinning out to some extent.... I But I'd been into the dark space where you feel that things are spiralling out of control. I knew there must be other ways to heal without having to do anything wildly extraordinary or go on mediation. There I was feeling on the edge of a nervous breakdown, there was a good period of time where I was completely stressed out (Line 75-77; 116; 112)

Interviewee 11: Sitting at a desk, travelling a lot, it made me stressed and affected my body. I felt the yoga and the mindfulness practices seemed to be an exact fit to counter act that. (Line 2-3)

Interviewee 12: A significant loss in my life led me to pursue meditation as a way of coping/navigating through the hard phase of life with consciousness, rather than with escape. (Line 47-48)

5.6. Theme 4: Mindfulness is perceived to be important for leader development

All the participants said that mindfulness is important for leader development. The participants related mindfulness to leadership by identifying it as a way to gain and cultivate necessary leadership skills. The participants referred to their own experience as leaders to articulate and verify their opinions.

5.6.1. Positive responses

The participants believed strongly that mindfulness plays a role in leader development. All participants responded with positive answers to this question:

Interviewee 1: Absolutely, and I have to get back to it (mindfulness) if I want to have a successful leadership career - there's no doubt in my mind... (Line 449-450)

Interviewee 2: You can see that if you want to be a respected leader in an industry like this you do need that edge (mindfulness) these days ...A great leader can use mindfulness to be a good. There's a lot of focus at Barclays of the culture we would like to have, even though it may not be here. In our CPIs there's a lot on how you do things instead of what you're doing. There is the complete awareness that you do need to be like that if you want get anywhere in this place. So be mindful, be more aware of what you're saying and not be as aggressive as the culture currently is. (Line 204-208; 212)

Interview 7: I do think it has a part to play in leadership development. (Line 334)

Interviewee 13: Most definitely! I have a sense that mindfulness has an important role to play in any leadership development. (Line 75)

The main skills that the participants believe need to be developed in leaders are self-awareness, valuing people and empathy. Mindfulness was considered a way of learning and cultivating these skills.

5.6.2. Leader development is gaining self-awareness

Participants described leadership development as a way of becoming more self-aware or gaining self-awareness:

Interviewee 1: Self-awareness really. You can't be a great leader over the medium- to long-term unless you are self-aware. In other words, knowing the gap between what you tell the world and what your actual skillset is. Because there is always a gap. The first thing we look at with leaders in our business is 'Does this person have enough self-awareness to know there is a gap?' If I was to do a

leadership training programme tomorrow I would absolutely have mindfulness and self-awareness as part of the same module. Because self-awareness only comes in self-reflection, and self-reflection means you have to take stock. It's not one and the same but there's definitely an overlap.... To be an enduring leader you need to have self-awareness, there's no doubt in my mind. That self-awareness is really hard to do, it's really hard to be self-aware enough to be honest about your skills and still being able to be a leader.... So my view is that you can't be a great leader without great self-awareness, and therefore you can't have self-awareness without mindfulness. It's a very simple formula. Mindfulness + self-awareness = great leadership. That is the derivative. (Line 262-263; 270-273; 291-293; 486-488)

Interviewee 5: There is a growing awareness and requirement as a leader to be mindful of the wider environment and the business environment. Marikana – they were not mindful and not aware of what was brewing around them and that was a fatal error. It can also be an absolute requirement – going forward potentially it is fatal not to be mindful in business and life (Line 330-331; 343-344; 329)

Interviewee 6: For a person to be an effective leader they have to have an appreciation of themselves, an awareness of themselves. The patterns and pitfalls that they face, their weaknesses but also their unique attributes, I cannot see someone being a sustainably good leader without that quality. Mindfulness, I think, is probably the best root for a person to achieve that. Some people will develop that appreciation of their unique attributes in group circumstances, or in relationships with people, and I do think that helps. But the most effective way for me to have developed that awareness was through mindfulness practice....To me leadership development is about having the courage to be ourselves and having the courage to show that to others, encouraging them as well to be themselves. Being aware of the unique strengths that you have to offer to a particular group and encouraging others to see the strengths that they bring to the same group. (Line 419-426; 252-255)

Interviewee 7: When I meet people who I think are amazing, every now and then they come along, for me the reason I think they're amazing is because they come across as though they're mindful. They're present, highly aware of the people in the room and their surroundings, they're highly aware of themselves, they're present and comfortable being vulnerable - which is an important part of mindfulness. I think it is a better way to be as a human being. We want to improve

our leaders as best we can, it's an important part of developing as a human being. ... It means people over time knowing themselves better, that's a big part of it. Understanding your own emotions and the way you engage with the world. (Line 335-340; 238-239)

Interviewee 9: Ultimately a leader is someone who can guide other people and have cognitive control of their thoughts and their behaviours in order to lead other people. You have to understand yourself before you can lead other people. Understanding your own thoughts before you can guide and develop other people. Half the battle is being conscious. If you are not conscious of something you can't work on it. It's difficult to work on something that you are not aware of. If you don't understand yourself and have no self-awareness it's difficult for you to help someone else and be empathetic have the right EQ in order to lead other people (Line 191-193; 207-209; 279)

5.6.3. Leader development is gaining empathy

Participants frequently mentioned that empathy is important for leader development. Here are four examples of their experience of empathy as a leadership skill:

Interviewee 3: I got here through empathy and sympathy. I've always been a pendant of supporting those that can't support themselves, but more importantly, giving those who have no energy some form of energy - sense of purpose and drive. It's been a behavioural aspect about myself. How I've come to realise it's a leadership trait that I can and do use, was highlighted by my tennis coach and my previous employer. I'd often hear expressions like, "It's interesting how you don't say much (and) the people around you want to be around you".... Someone who wasn't mindful would lack the context. If you're unable to put yourself in the shoes of the stakeholder (unable to understand how they think and what drives them) you would definitely come up with a strategy of your own, but that strategy runs the risk of not accommodating the way in which they operate. It's so much easier to send someone a bowl of their favourite cereal as opposed to trying to convince them to have a different cereal. (Line 270-275; 379-383)

Interviewee 5: Mindfulness for leader development will create a more empathetic leader... a more empathetic leader will spend much more time...focusing on the creative positive, productive issues of a business, it's a certain culture that a mindful leader creates and it becomes what is called self-guided workforce.

Everyone knows their job, everyone into their job, everyone's engaged. (Line 306-315)

Interviewee 9: The higher up the rank they go, building empathy and understanding yourself in order to build empathy and awareness is huge. From a physiological level, to be able to maintain balance and stress and all those things that come with being a leader in a corporate organisation, and being able to help other people deal with that, knowing what not being mindful does to your body and your mind...If you don't understand yourself and have no self-awareness it's difficult for you to help someone else and be empathetic have the right EQ in order to lead other peopleAnd you need more empathy and less judgement. (Line 322-325; 278-279; 307)

Interviewee 11: I became the managing director when I was quite young and I had the notion that I had to do my own work, but I had all these people reporting to me. I didn't realise as the man in charge that your main job is actually to work with the people around you. With mindfulness I was able to sit down and listen to people, get to know them and their own fears and frustrations, and help with some company structures, to address this. Before I was just waiting for them to finish talking to start my own projects again. (Line 35-40)

5.6.4. Leader development is learning to value people

Valuing people and making people feel values was clearly mentioned to be an important skill for leaders when the participants responded to questions on what leader development means and what it entails:

Interviewee 2: A great leader can use mindfulness to be a good example and make people feel that they're not just a cog in the wheel, and they add value by being themselves (Line 410-411)

Interviewee 4: Developing a leader is trying to help people to have confidence in their own abilities. To give them the space to grow professionally and as a person. It is being passionate, committed to the work that you do, it also means being genuinely interested in other people and their welfare. It requires the skill of being able to understand how people think, what their issues are and to be able to manage them appropriately... mindfulness has been a big part of that... if you develop more understanding and compassion for people then you see them as people in the working place, which becomes your primary. And that resonates

and I think people recognise it. It's become less about my own ego and status and more about the people around me and whether they're happy or not... In terms of developing leaders I think that you develop the ability to see people and what is going on with them, without filtering that through your own expectations and judgements. As a result if you are able to see people as they really are, rather than what you want them to be you are able to lead them better, and understand what the drivers are for them, and what the areas are which will make them more effective. As opposed to trying to impose your own judgements on them. Mindfulness helps in that process. (Line 237–241; 260-265; 293-298)

Interviewee 6: The only way people can truly value an expression of an appreciation of their performance is if they are acting from an authentic base. To me a leader has to be authentic to themselves to encourage authenticity in others. I have thought that my meditation practice has helped me to be more authentic... (Line 257-266)

Interviewee 13: Particularly insofar as you're able to give yourself and nurture relationships around you. The business in my view is mostly about relationships, in the quality of the attention that you can provide to individuals, if you're not providing them with your undivided attention moment to moment, it has the potential to really negatively impact the quality of your relationship. Then things like the thinking work that you might be able to do, even things like the amount you remember from one conversation to the next because you were fully present - you remember it, you can orientate yourself around it, you can bring those specific examples into future conversations. That's leadership and relationships... there's no doubt that it's played a big part in my ability to deal with that as a leader. (Line 75-82; 138)

5.7. Theme 5: Learning mindfulness is described as a personal journey and it requires practice

A strong theme that arose from eight participants is that mindfulness is a personal journey and not necessarily a publically shared experience or practice because it is not mainstream or well known. Participants described it as a personal experience due to there being different techniques and ways to practice mindfulness for different leaders. The participants also shared that mindfulness is a journey that requires practice that cultivates the effects of mindfulness over time.

5.7.1. Participants' personal journeys

Clarity was shown when the participants shared their thoughts on their journey with mindfulness, including the stigma associated with it:

Interviewee 1: Different horses for different courses in the mindfulness space.... the self-awareness is something that's quite innate... Obviously intellectually it's deeply compelling but to practice it, knowing you're an alcoholic and then going into rehab and going dry are two different things. I think that analogy for me is my journey on this. ...know that the journey is virtuous and a good one, then you can simultaneously pick yourself up to go into the office the next day and leave... And then with mindfulness there's many ways to do that, we talked about flow and Zen and yogi meditation. (Line 489; 491; 167-196; 307-308; 488-489)

Interviewee 3: I can't think of a single person who has made mention of time out or meditating. When I generally do it I don't announce it, I just privatise time in my diary and find a room. From my immediate superior I'd probably get quite a few questions, "What is this meditation business? Do you think you need it? We don't pay you to meditate." (Line 210-211; 226)

Interviewee 7: I don't know --- it's weird --- I find it a very personal thing --- to some extent it just feels like a very personal and private thing to me. I can see the impact it has on me and on the people around me when I'm consciously practicing mindfulness, It's just a constant exploration that there's so much richness to be had if we just slow down and are mindful and present with the people we're around and the thing at hand. My journey from now feels personal and private. I will openly engage with anyone who's interested, I don't hold it into my chest, but I don't evangelise about it at all, unless I have an opening from someone who mentions they're exploring it. (Line 182; 211-213; 230-234)

5.7.2. Mindfulness practices are private

These participants described why they do not share their mindfulness practice:

Interviewee 1: I guess in a way mindfulness is a big category and I kind of role my eyes whenever I say it, but that space that you're researching is about allowing yourself to be vulnerable. ...Being cynical is perhaps one of the bigger barriers to mindfulness. (Line 159-161; 129)

Interviewee 2: I think that sort of thinking is regarded as weak in the general culture, you're expected to get on with things without regard of people's feelings or specific circumstances surrounding people. (Line 150-151)

Interviewee 4: There is an interest in general, in terms of talking with colleagues, many of them are intrigued when you talk about having gone a retreat or the fact that you practice meditation. But it is not something that's formally offered or supported... I don't have the experience that people feel if you're doing this you are alien. My experience has been that in an environment like ours if you dig below the surface everybody is dealing with the same types of issues - stress, anxiety, status concern etc. My sense is that everybody at some level is struggling with the notion of being trapped by these things, and trying to find a way to cope. (Line 185-187; 194-198)

Interviewee 6: No generally I don't tell people about it. Generally I think it's not very mainstream, most people don't understand what you are talking about. I think this is sort of ahead of the curve at the moment, it needs to become mainstream (Line 231-237).

Interviewee 7: I find it quite difficult to explain and motivate to other people why they should do it. Maybe little things need to be awakened in you in order for you to go seek it out for it to be very valuable. I can see some people wouldn't be interested in it. There's a degree of this 'quackery'. A perception that you're a little crazy for doing this, which I don't think I am at all - but everyone is ... If I had to try and rationalise some of my thoughts it would be around that - how formal can you make this without freaking out half the population and people rejecting it. There is a delicate road that needs to be walked where people should discover it themselves, and if they don't and it ends up getting forced into corporates and people are talking about it like some stupid development programme then I'll just slink into my shell and do the mindfulness on my own or with four friends that do, but I won't speak about it publicly. (Line 189-195; 385-391)

Interviewee 7: If you're a fairly conventional person, which in some ways I'm not and some I am, things like meditation and mindfulness can seem like hippie-like activities. In order for one to have credibility, sometimes you need to hear about them from more sources than one thing. You have to hear it from people who you think have walked a potentially similar journey to what you have. Because without that it could be a bit of 'hokey-pokeyness', with George and Richard I spent a lot of time building strengths, people management, what motivates us to do great work, and that led onto Richard guiding me to TM and George and Richard introduced me to mindfulness. I needed to believe that, as someone who's unlikely to be someone who's a mover in that space, I needed friends who I trusted to say, "It's worth exploring." (Line 93-101)

Interviewee 9: For now mindfulness is quite intangible. (Line 146)

Interviewee 11: It has a spiritual stigma, or is linked to religion. It sounds counterintuitive but being busy is glorified and in the end counterproductive. It's something I've had to learn and am still learning more about. But if you force more and sit in the office for longer hours, working on the weekend, checking your emails first thing in the morning you may not arrive at better solutions. The solution sometimes is to go on holiday, take a walk, go away with the team - have a more productive session rather than spending all the time in the office. (Line 163; 170-174)

5.8. Theme 6: Mindfulness is perceived to be a useful tool for leaders in South Africa because of cultural differences

All the participants commented that mindfulness is important for leader development in the South African context because it enables leaders to manage the complexity of cultural diversity, which the participants frequently said was part of leading people in this country.

The participants shared their thoughts on the complexity and challenge of leading in the South African cultural landscape:

Interviewee 2: In SA with our different cultures here - some prefer face to face, some prefer different greetings and just being mindful of your individual context is relevant and important if you're going to be effective in a particular location. Also with the younger generation in SA, they are very difficult to train and I think being mindful means you don't just expect someone to come to your terms, you also try and see where they're coming from, what they would like, how they would like to be led and contribute. Which I think is also very specific to culture and location...I guess mindfulness also means you need to try and understand where a new generation is coming from and what they need to succeed (Line 447-454; 467-469)

Interviewee 3: With regards to South Africa, it's probably going to be very different to an aggregation to the US or Europe, that is purely because of our domestic diversity. I found myself being more tested in SA than I have elsewhere. We have a multi-layered and multi-faceted culture but you can't just divide it on racial lines and on culture lines, because there are subsets within both of those. There's a depth of awareness that needs to be created (I use awareness and mindfulness interchangeably) for one to chart away through the people element of leadership. (Line 415-421)

Interviewee 4: In South Africa we still have a lot of prejudices which are lurking below the surface and unspoken, but if you are more aware or mindful you see that they are there. If you are able to be mindful and get to a situation where you are judging a person's work based on their work, as opposed to an underlying prejudice or preconception as to what their ability is. In a culture where perceived differences are still very apparent, to have the ability to see beyond those is critical. (Line 302-306)

Interviewee 5: The history of our country in my mind definitely impacts the manner in which you conduct yourself as a leader and you better be mindful of what you're dealing with. Even if you don't understand it, you've got to be mindful of the departure point or the paradigm or culture from which the person comes that you are dealing with. There are countless examples of massive misunderstandings because of culture (Line 387-391)

Interviewee 6: If we have to build a nation as a country then all of the people have to be authentic themselves and appreciate their unique contribution. A mindfulness practice will then be useful for everyone, it's just that we can't put a bog-standard mindfulness approach on everyone (Line 453-459)

Interviewee 7: In the South African context we have such deep misunderstandings about different people, cultures and races. We are very quick to stereotype and see our employees as labourers, as one half-rung above slave labour. Mindfulness has a huge part to play in that context, as far as being completely present with those people. It goes into what those people's lives are like, an awareness of their own emotional space. Its potential impact is great in SA if we apply it effectively. (Line 355-359)

Interviewee 9: It's even more important in SA because of the challenges we've had... From a SA context, because of the magnitude and the complexity of our cultural diversity and economic environments it adds another dynamic to a leader that has to be dealt with, and it makes it more challenging to lead people. (Line 298; 305-307)

Interviewee 11: Also because SA is a multi-cultural country, if you don't apply some principles of mindfulness it's easy to get into the 'us' and 'them' thinking. South Africa vs. the rest of Africa, of the white people vs. the black people, men vs. woman. I think mindfulness teaches you that, the more you practice it the more you see the unity or union in things. (Line 186-189)

Interviewee 12: One of the things particular to SA is that for the most part non-white people have a deep brokenness (an internal psychological confidence not being there) on account of our racial history. What I've spoken about in my responses today has been that mindfulness, when done at a certain level of depth, allows one to develop an identity that is not really connected to who you are in that moment. Not connected to the colour of your skin, your age or your history, but to the fact that you are a ball of energy and potential that is unfolding. In addressing what I identify as a very social handicap in SA, which is also there

*in different forms in different countries, I see mindfulness as playing a role there.
I can see how mindfulness could fix and materially change that social fabric
handicap. (Line 256-264)*

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore whether mindfulness has a role in leader development, specifically in the South African context.

In this chapter the results of the research will be discussed in light of the literature reviewed, and interpretations on how mindfulness has a role in leader development in South Africa are suggested.

6.2. Themes

The themes that emerged from the results are:

1. There are differences in the interpretation of mindfulness.
2. Participants experienced three dominant benefits of mindfulness which have profound impacts.
3. Mindfulness and stress
4. Participants experienced mindfulness as important for leader development.
5. Mindfulness is a personal journey and requires practice.
6. Participants perceived mindfulness as a useful tool for leaders in South Africa because of cultural differences.

Each of the themes are discussed below in terms of the research question and the literature reviewed. It is important to reiterate that no causality can be attributed to these results as this is exploratory research. Instead, any insights generated from this research serve to add to the development of theory on mindfulness and leader development. Furthermore, these insights offer guidance for future research in this area.

6.2.1. There are differences in the interpretation of mindfulness

When considering the definitions of mindfulness in the current literature, they correspond with each other through themes of trait level consciousness (Dane, 2011) and present moment awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). For this research, the definition selected for mindfulness is the awareness that emerges though paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment by moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). The reason for selecting this definition is because it does not limit mindfulness to one form of practice operation, but rather keeps the definition of mindfulness open as an actual engagement with whatever discipline of inward focus one uses (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Mindfulness is partly defined as paying attention (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Keng et al., 2011; Reb et al., 2014; Avey et al., 2008) and as being aware of the present moment, i.e. what is happening internally and externally (Dane, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Theme 1 encompasses the participants' clear differences in the interpretation of mindfulness, as they did not define mindfulness in line with the literature or each other. The most common descriptors of mindfulness were awareness, presence and consciousness. Although the participant's interpretations of what mindfulness is had many descriptors, these three were the most common.

The respondents did not consistently refer to mindfulness as paying attention specifically, nor did they refer consistently to awareness as being internal, external or both. With regards to mindfulness being about awareness, presence and consciousness as constructs, there was some consistency with the literature and the way those leaders who practice mindfulness define mindfulness. Brown et al. (2007) suggested that mindfulness is "A receptive attention to and awareness of present moment events and experiences" (p. 212), while Thich Nhat Hanh (1976), a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, teacher, author, poet and peace activist, described mindfulness as "Keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality" (p. 11). According to Dane (2011), however, mindfulness is characterised by present moment awareness.

The participants may have had a broad understanding of the definition of mindfulness to be about awareness and presence as per the literature, but they articulated it in different ways. With regards to paying attention and having awareness of the internal and the external environments, the results show a lack of cohesiveness between the participants and the literature. This finding is in line with the academic opinions that there is no consensus on the defining components of mindfulness and that there is a lack of agreement on the nature and meaning of mindfulness (Ospina et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2007).

If there is no agreed definition of mindfulness, then there is uncertainty in the practice leaders engage in as it is not clear if this practice is similar or vastly different. Leaders could be engaging in mindfulness meditation in its different forms (Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Ospina et al., 2007; Faber, et al., 2015; Szekeres & Wertheim, 2014), or they could be practicing another form of mindfulness that they have found works best for them. All of these forms of mindfulness are alike and comparable to some extent, but despite this, the definition of mindfulness is important as it clarifies both the operational aspect of the practice of mindfulness and its intent. This will have implications for the role of

mindfulness on leader development and future research will need to clarify the operational definition of mindfulness so as to be expedient for leader development.

6.2.2. Participants perceived three dominant benefits of mindfulness which have profound impacts

The participants cited many benefits that they had experienced as a part of their mindfulness practice, with the most common being firstly productivity, efficiency and performance; secondly, the ability to respond rather than react to challenging situations and stimuli; and finally, an improved quality in their relationships. Theme 2 thus embodies the benefits leaders have experienced from their mindfulness practices which have had profound impacts on their lives.

With regards to productivity, efficiency and performance, something important to consider is that mindfulness is not the cure for all ailments (Dane, 2011) and there may be a risk of mindfulness being appropriated with the aim of making leaders more productive. This could potentially be viewed as a manipulative reason to introduce mindfulness for leader development and the motives questionable for mindfulness to be included in leader development initiatives as it exploits the leader to become mindful only to ensure greater performance and better business results.

Literature on the benefits for mindfulness is mostly from the medical, health sciences and psychology fields of research (Roche et al., 2014). The current research suggests that the known benefits of mindfulness are an increase in the ability to manage stress (Keng et al., 2011; Ismail et al., & Joubert, 2013; Leroy et al., 2013), heightened emotional intelligence, improved decision making and strategic thinking abilities (Hall, 2013), a heightened ability to focus (Zhang & Wu, 2014), enhanced creativity (Hall, 2013), greater self-awareness (Himmelstein et al., 2012), greater social awareness (Himmelstein et al., 2012), improved self-management (Brown & Ryan, 2003), validated behavioural regulation (Keng et al., 2011) (Himmelstein et al., 2012), reduced rumination (Keng et al., 2011), better coping capabilities (Sears et al., 2011) and an increase in positive emotions (Roche et al., 2014).

Benefits that have been documented in the limited research from the management sciences are an improved quality of interpersonal relationships (Dane, 2011); less emotional exhaustion; greater job satisfaction (Hulsheger et al., 2012); reduced burnout (Ismail et al., 2013); higher productivity; improved attention (Baron & Cayer, 2011), and enhanced leadership efficacy (Roche et al., 2014). There are thus many benefits, and as per the literature review the most prevalent benefits are the ability to self-regulate, the

ability to experience a positive state of mind, a noted improvement in relationships, and the ability to reduce and manage stress and then experience an increased awareness.

All of these benefits might be useful to leaders and in leader development. Below there are descriptions of where the benefits mentioned are borne out by the participants. Interestingly, the evidence to support the benefits of mindfulness is explicit, with no evidence that mindfulness has no benefits or negative effects (Dane, 2011). The participants in turn did not refer to any negative effects or make mention of mindfulness not having benefits.

Today's leadership development programmes are predominantly proving to be ineffective, which is negatively affecting organisations' performance (McDermott et al., 2013) and leader development initiatives are not achieving the desired outcomes (Avolio, 2009). The literature on leader development confirms that interpersonal processes are central to a leader's development (Day et al., 2014), and among the necessary skills a leader needs to learn and acquire in their development is an internalised way of self-regulating and metacognitive processing as well as the ability to create positive learning environments where cross-cultural communication happens and facilitates high quality relationships (Day et al., 2014; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

In South Africa we know that leaders face the challenge of recognising and acknowledging cross-cultural conflict (Mayer & Louw, 2010). The known benefits of mindfulness and those cited by the participants are related to the content of leader development and mediate the ability to address the current leader challenges in South Africa. With what we have learned about the benefits of mindfulness and what has emerged from this study, future research may investigate the efficacy of the inclusion of mindfulness in a leader development programme in South Africa.

6.2.2.1. Respond rather than react

A common benefit seen across the literature is improved self-regulation - also referred to as the ability to reduce reactivity and have the ability to choose how to react (Keng et al., 2011; Himelstein et al., 2012; Ismail et al., 2013; Roche et al., 2014; Baron & Cayer, 2011; Brown et al., 2007). The participants reported this as a benefit that mindfulness had on them with a powerful impact on all aspects of their lives, showing consistency with the literature.

A skill that authentic leaders display is to respond rather than react as it is related to an authentic leader's ability to have an internalised moral perspective, an internalised way of self-regulating (Walumbwa et al., 2008) and self-regulation processing abilities are the expertise of leaders (Day et al., 2014). These abilities are important in the South African

work environment considering the challenges arising from the diversity in culture and cross-cultural conflict (Mayer & Louw, 2010; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003). Leaders have to acknowledge these challenges and respond to them both mindfully and appropriately.

Referring to Adaptive Leadership and the analogy of the leader moving from the dancefloor to the balcony (Nicolaidis & McCallum, 2013; Heifetz et al., 2014), by taking themselves to the balcony, leaders can take perspective when uncertain and confused in the moment. Mindfulness may play an important role in developing leaders if it enhances this ability and encourages leaders to be more adaptive in their approach. Through cultivating the ability to step back (get onto the balcony) then that leader is choosing how to respond, choosing the right way to respond (Keng et al., 2011) on purpose.

6.2.2.2. Improved quality in relationships

Well-being in interpersonal relationships (Siegel, 2009) or improved quality in these relationships (Dane, 2011; Brown et al., 2007) are consistent with the perceived benefit of improved quality relationships frequently mentioned by the participants. In leader development, learning to create positive learning environments where cultural communication competence is encouraged facilitates high quality relationships (Day et al., 2014).

Leader development facilitates the development of an authentic leader who is emotionally intelligent and can perceive and understand others' emotions (Reb et al., 2014). Authentic leaders have a high awareness of others and engender trust, optimism and positivity with others (Gardner et al., 2011; Reb et al., 2014). The content of leader development focuses on the development of social capital in organisations built on leader-member exchange, i.e. relationships (Day et al., 2014). Perhaps without this ability to create and nurture relationships and social capital through being aware of others and engendering trust and optimism, a leader will have no followers nor any credibility. Mindfulness in both the literature and as shown in the results of this research improves the quality of relationships and therefore could be an effective practice for developing leaders. Mindfulness will enable a leader to identify the needs, anxieties and aspirations of those they lead, in an authentic way.

6.2.2.3. Productivity, efficiency and performance

Improved productivity and performance, along with greater efficiency as cited by the participants to be a major benefit of mindfulness, is not as consistent with the literature as the above mentioned benefits. Baron and Cayer (2011) found that mindfulness enables higher productivity and improves attention, while Hall (2013) shared that mindfulness heightens and improves decision making and strategic thinking abilities.

Zang and Wu (2014), meanwhile, claimed that mindfulness heightens the ability to focus. These benefits could be linked to improved productivity and performance along with greater efficiency. In this light, the participants perceived the benefits of mindfulness as making one more productive and efficient, which is consistent with the literature, but not as much as the other benefits of responding rather than reacting, or experiencing greater self-awareness.

6.2.3. Mindfulness and stress

Mindfulness as a means to manage and reduce stress and the effects of stress was a major theme that arose from the results as well as the literature reviewed (Keng et al., 2011; Hall, 2013; Brown et al., 2007). Both work stress reduction (Leroy et al., 2013) and situational stress management (Ismail et al., 2013) were found to transpire when one practices mindfulness. This theme is consistent with the literature on mindfulness and its relation to stress and stress reduction as a benefit. The MBSR practice in particular has been found to unequivocally reduce stress (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Pipe, et al., 2009)

There are unanswered questions about how leaders handle the unprecedented changes, complexities and stresses they face today (Roche et al., 2014), however mindfulness practice enables individuals to intentionally attend to experiences in a non-judgemental and open way, which has shown to mediate workplace stress (Keng et al., 2011).

Burnout is a result of chronic stress in the workplace (Ismail et al., 2013). The average rating for stress levels out of 10 from the participants was 10, which indicates a perception of very high stress. Some participants went as far as to rank their stress levels as 11 or even 20 out of 10, indicating perceived chronic stress. As mindfulness can reduce stress and has shown to reduce burnout in the workplace (Giluk, 2009; Ismail et al., 2013), it may be considered to be a stress reducing technique for leaders and help them manage and reduce their stress levels.

There is no indication in the literature that managing and reducing stress levels is a component of leader development, but there are advancing theories of leader development focusing on Adaptive Leadership, where the leader needs to learn to cope with complexity and bear intense resistance to change and personal attacks without losing sight of their goals (Day & Sin, 2011; Nicolaidis & McCallum, 2013). Eighty percent of the participants indicated that they found mindfulness during times of high and chronic stress to reduce stress and helped them manage it better. These results then make one question whether mindfulness is not only a tool leaders could use for stress reduction, but also if learning to manage stress using mindfulness is a component of leader development. There is a need for leadership theories to inform leader

development in South Africa that is consistent with the social-cultural realities in Africa (Kamoche, 2011), and it is not clear in the literature if the social-cultural realities cause stress which needs to be managed by leaders.

Future research should examine the impact that mindfulness has on the physiological, psychological and relational aspects of stress. This will be discussed further in the future research section.

6.2.4. Mindfulness is a personal journey

A clear theme to emerge from the data was that learning mindfulness is a private and personal journey that requires practice. The aspect of this theme referring to practice is consistent with Kabat-Zinn's (2003) description of mindfulness as an actual engagement with a discipline of inward focus. The literature therefore confirms the results in that mindfulness must be practiced to be effective.

With regards to the personal nature of one's journey to learning and practicing mindfulness specifically, there were no apparent findings in the literature review that re-enforced this theme. With regards to leader development, the literature confirmed that interpersonal processes are central to a leader's development (Day et al., 2014) and that generic leader development programmes do not work (Dalakoura, 2010). The most effective way to develop leaders is through tailored and individualised focus approaches (Baron & Cayer, 2011).

The implication of this theme is that mindfulness as a form of leader development may need to be tailored more to the individual. Mindfulness may also only have the desired impact on a leader's development when the leader is ready for it. This begs the question of how generic and standardised leader development programmes that include mindfulness can be effective if mindfulness is a personal journey. This is especially pertinent considering that the formal leader-development programmes that give little attention to the personal development process that leaders go through (Dalakoura, 2010; McDermott et al., 2013) mostly fail because they overlook context, and leaders cannot take their learnings into their real world (Gurdjian et al., 2014)

In his study, Dane (2011) commented that "philosophy and religious studies have considered the role of mindfulness for many years but not in the business context, and this may be due to the confusion around the term mindfulness to be something too mystical or Zen-like to merit application in this context" (p. 2). This is especially true for the perceived link between meditation and mindfulness that often occurs in the popular Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn in 1979 and the Oxford Mindfulness Centre

respectively. These include meditation techniques and practices (McCown et al., 2010), thus meditation and mindfulness practice are sometimes used interchangeably. The respondents made mention of the spiritual stigma surrounding mindfulness and associated it to meditation or how mindfulness is not mainstream and might be questioned at work by others and their superiors. Consequently they are private about their practices and keep them personal because they perceive the practice to not be credible. The literature presented in this research does not mention stigma and how leaders should manage it.

6.2.5. Mindfulness and leader development

All of the respondents made clear statements about mindfulness being very important for leader development, because mindfulness helps facilitate the acquisition and cultivation of key leader skills that one masters in leader development, i.e. self-awareness, empathy and valuing people. This is supported by the literature. If leader development is defined as a way of changing perceptions, motivations, competencies and patterns of behaviour when one is in a leadership position in order to help you function in your role more effectively (Harms et al., 2011), then self-awareness is an important ability to enhance in leader development and forms part of that leader's foundation (Church, 2014). An authentic leader is emotionally intelligent, perceives and understand the emotions of others (Reb et al., 2014), and has a high awareness of others (Gardner et al., 2011). This awareness and understanding of others can be interpreted as empathy towards others. As mentioned above, building quality relationships is paramount to a leader's credibility, and that ability to do so informs their development (Day et al., 2014; Gardner et al., 2011).

With regards to mindfulness and the literature that supports its role in leader development, Baron and Cayer (2011) claimed that there is a transition in the field of organisational development towards mindfulness approaches. Murphy and Johnson (2011) concurred, saying that organisations are focusing leader development opportunities on increasing self-awareness. Although the work-specific outcomes of mindfulness are largely unknown and misunderstood, Leroy et al. (2013) did find that mindfulness is a meaningful antecedent of strengthening personal resources for authentic functioning. This could be linked to authentic functioning such as empathy for and valuing others.

6.2.5.1. Self-awareness

Most participants shared that becoming self-aware and constantly being self-aware was a part of and continues to be a part of their leader development; self-awareness was considered a core leader trait. As per the literature reviewed, the progress seen in leader

development includes self-awareness, as it is a core personal skill that underpins leader development (McDermott et al., 2013; Murphy & Johnson, 2011).

Mindfulness is also termed an intrapersonal strategy (Ismail et al., 2013) which is a meaningful antecedent of authentic functioning (Leroy et al., 2013). Mindful awareness emphasises impartiality, an ability to be objective and neutral and then self-aware (Giluk, 2009). As mentioned before, a major benefit of mindfulness is awareness, both of the external and internal environments. The literature confirms that mindfulness is an internal (intrapersonal) strategy that enables one to be objective (impartial) and helps one to function authentically and be aware, which is consistent with the results of this study.

6.2.5.2. Empathy

Empathy was named the second major trait to learn and cultivate in the participants' leader development strategy. This is consistent with the literature, where empathy for the suffering of others is strongly related to outstanding leader performance (Day et al., 2014). Another insight is that MBSR training is able to increase empathy in healthy people (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009). Empathy could be linked to valuing people and to building relationships, as it is a component of being an authentic leader (Day et al., 2014).

6.2.5.3. Valuing people

Mindfulness is mentioned in the literature as having a positive effect on workplace challenges like burnout, lack of engagement and responding rather than reacting (Ismail et al., 2013; Giluk, 2009; Leroy et al., 2013), but less so on the capacity to better value people. The participants quoted valuing people as key in their own leader development and to be an important part of leader development in general. The literature supports these perceptions in that leader development content should include experiences that create optimistic views of others and quality relationships, both which are strongly related to outstanding leader performance (Day et al., 2014).

6.2.6. Mindfulness and leader development in South Africa

The participants repeatedly quoted that mindfulness is important for leader development in South Africa because it enables leaders to acknowledge cultural differences in the South African context and manage themselves and others considerately in light of these differences. The literature confirms that managing cross-cultural conflict is a major challenge in South Africa (Mayer & Louw, 2010). What is unclear is whether the skills of leader development, namely empathy, valuing people and self-awareness, are the antecedents of the ability to acknowledge cultural diversity and the challenges that come with it in the workplace.

6.3. Discussion suggestions

The six themes that were drawn out in this study on individual leaders and the role mindfulness has had on their leader development present some salient features of these participants' leader development processes and experiences. Based on these findings and the consistency or inconsistency with the literature, there are two considerations that have been identified for the role mindfulness plays in leader development. These are tentative suggestions based on the literature reviewed and the results of this study only, and they require further research to be considered sound propositions.

6.3.1. The relationship between the benefits of mindfulness, the content of leader development and the qualities of an authentic leader

The benefits of mindfulness could be compared to the skills leaders attain in their ongoing leader development and are like the qualities of an authentic leader. To be a great leader one must be self-aware and have self-regulating abilities (Day et al., 2014). Self-awareness is a process that is attained in a leader's development (Gardner et al., 2011; Reb et al., 2014), while mindfulness is a way of becoming self-aware and cultivating that awareness (Avey et al., 2008; Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Dane, 2011). Self-regulation is also a component of leader development, and specifically of authentic leader development (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Day et al., 2014).

Despite the significant financial investment in today's leader development initiatives, they are not yielding the desired results and do not adequately prepare leaders for the challenges of the current business environment (Avolio, 2009; Leonard, 2014). The participants all clearly stated that being self-aware is an important component of leader development, and eight respondents gave real examples of how they had behaved like 'good' leaders when their mindfulness practices had made them more self-aware. More than half of the respondents commented that mindfulness enabled them to respond rather than react to challenging situations.

Mindfulness initiatives are being implemented in businesses around the world and are yielding benefits for these organisations (Pickert, 2014; Kahn, 2014; Huffington, 2013; Gelles, 2012). What is not clear from the literature is if these initiatives are beneficial because they are targeted at leaders specifically and enhance those leaders' ability to be self-aware and to self-regulate. Research on mindfulness in the managerial field and its relation to leader development is limited and in line with this (Roche et al., 2014). Based on the results of this study and the literature on self-awareness and self-regulation in leader development, it is suggested that both are core components of leader development and can be learnt and cultivated with mindfulness.

There is a strong correlation between good leader performances and having empathy for others; being an authentic leader requires a continuous process of attaining self-awareness and building genuine relationships with others (Day et al., 2014). In order to be an adaptive leader one must be able to deal with complexity by reorientating oneself and having perspective (Heifetz et al., 2014), in other words being able to respond and not react. Roche et al. (2014) showed that mindfulness may prove to be a psychological strength that leaders can draw from for their mental well-being in trying times. This is because mindfulness is an internal resource that supports beneficial psychological functions and facilitates well-being, so it plays a major role in developing the behaviour regulation long associated with leadership efficacy.

In their leader development the participants stated that learning to have empathy for others and to value people made them better leaders and are important for leader development. They quoted that managing their stress, being more aware and cultivating the ability to respond rather than react were benefits of their mindfulness practice that impacted their leader development positively.

Therefore, it is suggested that mindfulness could play a role in leader development as it enables leaders to develop effective skills and cultivate authentic leadership capacity.

6.3.2. Mindfulness might be considered for South African leader development

Does mindfulness have a role to play in developing leaders in South Africa? This study supports the current research on the benefits of mindfulness and what leader development is composed of, therefore it is suggested that the benefits of mindfulness are similar to the skills necessary for, and a part of, leader development. As discussed above, mindfulness engenders the ability to have and cultivate empathy for others, as well as to develop a greater awareness of what is happening in the internal and external environments of one's experience (Avey et al., 2008; Dane, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Day et al., 2014).

In South Africa, clashing identity aspects, racial ascriptions and differences in values and priorities cause cross-cultural conflict (Mayer & Louw, 2010) and South African leaders have to manage diverse groups (Grobler & Bruyn, 2011). The ability to have empathy and to be aware of what is happening internally and in the external environment might thus be a way for South African leaders to be aware of and observe their own individual sensitivities and the sensitivities others experience when cross-cultural conflicts arise.

Valuing people is a trait of authentic leaders and a component of leader development (Garg & Ramjee, 2013; Day et al. 2014; Walumbwa e al., 2008). This literature supports

the results of the study, where participants commented that the ability to value people is an important skill to acquire in one's development as a leader. The literature on mindfulness does not support the notion that a benefit of mindfulness is an enhancement of the ability to value people, but this research showed that leaders who practice mindfulness found that they had an increased ability to value people. Mindfulness may thus play a role in assisting leaders to develop the ability to firstly acknowledge and then appreciate the differences in people and value them.

Should mindfulness be considered for leader development in South Africa, not only because the benefits of mindfulness are part of developing the necessary skills of leader development, but also because it enables South African leaders to become aware of and acknowledge the impact and sensitivity of cultural diversity and cross-cultural conflict in the South African workplace through empathy, building quality relationships, self-awareness and self-regulation as well as valuing people? More longitudinal experimental research is needed to answer this question.

6.4. Discussion Conclusion

The results of this research have generated questions and perhaps hypotheses about leader development in South Africa and how mindfulness plays a role. The lack of a clear definition of mindfulness is a cause for concern and limits the operational understanding and potentially the effectiveness of mindfulness as a tool to help develop leaders.

The literature supports the results of the study in that mindfulness has had a profound impact on leaders and the dominant benefits leaders perceive are an increase in productivity, the ability to respond rather than react and better quality relationships. In addition, the literature further supports the study results where mindfulness is a useful tool for managing as well as reducing stress.

Mindfulness was found in the results to be important for leader development because it enables leaders to become self-aware, to value people and to be empathetic. The literature supports that all three of these constructs are important for leader development.

The literature did not clearly support the resulting theme of mindfulness as a personal journey, but there is literature that reinforces the participants' comments that mindfulness is not yet mainstream in the corporate setting and therefore not a shared practice.

Finally, mindfulness was found in this study to be a useful tool for leaders in South Africa, specifically because of the diverse cultures leaders are exposed to and have to acknowledge. The literature supported this result in that cross-cultural conflict is a reality

in South Africa and that leader development is comprised of being able to create environments of positivity where cultural communication competence is encouraged.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter highlights the main findings of this research and includes suggestions for management based on the implications of these findings. Based on the limitations of the research outlined below, recommendations for future research are made.

The purpose of this research was to explore if mindfulness plays a role in leader development in South Africa. The research yielded useful results by analysing the text from open-ended interviews with South African leaders in the private sector who had or have and still practice mindfulness. These results not only suggest that mindfulness does have a role to play in leader development in general as well as leader development in South Africa specifically, but they also contribute meaningfully to the field of research on mindfulness in the world of work.

This study contributes to the understanding, progress and expansion of the theory that underpins good leader development, which is a construct that needs attention and improvement in a world that desperately requires better and more enduring leadership. This is now discussed in more detail.

7.1. Principle findings

This research generated results that contribute to the expanding body of research on mindfulness and on leader development in the field of management sciences. These results tentatively suggest that mindfulness has a role to play in leader development, mainly because the benefits of mindfulness are comparable to the skills leaders should attain in their ongoing leader development and are akin to the qualities of an authentic leader. Mindfulness might also be considered for South African leader development for these same reasons, as well as because mindfulness could assist leaders in acknowledging and working with cultural diversity. The suggestions highlight the main findings of the research and are supported by the literature on mindfulness and leader development, especially where mindfulness may prove to be the psychological strength that leaders need to develop effectively and to manage their mental wellbeing in the face of challenges and complexity (Roche et al., 2014).

Having empathy (Day et al., 2014; Chiesa & Serrati, 2009), being self-aware (Day et al. 2014; Walumbwa et al., 2008; McDermott et al., 2013; Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Church, 2014), building genuine relationships with others, valuing others, improving the quality of relationships (Day et al., 2014; Siegel, 2009; Gardner et al., 2011; Reb et al., 2014), having the ability to respond rather than react (Day et al., 2014; Heifetz et al., 2014; Walumbwa et al., 2008), managing stress and the effects of stress (Keng et al., 2011;

Ismail et al., 2013; Giluk, 2009) and being more productive and focused (Baron & Cayer, 2011; Hall, 2013) are benefits of mindfulness and are the elements that make up the content of leader development that allows one to progress into an authentic leader. The participants stated that these benefits have impacted their lives positively, which was also upheld by the literature that presented and supported the observed benefits of mindfulness.

Another key finding was the lack of a clear definition of mindfulness, which suggests that there is uncertainty in what the operational elements are of the mindfulness practices that leaders engage in and the different degrees of efficacy of those practices. An operational definition of mindfulness would thus be useful if mindfulness is to be considered for leader development.

These results, hand-in-hand with the literature that supports them, suggest that mindfulness is potentially useful in leader development in South Africa largely because South African leaders are often faced with having to acknowledge cultural diversity and work with the possibility of managing cross-cultural conflict (Mayer & Louw, 2010; Kamoche, 2011). The skills leaders need to be able to acknowledge different cultures and work positively in this context are aligned with the content of leader development and the benefits of mindfulness.

Mindfulness was found to be a personal journey for the participants of this study and requires a dedicated practice. In line with the literature, mindfulness is a discipline (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) of inward focus and may play a role in leader development, as this requires interpersonal processes to occur (Day et al., 2014) through an individualised focus approach (Baron & Cayer, 2011).

In taking stock of the current literature that supports the study results, the perception leaders have of mindfulness is that it has a role to play in leader development. Given the suggestions here that mindfulness helps, enhances and cultivates the skills necessary for leader development that are in line with authentic leader characteristics, organisations should consider the role mindfulness could play in their leader development initiatives in South Africa.

7.2. Implications for management

Below are several suggestions for management made according to the findings of this research.

- With billions of dollars being spent annually on leader development (Leonard, 2014), it is in the interest of organisations to ensure that there is a return on their

investment. Today most leader development initiatives fail and a tangible return on leader development investment is not being realised (Gurdjian et al., 2014). Mindfulness initiatives in leader development programmes could potentially improve this return on investment if they could generate the desired outcomes of leader development, which is in line with and similar to the contents of leader development and the characteristics of an authentic leader, as per the results and suggested findings of this study and the supporting literature.

- Stress management and burnout are realities in today's organisations (Ismail et al., 2013), thus mindfulness could potentially be included in leader development initiatives to help manage stress and mitigate the risk of burnout in leaders.
- If mindfulness is to be considered for leader development, management in organisations must consider the fact that mindfulness was perceived as a personal journey in this study, and therefore any leader development initiative including mindfulness may need to be tailored for each leader taking part in that initiative.
- Finally, due to the lack of a clear definition of mindfulness, management should consider clearly communicating the operational definition of mindfulness for leader development initiatives. This will clarify the practice and allow for the consistent measurement of its effects.

7.3. Limitations

The limitations to the reliability and validity of this research are presented below:

1. The data for this study are only self-reported. Each participant had their own unique story of their journey to mindfulness and their journey of development as a leader. There are many issues pertaining to the assessment of mindfulness, as individual responses to the interview questions varied as a function of different understandings of the questions that depended on the extent of the participants' exposure to the idea of the practice of mindfulness. (Keng et al., 2011). There is thus a need for more data from other sources to add to this data.
2. Without a common definition of mindfulness the participants' experiences may have been similar but are not necessarily the same. This limits the degree of validity of the research.

3. Out of the sample achieved, the 13 participants were all confirmed leaders in their respective organisations with significant leadership experience and leader development exposure, yet the validity and reliability of the sample achieved is threatened in that eight of the participants were white males, three were black males and two were white females. This sample is not representative of the current leadership profile in South Africa based on race and gender.
4. Another threat to the reliability and validity of the themes involves the researcher's personal judgment, where her identity and its influence limited the degree of objectivity when analysing the data. Her biases include and are not limited to believing that mindfulness is important for leader development. The researcher has her own personal mindfulness practice, has taken part in many leader development initiatives, and is aware of the perceptions she has of the gaps in the current leader development offerings in South Africa and how mindfulness has closed those gaps. Her perceived benefits of the practice thus make her approach to analysing the findings less objective.
5. Exploratory research is limited in that it cannot address specific hypotheses in the way that quantitative research may be able to. Although the sample achieved for this research was small, it provides a base for future research and is normal for exploratory research.

7.4. Suggestions for future research

Future research should use strategies such as triangulation to further verify the themes identified in this research, as the accuracy of research will improve by collecting different kinds of data on the same phenomenon (Jick, 1979).

With no common definition of mindfulness, is each participant's experience the same or even similar? Future research should adopt a phenomenological approach to explore this in depth. As research on mindfulness in the managerial field is in the early stages of development, further collaborative research is needed to develop a more solid understanding concerning the nature of mindfulness; how mindfulness can best be measured, fostered, and cultivated; and the mechanisms and specificity of effects of mindfulness-oriented interventions. Future research should also continue to explore other potential applications of mindfulness and examine practical issues concerning the

delivery, implementation, and dissemination of mindfulness-oriented interventions. Given the advances that have been made thus far, it is likely that new paradigms for the understanding and application of mindfulness will continue to appear, which would move us further toward the goals of alleviating human psychological suffering and helping others live a life that is happier and more fulfilling (Keng et al., 2011).

With what the literature reveals about the benefits of mindfulness and what has emerged from this study, future research may investigate the efficacy of the inclusion of mindfulness in a leader development programme in South Africa. Longitudinal, experimental quantitative research would be needed to prove the efficacy of including mindfulness in a leader development programme, however this approach could compare the effectiveness of mindfulness against a control group and an experimental group receiving medication on stress. This will provide clear guidance for the inclusion of mindfulness as a strategy to manage stress and burnout.

Although the study might be limited by its small sample, it provides a basis for further research and draws attention to personal leader development processes. In particular, the importance of formative experiences on leaders' development, their struggle to attain balance, the need for advanced emotional management skills, and the capacity to work with collectives of people and to adapt to contextual demands, are emphasised. The study suggests that future research investigates how contextual factors influence the adoption of certain leadership styles.

Mindfulness has clearly had a profound impact on the participants in this study. The intention of this research was to explore and further our understanding of how paying attention on purpose without judgement has the potential to change the quality of our lives. It is exciting that research can challenge the entrenched schools of thought on leader development, and offer something new to the traditional approaches which are not showing a return on financial investment and not yielding the desired behavioural results. Through leader development, mindfulness could change the way the world is being lead. In any newspaper around the world there are reports on the crises of warfare, sluggish economic growth and the battle for resources. If leaders at the helm of these challenges could benefit from mindfulness, then the world might become a better place.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview Guide

Mindfulness and its role on Leader Development in South Africa

Interview guide

Introduction

1. Confidentiality and transcription (follow up on consent form if not signed)
2. Duration estimation of interview
3. Summary of results available after research marked

Bio graphics

1. Name and occupation (title)
2. Age
3. Number of years work experience
4. Current work responsibilities
5. Number of direct reports
6. Education

Contextual questions

1. What is your understanding of 'mindfulness'?
2. What is your understanding of 'meditation'?
3. How did you find mindfulness? What lead you to it?
4. What was happening in your life during the time that you learnt about mindfulness? Can you share any situational/ real life examples?
5. Stress from 1 – 10 ranking

Mindfulness journey

1. What is your practice? (frequency and duration; how you practice; how long you have been practicing)
2. What sort of impact has 'this' had on you? Do you have any examples you can share?
3. Is mindfulness (your practice) supported by your organisation? Your colleagues?
4. Where is your mindfulness journey going?

Leadership journey

1. What is leader development mean to you?
2. How have you developed as a leader?
3. Describe your leadership style. Would others agree with this? Can you give examples of this? Can you give examples of when you have behaved as a good leader?
4. What impact has mindfulness had on you as a leader? Has it had any impact?
5. Rate the complexity of your work today from 1 – 10. Can you describe this complexity?
6. How do you deal with challenging situations at work? Has mindfulness had an impact on this?

Final questions

1. Using intuition and previous interview questions to continue interview.

- i.e. what are your perceived benefits of mindfulness for leader development?
2. Research question
 3. South Africa context

Appendix 2 Email confirmation of Ethics clearance

Gordon Institute of Business Science University of Pretoria

Dear Miss Taryn Smuts

Protocol Number: **Temp2015-01287**

Title: **Application for Ethical Clearance**

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been APPROVED.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards,

GIBS Ethics Administrator

Appendix 3 Turnitin report

Turnitin Originality Report

Mindfulness and its role in leader development by Taryn Smuts

From Test your originality (GIBS Information Center)

- Processed on 07-Nov-2015 15:21 SAST
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17

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<http://www4.nau.edu/eaw/documents/PayingAttentiontoMindfulness.pdf>

18

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[Journal of Management Development, Volume 30, Issue 4 \(2011-04-03\)](#)

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