Deconstructing Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness in a Leadership Context to Explore Emotionally Mindful Intelligence

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Abstract

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In this study, two fields of research that have perplexed and divided scholars over the last 30 years are explored. Emotional intelligence and mindfulness have been the subjects of many studies, although questions remain as to their definitions as constructs and how they can be applied from an organisational perspective (Daniel et al., 2022; Dasborough et al., 2021). The concept of leadership, which provides the contextual backdrop to this study, has also been dogged by criticism and debate, with an abundance of theory seemingly unable to provide a consensus view on what exactly it is and how academic research can provide relevant insights for those working as leaders (Alvesson, 2020).

One of the issues to date has been that all three of these fields of research have been dominated by quantitative study; there is a search for the 'holy grail' in terms of absolute definitions and precise causal relationships. Despite years of academic study into emotional intelligence and mindfulness, precise answers have remained beyond reach. In order to contribute to knowledge the author of this study has taken a very different approach to theory building. Through exploration by application of qualitative methods of how individuals working in leadership roles experience emotional intelligence and mindfulness, this researcher has captured the two constructs as they present in leadership practice. Through the thematic analysis of rich data, a picture of the inter-relationship between mindfulness and emotional intelligence in leaders has emerged and, as a result, a new theoretical model of Emotionally Mindful Intelligence (EMI) is proposed which is relevant to both academia and management practice.

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Finally, thanks go to my family who never gave up on me or questioned my ability to complete a PhD. It is fair to say that the work required to complete a doctoral degree was significantly more than I was prepared for, and my family bore the brunt of my frustration at the seemingly never-ending process of producing this thesis. Thank you to team Roberts for putting up with months of my physical and mental absence and the general grumpiness I displayed during the writing up process. I think we are all equally relieved that it is now completed.

Author's Declaration

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. As the author of this thesis, I declare that it is all my own work and has not been submitted in any form for the award of a higher degree at any educational establishment. All references to work other than my own are credited in the text.

Conference Papers

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Despite over 50 years of research in the area of leadership, academia has failed to deliver significant output in terms of practical knowledge-building and support to those working in the field (Alvesson, 2020). In reality, leadership development and practice move in large part independently of academia. There is a recognised gap between theory and practice, and the value of scholarly research, which is not always perceived as relevant to those who work in the field, has been considered suspect (Tucker and Lowe, 2014). Many leadership models and theories have been developed through scholarly research; however, the complexity of modern organisations in the digital age has led some researchers to question the relevance of leadership theory (Kozminski et al., 2022). Whilst the research that was conducted through this study does not attempt to contribute directly to the field of leadership, it is relevant to those practising leadership. Indeed, the leadership practice gap (Tucker and Lowe, 2014), and the recognised need to support theory with real-world insights, was a key driver for this study, which aims to be equally relevant to academic and practice-based audiences.

This research project explores two independent fields of academic study; emotional intelligence (EI) and mindfulness, which have garnered significant interest within both management practice and leadership development over recent years. Although these terms have become widely used in organisations, their meaning remains rather nebulous, particularly in the context of leadership. Emotions are a fundamental element of being human; however, recognising their presence in oneself and in others is not a straightforward process (Gross and Preston, 2020). Evidence suggests that emotionally driven decisions can result in sub-optimal outcomes (Andrade and Ariely, 2009), which goes some way to explaining why management practitioner literature suggests that having EI is essential for effective leadership and indeed wider life success (Coleman, 2019; Goleman, 1995, 2020). In practice, however, it seems to be an implicit rather than explicit requirement; very few job descriptions or advertisements for leadership positions refer specifically to EI in the job description or person specification. This raises the obvious question, why not? It suggests a lack of full understanding of what EI is and how it impacts leadership. This study aims to rectify this situation by establishing how leaders perceive EI, how they experience it in the

course of their work and the significance they attach to it in terms of leadership effectiveness.

Mindfulness is a less recognised term within the context of leadership and management, although it is rapidly gaining a footing as an effective tool for use in the workplace, featuring in leadership development and management practitioner literature (Hougaard and Carter, 2017). Mindfulness has been credited with almost magical properties that cause it to impact all aspects of life positively for those who practise it (Blanke, Reidiger and Brose, 2018) whilst its proponents have been criticised for misrepresentation and a lack of empirical evidence to support bold claims regarding its effect (Carlson, 2018). So where is the truth? This study goes to the grass roots to discover how mindfulness is experienced by those working in leadership positions. How does mindfulness present in a leadership context and could the positive impact of mindfulness extend to providing benefits in the area of EI? These were the questions that prompted this research.

Regarding academic literature, EI and mindfulness have been linked with leadership effectiveness (Kantor et al., 2020: Livesey, 2017; Siegling, Nielsen and Petrides, 2014) and with each other (Bayighomog and Arasli, 2022; Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Miao, Humphrey and Qian, 2018). The constructs have also become recognised as fields outside academia; some leadership development courses now include elements of EI and mindfulness in their programmes. To counter criticisms that academic research has become too far removed from leadership practice (Tucker and Lowe, 2014), this researcher sought to build knowledge in the area of EI and mindfulness by engaging directly with those working in positions of leadership in order to understand these two constructs within the context of leadership practice.

Both EI and mindfulness, and the broader research umbrella of leadership in which they are positioned in the context of this study, have to date been dominated by positivism with studies using quantitative research designs (Iszatt-White and Kempster, 2018; Lincoln, 2009; Nguyen, Ladkin and Osman, 2022). Quantitative research is based on the assumption that reality exists as an absolute, therefore it can be objectively defined and subject to measurement (Brand, 2009). In contrast, this study was based on a recognised requirement

for constructs linked to leadership and management practice to be grounded in empirical research from qualitative study (Iszatt-White and Kempster, 2018). Rather than proposing new theory and undertaking research with a view to finding supporting evidence, this researcher used qualitative research techniques to engage with leaders on the 'front line' of organisations and to establish how EI and mindfulness are presented in everyday acts of leadership. This study gathered rich data to provide context and depth to the presentation of EI and mindfulness, reported by those who experience them. This bottom-up inductive approach, previously missing from the literature, provides deep insight into the reality of these constructs and the value they hold independently and collectively from the perspective of leaders in practice. As such, the research contributes to existing literature through the addition of a qualitative study. It also provides a new, empirically backed theoretical model, which will be of interest to both academics and leadership practitioners as it links theory with evidence-based practice.

Background and context of the study

Emotions in leadership have been a subject of much debate over the past 20 years. There has been disagreement on whether displays of emotions in leaders should be encouraged or frowned upon (Sharp-Page, 2018; Sy and Van Knippenberg, 2021). What has been established is that modern leadership requires navigation of emotions on a regular basis (Connelly and Gooty, 2015), particularly negative emotions (Humphrey, Ashkanasy and Troth, 2022). The concept of EI has been associated with the effective management of emotions in the workplace (Yuste, 2021). Over the same period, mindfulness has emerged from its roots in Buddhist meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) to become a field of academic interest across multiple research disciplines (Crane, 2017), including organisational management and leadership (Sutcliffe, Vogus and Dane, 2016). The question of whether mindfulness can positively impact EI (Robinson, Perisch and Krishnakumar, 2021) in an organisational context is an area of emerging interest for both scholars and leadership practitioners. Exploration of how leaders believe mindfulness helps them to engage in intelligent decision-making when faced with emotional situations was a key element of this research.

EI was first introduced as a construct in the mid-1990s. It was presented as a new form of intelligence that was purported to be more significant to 'life achievement' than cognitive ability alone (Goleman, 1995). The concept was launched to some cynicism and ambiguity around its definition, and debate regarding what it was and how it could be measured, which continues to this day. Whilst the concept of EI has taken off in terms of management practice and leadership development (a Google search indicated 179,000,000 results and Amazon offers 7,000 books on the subject), from an academic perspective the construct is controversial. Researchers have so far failed to reach a consensus on what exactly EI is, how it can be measured and how it manifests in terms of thought processes and behaviours. There has been considerable debate about its definition (Antonakis et al., 2009; Cherniss, 2010; Dasborough et al., 2021) and particularly how 'emotions' can be related to 'intelligence' (Jordan et al., 2002; Salovey and Mayer, 1999; Wong and Law, 2002). As a result, the construct has been categorised into three 'streams' (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2005) to try to differentiate between the presentation of EI as an ability (streams 1 and 2) or as a set of traits, competencies and/or behaviours, which are classified as stream 3 (Boyatzis, 2009; Cameron, 1999; Petrides, 2009).

There has also been a surge of scholarly interest in mindfulness over the last decade (Dane, 2011; Dane and Brummel, 2013; Giluk, 2009; Hülsheger, 2015; Sutcliffe et al., 2016). Mindfulness has advocates across multiple fields that include sport (Crivelli, Fronda and Balconi, 2019), medicine (Ludwig and Kabat-Zinn, 2008) and education (McCaw, 2019) as well as the leadership and management sector (Baron et al., 2018). Nearly all studies have been grounded in a positivist ontology and positivist/realist epistemology (Frank and Marken, 2022). Whilst a plethora of theories have been put forward in an attempt to measure mindfulness, the field remains immature in terms of understanding, and more work is required to consolidate and develop mindfulness as an academic subject (Daniel, Walsh and Mesmer-Magnus, 2022). Virtually all studies to date have used quantitative methods to measure results through complex data analysis and the application of statistical techniques (Frank and Marken, 2022). Whilst there is empirical evidence to support the positive effects of both EI and mindfulness in the context of leadership, the academic community has failed to reach a consensus view on a precise definition or regarding what measurement tools are appropriate for either (Dasborough et al., 2021; Matthews et al., 2004; Maul, 2012).

When this debate is considered in the context of the additional challenges that are made regarding the relevance of academic research to leadership practice, the value of qualitative research studies to uncover deeper understanding of lived experiences is apparent. Engagement with leaders directly in discourse through qualitative research can provide a rich picture of these phenomena that is relevant and relatable both to academics and to those working in practice. This research study examines how individuals working in leadership roles experience EI and mindfulness as part of their day-to-day working lives. In addition, the researcher seeks to explore the inter-relationship between mindfulness and EI in leaders, as perceived by those who engage in the practice.

The dearth of qualitative studies on EI and mindfulness has significantly limited our understanding of these phenomena. Scholarly research has produced a range of measurement scales for both EI and mindfulness, and there is evidence to suggest that individuals who score well on these scales perform a myriad of tasks better than those who score lower. These tasks range from managing health issues to performing as leaders in organisational contexts (Andrei et al., 2016; Bazarko et al., 2013; Khalili, 2017). A couple of studies have been undertaken to perform exploratory research into the inter-relationship between EI and mindfulness (Miao et al., 2018b; Schutte and Malouff, 2011). The results indicate that the use of mindfulness may increase EI, based on correlations within quantitative data analysis (Miao, Humphrey and Qian, 2018b). There is, however, a recognition that further research is necessary to substantiate the findings in these studies (Dasborough et al., 2021), and this research contributes to that.

Several studies have explored the validity of EI as a stand-alone model. They conclude that, despite the lack of agreement on a single definition of the construct, there is sufficient evidence to support it as distinct from other recognised constructs in the areas of intelligence or personality measurement (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2005; Walter, Humphrey and Cole, 2012). Research into mindfulness to date has focused generally on a definition of the construct and identification of the beneficial properties that are associated with mindfulness practice across a range of activities and experiences in the modern world (Daniel, Walsh and Mesmer-Magnus, 2022).

There has been some indication that EI and mindfulness are interconnected (Miao et al., 2018; Nadler et al., 2020). However, this finding has been inconsistent across studies, possibly due to the range of measurement tools that are used. To date, the link between the two constructs has been based purely on evidence of statistical correlation among quantitative data. A range of results has been reported, from weak to strong correlation, according to the scale measurement tools used and the associated stream of EI (Dasborough et al., 2021).

In a call for researchers to 'do better science', Antonakis (2017, p6) put forward three questions that researchers should answer before embarking on studies:

1. So what?
2. Is it rigorous?
3. Will it make a difference?

Accepting this as wise counsel, and to ensure that the significant effort involved in undertaking this study was not in vain, the researcher used these questions to steer the research process from an embryonic idea to the production of this thesis.

In terms of 'so what?', because leaders are required to perform their duties in ever more challenging and dynamic environments, understanding the emotional demands on them provides genuine insight into the reality of modern-day leadership practice. Exploration of EI and mindfulness through the use of qualitative methods enables us to establish how these constructs, which have been the subjects of much research effort, present in the context of leadership practice. Ultimately the research has been conducted not just to add to the literature, but to provide insights and knowledge that have practical relevance and utility to leadership practitioners.

In terms of methodological rigour, the lack of qualitative research in the areas of EI and mindfulness provides an opportunity to deepen and refine our understanding of these constructs through qualitative study. The work described in this thesis was designed to ensure that the methodology was both appropriate and robust as a tool to answer the

research aims and questions posed. The use of a diary study followed by interviews enabled the researcher to test their understanding of the data provided by the participants in their diary accounts and to explore these insights in greater depth through interviews at a later date. This enabled the collection of data both in real time, in the form of written diary entries, and in reflective discourse, when they were revisited in interview situations. The intention of the study was to go some way toward filling the identified qualitative research gap, by exploring how the constructs of EI and mindfulness were experienced by leaders in a work context. The chosen form of data collection enabled the research participants to provide personalised accounts of real experiences, which offered broader and deeper insights than it would have been possible to collect through quantitative study. As such, this study compliments and enhances research that has been undertaken to date, and demonstrates the synergies created in knowledge-building when multiple methodological approaches and research designs are used over time to develop our understanding of phenomena. Whilst previous research has attempted to identify what EI and mindfulness are, this study was focused on how they present in practice, both individually and collectively. A combination of the what and the how can provide a multidimensional view to deepen our understanding and enrich and solidify knowledge claims. It is recognised that no qualitative study can be wholly free of researcher influence (Petit and Huault, 2008), but every effort has been made to ensure that the findings and final theoretical contribution were based on data that was both gathered authentically and obtained from trusted sources; both are key factors in the definition of rigorous qualitative study (Shannon and Hambacher, 2014).

Regarding the final question posed by Antonakis (2017), 'will it make a difference?', the intention was that the use of qualitative research to explore how these constructs are experienced and utilised would offer, in a practical sense, insights and a resulting theoretical model that would be of genuine value within the fields of leadership practice and leadership development as well as in academia. The researcher intends to use the output of this research to support her in future consultancy work, particularly to coach senior leaders.

The timing of this research is noteworthy. Data collection was carried out between October 2020 and September 2021, in two tranches of work. During this time the world was in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, and various stages of lockdown rules applied across the UK.

The pandemic put an unprecedented amount of stress on individuals, both inside and outside work, which impacted all of the research participants from an emotional perspective. This was clearly demonstrated in the data; research participants indicated a sense of heightened emotion in themselves and/or in those around them as a direct result of the pandemic. Whilst it was coincidental that this research took place during the pandemic, it has provided an interesting contextual backdrop from which to observe the emotions and associated behaviours of leaders at a historically significant point in time.

Overview of Chapters

After this introduction to the research study, a review of the literature in the field is presented in Chapter 2. The chapter provides a comprehensive review of literature that covers the fields of EI and mindfulness and how they relate to leadership and each other. [Opening with an introduction to EI, it charts the evolution of the construct from its origins in the mid-1990s]. The literature review explains how an understanding of this new form of intelligence has developed to the present-day position in which scholars remain divided in their opinions regarding construct maturity and validity of research progress (Dasborough et al., 2021). Literature pertaining to the use of EI in an organisational context is also reviewed to provide background and context to the specific area of research focus in this study, EI and leadership. Studies in which a relationship between EI and leadership has been explored are discussed, along with the criticisms and challenges that are presented in the literature. This provides a comprehensive view of the current research landscape and identifies an opportunity to inject qualitative findings into a field dominated by quantitative study.

Studies in the field of mindfulness are also reviewed. The mindfulness construct originated in Buddhism as a form of 'insight meditation' (Kumar, 2002). Widely practised in the East for centuries but comparatively new in Western cultures, mindfulness may be rooted in Buddhism, but over time it has assumed its own identity (Lundh, 2022). The literature review explains that, whilst scholars have been quick to create construct definitions and measurement tools, mindfulness remains a complex and multidimensional phenomenon (Blanke, Brose and Riediger, 2018; Hyland, Lee and Mills, 2015). Notwithstanding the complexities of this phenomenon there is some

evidence that, in a world where leaders are required to deal with ever-changing and often unforeseen circumstances (Yuste, 2021), mindfulness has helped them to manage unexpected events, accept situations without judgement, and maintain objectivity when dealing with challenging situations (Baron, 2016; Götmann and Bechtoldt, 2021).

Empirical quantitative studies have demonstrated positive links between mindfulness practice and leadership (Hülsheger and Nübold, 2019; Konte and Xiaohjui, 2020). These studies are presented and discussed as critical to understanding how previous work supports and influences the study performed for this thesis. As with EI, research has been very much dominated by quantitative studies and a review of the literature confirms a need for qualitative research to complement current knowledge in the field.

To date, very few studies have been performed to look at the inter-relationship between EI and mindfulness (Schutte and Malouff, 2011; Miao et al., 2018), but given that a key research aim of this study was to explore how these constructs inter-relate, they form an essential part of the literature review. Early indications are that the use of mindfulness may increase EI, but the research to date is based on quantitative data analysis. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of how the lack of qualitative research in the fields of EI and mindfulness presents a significant opportunity to build knowledge through the use of a different methodological approach, framing this study in the context of existing research.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological design and research choices made to support this research project. The study was designed to uncover deeper insights into EI than had previously been exposed, and thereby to provide evidence of how leaders experience the management of emotions in the workplace. Specifically, the study was designed to explore how they report an understanding of their own and others' emotions and if/how they use this information to support analysis and decision-making in the enactment of their roles as leaders. Mindfulness was also explored through the use of qualitative data collection to establish how leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners believe their mindfulness practice influences them as

they undertake their duties, particularly when they are required to engage in emotional situations.

The collection of rich qualitative data from a group of leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners and a group who did not enabled the gathering of practical evidence-based insights into how the research participants reported experiencing these constructs in day-to-day acts of leadership. In addition, and most importantly, the study sought to explore the relationship between EI and mindfulness through in-depth analysis of real life experiences to highlight points of overlap and difference. The study also sought to explore whether leaders who practised mindfulness perceived it to have a positive effect on their EI and leadership effectiveness and, if so, how did they determine this? The full rationale for the research design selected is explained in this chapter, along with an explanation of why the design was appropriate to the specific research aims and questions posed. Detail is provided on the methodology that was applied over the course of the research study, including the collection and analysis of data, interpretation of the data into themes and an explanation of how this informed the final theoretical contribution. The methodological limitations of the study are also presented and discussed.

Chapters 4 to 6 contain the main body of research findings. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the key data themes that represented leaders' experiences of EI in the workplace. Given the quantity of data provided in this study, it was evident that leaders devoted a significant amount of time to emotional management as part of their day-to-day work. This chapter presents the key data themes that emerged from the study, highlighting that EI is enacted in two distinctively different ways. Emotional awareness and management in the self was the most commonly reported form of EI that emerged from the data, and there are some interesting insights into how leaders navigate their emotions at work with the aim of achieving desired outcomes. Whether these outcomes are positive are not we do not know. For the purposes of this study a desired outcome is simply something the leader hopes to achieve.

Emotional awareness and management of emotions in others also presented as a related but distinct process, but it was less frequently reported and seemingly harder to achieve, given the evidence from the study. Managing the emotions of others was also undertaken by leaders with the aim of achieving desired outcomes, which research participants explained in their diary accounts and/or at interview. This chapter provides insight into the everyday application of EI by leaders including the importance placed on EI, as an antecedent of successful leadership, by the research participants. It also highlights that, in this study, the enactment of EI was almost exclusively involved with the management of negative emotions.

Chapter 5 contains data themes that surrounded leaders' experiences of mindfulness, as reported by research participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners. The study highlights how mindfulness practice is being experienced in a myriad of ways, from traditional meditation to lesser-known, more novel, examples of this rather perplexing construct. The benefits of mindfulness, particularly its ability to support stress management and to provide heightened levels of awareness to those who regularly practise it, are captured in the form of rich data as this chapter uncovers mindfulness in the words of the leaders who experience it. In particular, with reference to the research aims of understanding the relationship between EI and mindfulness, findings identify that leaders who practice mindfulness believe it provides positive support to them in the areas of emotional awareness and empathy, which they find helpful in managing emotional situations in the workplace.

In Chapter 6, the inter-relationship between EI and mindfulness that emerged during the study is explored and compared back to the literature to identify where this work contributes to knowledge. In comparing the data from leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners to those who did not, subtle differences in the enactment of EI between the two groups became apparent, providing the basis for the theoretical contribution of this work. Analysis of findings at a nuanced level identified EI as a dual process-based phenomenon that comprised two distinct elements: self and other-focused EI (Pekaar et al., 2018a). Analysis of the data supported the theory that EI exists at foundation and higher-order levels (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021);

with foundation level EI comprising awareness and understanding of emotions, whilst higher-order processes built on emotional awareness, and resulted in leaders modifying behaviours to manage emotional situations with the aim of achieving desired outcomes. As such, this piece of research has built on the work of both Pekaar et al. (2018a, 2018b) and Görgens-Ekermans and Roux (2021) to reveal a deepened understanding of EI as a process-based phenomenon. In this study, EI was identifiable as both self and other-focused processes, with evidence to suggest the construct comprises both foundation and higher-order elements. This is a new representation of the EI construct that contributes to existing EI literature.

Detailed analysis of the data revealed that leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners provided more detailed accounts of their emotional experiences at work. These leaders believe that mindfulness practice has, amongst other reported benefits, developed their awareness levels which subsequently supports them in recognising emotions in the self and in others at the point at which they occur. Analysis of data indicated that mindfulness also presents as a process (Khaury, Grégoire and Dionne, 2020; Rogge and Daks, 2021) which supports those who practise it in building emotional awareness. Since awareness of emotions in the self and in others is a pre-requisite to accessing higher order EI processes, these leaders reported that mindfulness provides them with an enhanced ability to enact EI through in the moment awareness and recognition of emotions in the self and in others.

In Chapter 7, the relationship between EI and mindfulness uncovered through analysis of the data is interpreted in the form of a new theoretical process model. This new theory suggests that mindfulness processes present a positive addition to the EI construct. This chapter contains the theoretical contribution to knowledge that is required of a thesis. Here the research process culminates in theory which can be developed through future academic study, or used to support leaders in practice by contributing a practical and empirically grounded model to assist them in understanding and managing emotions in the workplace.

The emotionally mindful intelligence (EMI) model is presented, explained and positioned to demonstrate how the processes of EI and mindfulness can work synergistically in the context of leadership practice. EMI theorises that when the processes of mindfulness are overlaid onto EI, there is a positive, additive effect which supports leaders in engaging with emotions in the self and in others in real time to facilitate conscious modification of their behaviours. The relevance of EMI to academia and leadership practice and the potential to develop the model further are also discussed. Chapter 7 concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this study and identification of opportunities for future research to strengthen and develop the conclusions drawn from this work.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

To explore how individuals who work in leadership roles experience EI, mindfulness and the relationship between them, three fields of research require investigation: those that have considered EI, mindfulness, and leadership at the point where it intersects with both of the aforementioned constructs. The usefulness of all three phenomena is supported by significant bodies of work, so the literature review is directed at the areas of most relevance to the research question. As mentioned previously, most published literature on mindfulness and EI is positivist in nature which presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The positivist viewpoint is of interest in terms of gaining an understanding of these phenomena, albeit on the assumption that they can be measured; however, both EI and mindfulness are debated and challenged as constructs, even within the positivist research community (Dasborough et al., 2021).

With regard to a review of relevant qualitative studies in the areas of the application of EI and mindfulness in leadership, both independently and in relation to each other, there is as yet just a modest number of studies on which to call. This has resulted in little depth or breadth of knowledge in the presentation of EI and mindfulness in practice and as such these phenomena remain ambiguous constructs. The lack of qualitative studies in the literature indicate a significant gap in the research and present an opportunity to contribute to an evolving field of study from an alternative methodological perspective.

Notwithstanding the challenges of epistemological and methodological relevance, the literature is important as it presents the reader with an understanding of works on EI, mindfulness and their relationship with leadership. Positioning this research in relation to prior studies and identifying unanswered questions provides the rationale for the research described in this thesis. It would be impossible within the confines of a single thesis to analyse fully the literature across all three fields; therefore, the structure outlined below is followed in order to take the reader through literature pertinent to this specific piece of research and the questions it seeks to answer.

At the start of the review, the evolution of EI as a construct is charted. In this section, the key literature on EI is introduced, beginning with the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990, 1997), which provides background on the development of this field of study. Given the controversy and ambiguity that have consistently surrounded the construct, the reader needs to understand how EI has evolved since its launch in the 1990s. This section covers the notable writing on EI with an explanation of the most well-known theories, models, and measurement tools that have been presented to date. As already mentioned, the majority of research to date in the field of EI uses quantitative data analysis to test various hypotheses through the use of a variety of construct definitions. In contrast this study fills a gap in existing research by taking a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis to gain deeper insights into this complex phenomenon. Although this limits the relevance of the literature somewhat, a review of previous works provides a necessary foundation on which to build an understanding of EI and position this study within existing research.

Next, EI is considered in an organisational context, with a specific focus on studies that pertain to EI in relation to leadership. Leadership is a vast subject in its own right and this researcher has made no attempt to cover all the key literature across the field. Instead, in recognition of this work's contribution to a very specific area of knowledge within the field of leadership, the review is limited to literature that explores the intersection between leadership and EI.

Moving to an exploration of the critical discourse that surrounds EI, literature that challenges the EI construct (Antonakis et al., 2009; Dasborough et al., 2021) is reviewed along with the associated defence (Ashkanasy and Dorris, 2017; Miao, Humphrey and Qian, 2016). Literature in which EI theories, constructs and measurement tools are critiqued has played (and continues to play) a critical role in the development of this field of study. There has been much lively, and at times quite pointed, debate among scholars and some very different conclusions have been drawn on where EI is currently positioned as a subject of academic study. Awareness of this controversy and criticism offered the opportunity to build knowledge through the introduction of qualitative research (Lincoln, 2009: Nguyen et al., 2021).

Regarding mindfulness, the review follows a similar pattern; it begins with an introduction to the construct to provide background context on its evolution as a field of academic interest. The practice of mindfulness can be traced back thousands of years (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). As with EI, the construct of mindfulness has been researched using predominantly quantitative methods. Theorists have presented a myriad of constructs and measurement tools, the most relevant of which will be introduced to provide a basis of understanding for this research study. There follows a review of literature focused on mindfulness in the workplace (Blanke, Riediger and Brose, 2018; Good et al., 2016; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2017) to provide relevant context to explore the research that has been performed into how mindfulness relates to leadership (Baron et al., 2016; Götmann and Bechtoldt, 2021). As an emerging area of research (Carlson, 2018), mindfulness constructs and measurement tools have been subject to almost as much challenge as have those in the field of EI. It is therefore essential to include a review of this literature to provide a comprehensive view of the conclusions drawn to date by scholars in the field.

Finally, there is a review of the literature that covers the inter-relationships between EI and mindfulness. To date this has been a little studied area; however, research interest is increasing and initial findings from empirical studies show promise, highlighting synergies across these two rather elusive phenomena. Details of research conducted to date, findings and limitations, are discussed along with the key areas for further research. The literature review concludes with an identification of the opportunities presented by the current literature, confirming the specific unanswered questions that this research study aims to answer and the key benefits of doing so.

EI – how it has evolved as a construct

EI came to academic prominence through the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990, 1997). They proposed that a new type of *intelligence* existed, which stemmed from the recognition and understanding of emotions, ultimately improving cognitive ability. The model presented by Salovey and Mayer was based around four key components: *the ability to perceive emotions in the self and in others; the ability to understand relationships between emotions; the ability to manage emotions in the self and in others;* and *the ability*

to use emotions to support cognitive thinking and decision making. Later, they developed the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso EI test (MSCEIT), which they used to measure the construct (Salovey, Mayer and Caruso, 1999, 2002, 2003). The Salovey and Mayer model was picked up by the then social science correspondent of *The New York Times*, Daniel Goleman, who was writing a book on emotional literacy. Inspired by the concept, he retitled his book *Emotional Intelligence – Why it matters more than IQ* (1995). This book became an international best-seller and launched the concept of EI into the public domain (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2005).

The raised profile of EI resulted in a plethora of other proposed EI constructs by scholars. Goleman (1995) presented his own definition of EI, which also comprised four key, but subtly different, components to those of the Salovey and Mayer model: understanding self, managing self, understanding others and managing relationships. Bar-On (1997) built on Goleman's work through his development of the emotional quotient inventory (EQi), which he used to measure what he called *non-cognitive intelligence*. Goleman and Bar-On later worked together to produce an EI measurement tool, the emotional competency index (ECI), which comprised a 360-degree feedback model.

Over the next few years, academics proposed constructs and measurement tools at a significant rate. Several of these overlapped in terms of theoretical conceptualisation (Landy, 2005). The first EI model that was developed specifically for use in the workplace was the work profile questionnaire for EI (WPQei) (Cameron, 1999, 2004). Cameron's conceptual model of EI was developed around seven trait/behavioural components (innovation, self-awareness, intuition, emotions, motivation, empathy and social skills). Cameron designed his model to overlap with existing constructs in order to bring together the content that he felt was relevant to the workplace. However, despite some confirmatory research (Apaydin and Anafarta, 2012) that supported the reliability of the WPQei in the Turkish education sector, Cameron's model failed to attract much interest from other researchers.

Gignac (2008) created an inventory (the Genos EI inventory) that was built on existing measurement tools to create a seven-strand set of EI dimensions designed for use in the

workplace. This model used both self- and directly reported measures. Subsequently, Boyatzis (2007, 2009) developed the emotional and social competence indicator (ESCI) as a management assessment tool. He presented his research as more empirically robust than previous versions because it followed an inductive approach to researching exceptional performers to establish common emotional and social competencies (Boyatzis, 2011). A measure of the collective EI of team members in an organisational context was developed, which employed awareness and management of one person's and others' emotions as the primary EI definition (Jordan and Lawrence, 2009). The most widely cited work-based EI measure is the Wong and Law EI scale (WLEIS) (2002). This scale was based on the Salovey and Mayer EI definition. It was developed to provide a sound yet simple, and therefore practical, EI measure specifically for use in the fields of leadership and management.

More recently, EI measurement has taken a slightly different direction with the introduction of the Rotterdam EI scale (REIS) and associated construct definition (Pekaar et al., 2018a, 2018b). The self-reported REIS takes a different approach to previous construct definitions by presenting self-focused EI and other-focused EI as two distinct components within a single, over-arching EI construct. In addition, Pekaar et al. (2018a, 2018b) suggest that both self-focused and other-focused EIs exist as a set of sequential processes in which emotional appraisal presents initially as separate and distinct from emotional regulation.

As the field of EI was flooded with construct definitions and associated measurement tools, Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) attempted to introduce some order and clarification to the situation. Building on the emerging concepts of ability and trait EI, which had begun to proliferate in the literature (Petrides and Furnham, 2000), they introduced three 'streams' of EI, to enable the consolidation of similar construct definitions and measurement tools under one broad categorisation. An understanding of the similarities and differences across the three streams is helpful to critique the literature and to evaluate in which areas future research will contribute to what continues to be considered an immature and controversial field of study (Dasborough et al., 2021).

Stream 1

Stream 1 relates directly to the Salovey and Mayer model, which is measured by the MSCEIT. It remains the primary measure of all four 'branches' of the original model. It is widely accepted in the literature as a test of EI in the manner of a true *intelligence*. As such, stream 1 is often referred to as the intelligence or ability-based model of EI. The MSCEIT was the only recognised measurement tool for ability EI for over 20 years; however, it has been challenged recently by the Geneva emotional competence test (GeCo) (Schlegel and Mortillaro, 2019). Stream 1 appeals to EI purists, who suggest that it is the only true measure of EI since the element of 'intelligence' is missing from streams 2 and 3 (Walter et al., 2012).

Stream 2

Stream 2 is based on the Salovey and Mayer definition of EI but is measured through a range of self- and peer-reported measures rather than an 'ability test'. Examples of stream 2 EI tools are the WLEIS (Wong and Law, 2002) and the workgroup EI profile (WEIP) (Jordan et al., 2002).

Stream 3

Stream 3 includes trait- and competency-based models of EI that are broader than and sit outside the Salovey and Mayer definition. Models that follow stream 3 are referred to as mixed EI models and use self-reports or peer/360 review to assess levels of EI. The EQI (Bar-On, 2000), ECI (Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2000), ESCI (Boyatzis, 2007, 2009), the trait EI questionnaire (TEIQue) (Petrides, 2009) and REIS (Pekaar et al., 2018) are all classified as mixed models. Table 2.1 shows a summary of the key measures of EI with their authors, years of publication and the EI stream in which they are classified.

Evaluation of the literature that was published after the three-stream classification of EI had been introduced indicates a subtle but recognisable shift in focus. There is a reduction in the number of papers that present new EI constructs and measurement tools and a rise in the number that discuss the use of existing EI constructs to test for validity, both independently and as a mediator and/or moderator with other constructs.

Table 2.1 – key measures of EI

Construct	Measure	Author	Content	Stream
Mayer, Salovey and Caruso emotional intelligence test	MSCEIT/ MSCEIT2	Salovey, Mayer & Caruso, 1997/2002	Ability-based model to assess how individuals perceive, appraise and express emotion; and manage emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth	1
Emotional quotient inventory	EQi	Bar-On 1997/2000 (2006)	12 subscales: self-regard, assertiveness, independence, self-actualisation, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships, reality testing, flexibility, problem solving, stress tolerance, impulse control and happiness.	3
Emotional intelligence scale	EIS	Schutte et al., 1998	Uses the conceptual framework of Salovey and Mayer within a self-reported questionnaire. Single factor model of 33 items	2
Work profile questionnaire –EI	WPQei	Cameron, 1999	Focuses on seven competencies – innovation, self-awareness, intuition, emotions, motivation, empathy and social skills	3
Wong and Law emotional intelligence scale	WLEIS	Wong and Law, 2002	Designed for use in the workplace, this scale measures emotional appraisal in self and others, use and regulation of emotion	2
Workgroup emotional intelligence profile	WEIP	Jordan et al., 2002	Tool that assesses the awareness and management of own and others' emotions within a team situation	2
Emotional competence inventory	ECI/ESCI	Goleman and Boyatzis (2000), Boyatzis (2009)	Competency-based model which supports predictive behaviours in the workplace	3
Trait emotional intelligence questionnaire	TEIQuE	Petrides, 2009	Suggests that EI is a subset of personality factors such as empathy, assertiveness and optimism	3
Genos emotional intelligence inventory	Genos (EI)	Gignac, 2008	EI measurement tool specifically designed for use in the workplace using seven dimensions: self-awareness, emotional expression, emotional awareness, self-management, emotional reasoning, emotional management and self-control	3
Rotterdam emotional intelligence scale	REIS	Pekaar et al., 2018	Focus on the split between self management of emotions and management of emotions in others using a self-report model	3

Some researchers consider that EI is better understood as an umbrella term to demonstrate broad abilities in emotional perception and management rather than as a detailed set of model-specific components (Efenbein and McCann, 2017). In addition, several scholars have focused on the use of meta-analytic techniques to consolidate studies and advance understanding in the field. This move indicates an increased level of construct maturity (Reichers and Schneiders, 1990). Interest in the manifestation and consequences of EI in the workplace and, in particular, how it relates to leadership has resulted in the production of a significant body of research, which is explored next.

EI – organisational and leadership implications

After Goleman launched his claim that EI was more important than intelligence quotient (IQ), interest increased in how this translated into an organisational environment (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2005). Studies have shown EI to be associated with a range of

positive outcomes in the workplace. In a study of 319 working adults in Australia, those with higher levels of EI were reported to enjoy improved mental health and greater levels of social support and perceived power (Schutte and Loi, 2014). Empirical research has suggested that the increased amount of social support experienced by those with higher levels of both ability and mixed types of EI mediates stress management at work; this means that their resilience is increased and their work-life balance is improved (Schneider, Lyons and Khazon, 2013; Weinzimmer et al., 2017; Zeidner and Matthews, 2016). There is also some empirical evidence to support EI as a predictor of leadership effectiveness (Edelman and Van Knippenberg, 2018) and an antecedent of career adaptability, with the potential for greater levels of success in the achievement of career goals (Coetzee and Harry, 2014).

People who show EI have been reported to have improved abilities to manage conflict in the workplace (Khosravi, Rezvani and Ashkanasy, 2020). They recognise anger and manage aggressive behaviours effectively (Megías et al., 2018). Literature suggests that when team members collectively display emotionally intelligent behaviours, particularly through their recognition of emotions of other individuals within a group situation, issues can be more effectively debated than without such behaviour and collective decisions are reached (Boyatzis, Goleman and McKee, 2002).

The presence of EI was found to be associated with positive employee engagement in a study of 306 employees in the UK (Barreiro and Treglown, 2020). Trait EI was measured using the stream 3 TEIQue (Petrides, 2009), and the study found that levels of EI were positively correlated with increased engagement at work, specifically in the areas of happiness, emotion management, self-motivation and emotion regulation.

Scholars engaged in the field of organisational behaviour are interested in the testing of theoretical constructs against performance outcomes (Miller and Tsang, 2010). Meta-analysis has demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between all three streams of EI and performance and that this correlation goes beyond personality and cognitive ability, although the self- and peer-reported streams 2 and 3 present stronger relationships than ability-based stream 1 (Boyle et al., 2011). Later studies have supported this finding

(Joseph, Newman and O'Boyle, 2015).

In the literature, some leadership constructs have been linked with EI. Leadership provides the context rather than the focus for this piece of research and, as such, the literature review is focused on the intersection between EI and leadership. Leadership studies have attracted significant research interest over recent years. In particular, a 'new genre' of 21st-century leadership theories has been presented, which extend far beyond the direct management of tasks within organisations (Hannah et al., 2014). These theories suggest that staff can exceed previous performance levels and expectations when leaders engage and support employees through the application of authentic behaviours, ethical values, coaching and feedback (Hannah et al., 2014; Hoch et al., 2018). Several constructs have been put forward, but the key theoretical contributions have been attributed to ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005), transformational leadership (Bass, 1990), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970) and authentic leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003).

Transformational and authentic leadership are regularly cited as of relevance to EI in the literature (Føllesdal and Hagtvet, 2013; Miao et al., 2018). Among academics, authentic leadership is considered a more genuine form of leadership that is enacted in response to challenges of the modern world such as terrorism, economic frailty or questions surrounding the ethics of influential leaders. The construct comprises four key facets: self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency and internalised moral perspective (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). The development of the authentic leadership questionnaire (ALQ) measurement tool (Walumba et al., 2008) is viewed by some as a conscious effort to include elements of EI in a model of leadership (Duncan et al., 2017). Authentic leadership has been presented as a *root construct* that provides the foundation for other modern forms of leadership such as transformational, servant, ethical and spiritual (Avolio and Gardener, 2005).

Transformational leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1994) is presented as a process through which leaders display role model behaviours and encourage innovative behaviours in followers by actively supporting them through the supply of feedback and coaching. The construct comprises four characteristics: idealised influence, inspirational motivation,

intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. Research has shown positive links between transformational leadership and improved performance and innovation in employees. The suggestion is that the ability of leaders to engage and connect deeply with employees on an emotional level stimulates motivation and creativity (Asfar and Umrani, 2020). Some researchers have reported that the application of transformational leadership in team settings promotes positive work cultures and ultimately promotes creativity and innovation within the team (Eisenbeiss, Boerner and Van Knippenberg, 2008).

Researchers have investigated the ways in which the constructs of EI and leadership (in their various forms) inter-relate (Edelman and Knippenberg, 2018; Føllesdal and Hagtvet, 2013; Gransberry, 2021; Halliwell, Mitchell and Boyle, 2021). A significant body of research points to a positive link between EI and leadership effectiveness (Dasborough et al., 2021; Miao et al., 2018). Bearing in mind the differences among the three streams of EI and the multiple types of leadership, which can complicate matters somewhat in terms of comparing studies, empirical evidence suggests that those with higher levels of EI demonstrate enhanced leadership behaviours as defined by the constructs used in the individual research studies (Livesey, 2017; Halliwell, Mitchell and Boyle, 2021; Miao et al., 2018).

Siegling, Neilson and Petrides (2014) examined whether measurements of trait EI could be used to differentiate leaders from non-leaders in their study of a multinational company in Europe. Volunteers from across the organisation were invited to complete the TEIQue trait EI questionnaire (Petrides, 2009). Of the 96 participants, those in leadership and management positions were found to have significantly higher EI scores than non-leaders. Barling et al. (2000) studied 49 managers, each of whom completed mixed-method EI assessments and a transformational leadership questionnaire. This study found that EI was associated with three of the four areas of transformational leadership (idealised influence, inspirational motivation and individualised consideration); however, no link was found with the fourth component, intellectual stimulation. Links between EI and transformational leadership were also found by Mandell and Pherwani (2003) in their study of 32 managers in the US. Their study found that transformational leadership styles could be predicted from EI scores, with those higher in EI demonstrating a stronger affiliation to

transformational leadership that was reflected in output from the multi-factor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass and Avolio, 1995). Görgens-Ekermans and Roux (2021) used the ESCI mixed-method EI tool (Boyatzis and Goleman, 2007) to investigate how the sub-facets of EI were related to transformational leadership, as identified in the MLQ (Bass and Avolio, 1995). Through the use of a large research pool of 267 respondents and a 360-degree feedback EI tool, they concluded that EI existed as a hierarchical ability; self-awareness acted as the foundation that supported self-management and relationship management. These competencies are directly linked to elements of transformational leadership, notably relationship management and the exhibition of role model behaviours to create inspirational motivation in followers. Similar conclusions were drawn in a recent study by Milhem et al. (2019), who used data from 338 full-time employees in Palestine. They found that the positive effects of transformational leadership, regarding employee engagement, were significantly mediated by leaders who showed EI.

Meta-analysis has demonstrated a significant, positive relationship between levels of EI and authentic leadership, although Miao, Humphrey and Qian (2018a) found that this relationship was much stronger in the cases of self-reported and mixed EI (streams 2 and 3) than in the case of ability EI. In addition, leaders higher in EI have been found to display humble, caring, ethical and authentic behaviours, as assessed by themselves and their followers (Miao et al., 2019; Miao, Humphrey and Qian, 2021). In terms of relationships at work, there is some evidence that leaders with higher levels of EI have more emotionally intelligent and satisfied followers, and that emotional contagion creates positive operational cultures in which self-development and personal growth are encouraged (Ashkanasy and Humphrey, 2011; Bono et al., 2007; Miao et al., 2016). Organisations that develop 'emotionally intelligent cultures' have employees who are better able to deal with negative feelings and the culture facilitates more effective interpersonal interactions, reduced levels of Machiavellian behaviour, improved operational performance and improved work/life balance as reported by employees, compared with companies that do not build such cultures (Humphrey et al., 2019; Weinzimmer et al., 2017).

Alzoubi and Aziz (2021) aimed to identify whether EI could contribute to the *effectiveness* of leaders through a comprehensive study of 213 senior leaders across all (22) national

banks in the United Arab Emirates. The researchers sought to discover whether EI contributed to the quality of strategic decision-making. They crafted their own questionnaires, which were essentially hybrids of existing measurement tools, to measure EI and the quality of strategic decisions. Their findings supported the hypothesis that there was a link between EI and higher quality strategic decisions. The link was demonstrated in the ability of those leaders with higher levels of EI to display greater self-awareness, self-management and relationship management. This enabled them to balance the need to make rational decisions (which may not always be popular with subordinates) with an understanding of how to engage positively with colleagues to obtain feedback and to share ideas, which ultimately drove better decision-making.

In a modest study of 41 Australian public service workers, EI (through the use of the MSCEIT ability measure) and cognitive ability were measured. These data were considered with personality profiles and ratings of leadership effectiveness provided by the participant, their manager and peers. The collected data provided all-round feedback on both performance outcomes and leadership behaviours. Results showed that leaders with strong ability EI scores were more likely to achieve business outcomes and be rated as effective leaders by peers and subordinates than those who did not (Rosete and Ciarrochi, 2005). Edelman and Van Knippenberg (2018) added an ability EI test to a leadership assessment programme that included personality tests and role play. The role play required the leader to provide subordinate feedback. After the researchers had controlled for the big five personality factors (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and neuroticism, also known as the five-factor model (FFM)) and cognitive intelligence, they found that EI levels were positively correlated with leadership effectiveness. The authors suggested that the findings provided empirical support for EI as a contributor to leadership effectiveness over and above other known personality measures (Antonakis et al., 2009). Their conclusion from this study was that leaders higher in EI were more effective in their interactions with followers as they used their ability to recognise and understand the emotions of others.

More recently, a bespoke self-report questionnaire designed to assess the relationship between leadership and management practices in the US was distributed to 615,295 federal agency employees (Gransberry, 2021). In order to establish links between EI and

desirable behaviours, questions were developed to test EI in line with Goleman's theory and the associated Bar-On model (1997). Results indicated a correlation between the presence of EI and desirable leadership practices through observation of behaviours and perceived levels of EI in leaders (Gransberry, 2021). Similar results were obtained in a study by Sáncheaz, Pérez and Aránega (2020) that involved 161 executives from a global manufacturing organisation. Participants were asked to answer a detailed questionnaire to establish the relative importance of general intelligence and EI in leadership effectiveness. The researchers concluded that both were required in effective leaders.

In 2020, Blaik Hourani, Litz and Parkman published a study that involved 27 public school leaders in Abu Dhabi. The qualitative study, a rarity in this field, explored the perceived role of EI in professional performance standards in leadership within the education sector. They used semi-structured interviews based on the model developed by Bar-On et al. (2007) to gain insight into the impact of EI on the professional challenges the participants faced in their roles. The research concluded that the leaders' EI supported them during their performance of a significant number of their day-to-day activities, notably in the ways that they communicated with the community and other stakeholders and led their teams. However, it is difficult to establish from the research paper how the choice of research questions aligned to a specific EI model may have influenced the responses from the research participants. The authors noted the limitations of this study in terms of size, geography and associated cultural bias, which may have impacted the findings. On this basis, they positioned their work as exploratory in nature. Nonetheless, as it is one of the very few qualitative studies that has been performed on EI and leadership, it provides a good basis on which to build, compare and contrast the findings from this research.

An article by Cherniss and Roche (2020) provides a synopsis of their book, which is aimed at management practitioners and entitled *Leading with feeling; nine strategies for Emotionally Intelligent Leadership*. The book contains data gathered over ten years from 25 'outstanding leaders' (identified by management consultants, executive coaches, and other experts in organisational and leadership behaviour). Although not aimed at the academic community, this book was particularly relevant to this study since it provides another example of the use of qualitative methods (interviews) to establish how leaders use

emotions to deal with challenges and opportunities at work. Interestingly, the authors associate none of the themes presented from the research data with any of the established EI constructs. The study reports that successful leaders: monitor and analyse the emotional climate of their surroundings; express feelings to motivate others; are aware of the impact of their behaviour on others' emotions; display empathy; reframe emotionally difficult situations to make them easier for others to deal with; and help others to develop emotional awareness and EI. Whilst these themes do not relate directly to any specific construct, they do align with the essence of EI as captured by Pekaar et al. (2018 p1): *'The knowledge and/or competencies to effectively deal with emotions to regulate social and emotional behaviours.'* Cherniss and Roche (2020) conclude that many leaders have sufficient EI to improve their effectiveness in the workplace, but they need to develop their application of EI to deal effectively with challenges and opportunities as they arise. This suggests that EI is highly valuable to leaders as they manage dynamic situations, in which they must simultaneously manage their own and others' emotions in pursuit of positive organisational outcomes.

From the evidence in the literature, it seems that there is a strong case for developing EI in leaders through training and development. This is explored in the next section.

The case for the development of EI in leaders

A significant body of evidence has been built in the literature that supports EI as an element of, or contributor to, effective leadership. So great is the belief that EI is fundamental to leadership effectiveness that it has been described as a necessary competence to be sought during recruitment at senior levels (Livesey, 2017). The development of EI in leaders has become big business, and plenty of commercial training is available (Mattingly and Kraiger, 2019). However, without sufficient empirical research, individuals and organisations could waste time and money investing in EI development without assurance that it will help them to train or become better leaders (Dippenaar and Schaap, 2017; Golnaz, 2012). Those who subscribe to the idea of EI as an ability or trait construct may reject the idea that EI can be taught or learned, since the theory links it

directly to individuals' inherent cognitive abilities or personality. There is, however, a school of thought that trait EI in the form of inheritable characteristics does not exist in isolation and can be complemented or compensated for by learned behaviours (Petrides et al., 2016). Few empirical studies have been conducted on the effects of training on EI and leadership effectiveness. What there are, however, present some encouraging indications in terms of the positive outcomes associated with EI training (Clark, 2010; Wittmer and Hopkins, 2018). The literature contains some empirical evidence that EI training can be effective in a workplace context (Clarke, 2010), and some researchers have called for EI to be included as part of standard leadership development programmes (Walter et al., 2011) and executive coaching interventions (Wittmer and Hopkins, 2018).

Dulewicz and Higgs (2004) considered the question of whether EI could be developed in leaders in a paper which reported the results of three separate studies. The research participants were representatives of the retail and pharmaceutical industries and the team leaders, managers, and crew in a round-the-world yacht race. The authors constructed their own EI measures after reviewing the literature, These measures were built on the inter- and intrapersonal enablers to EI (Bar-On, 1997) and highlighted intuition and resilience as key enablers that supported EI in a leadership context. Participants' EI levels were measured prior to a leadership training intervention and again at some time after the intervention. Two of the three training courses contained material specifically designed to develop EI, whilst the third, conducted on a control group, contained only general management development material. Re-testing included assessments from line managers on participants' performance to introduce a level of impartiality to the results. Participants knew they were taking part in an academic study, but no other details were shared until after the research was completed. Whilst results were mixed across several tested hypotheses, the control group was the only one to show no change in EI following the training, and there were significant increases in levels of intuition over the course of the study in the other two groups. This led the authors to conclude that it was possible for people to develop EI. They conceded that the findings were modest and that further research was required to explore further the nature of EI development in different contexts and to reinforce the findings through other studies.

In a case study of an American bank (Boyatzis et al., 2013), positive links were reported between the completion of EI training and leadership effectiveness. The study followed an executive development programme that was grounded in EI and delivered over a two-year period to 370 of the bank's top leaders. The programme contained a range of interventions that involved reflection, the development of a personal vision supported by coaching and some mindfulness practice.[1] Interviews with participants provided highly favourable feedback that described the training as a positive influence in their work and home lives. One participant said: '*I determined the two most important things to focus on are my family and my career'.* This analysis demonstrated self-awareness that had clearly evolved as a result of the programme. The Chief Executive and sponsor of the programme reported: *"Our business is all about people, it's all about taking care of our customers … taking care of each other … working collaboratively to create better solutions … the entire team are participating in a very, very different way … in a great way."* (Boyatzis et al., 2013, p23).

Leadership development coaching has the potential to support the development of EI. Since some academics suggest that EI can exist as both an inherent personality trait and/or a set of behaviours (Boyatzis, 2018; Mathews et al, 2004), it should be possible to develop EI competencies through training and/or coaching interventions (Dippenaar and Schaap, 2017; Halliwell, Mitchell and Boyle, 2021). To investigate this point, Dippenaar and Shaap (2017) studied 30 randomly selected participants, all in management or senior leadership positions, who attended a leadership coaching programme specifically focused on the development of emotional and social competencies as defined in the Bar-On EQi (1997). The results comprised quantitative and qualitative findings that demonstrated a medium-to-large improvement in EI levels among the participants. From the qualitative results, the authors drew out five main themes that showed overall improvement: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability and general mood. The participants reported that their coaching journeys had been "enjoyable, relevant and impactful". Dippenaar and Shaap (2017, p11).

[1] Mindfulness training is explored further in the mindfulness section of the literature review.

Schlatter and McDowall (2014) undertook a longitudinal study over five years of 100 managers in the mining industry. The research comprised reviews of the impact of a coaching programme designed to raise the awareness and competence of EI in leaders. The results demonstrated significant positive changes in the leadership styles of those participants who had engaged consistently in the coaching process. The average length of time spent in the programme by each manager was six months, and progress was evidenced by EI psychometrics that were self-reported through the EQi (Bar-On, 1997) and 360 feedback assessments that were undertaken at regular intervals.

Criticisms of and challenges to EI

Supporters of EI suggest that studies performed over the last 25 years provide robust evidence of the validity of EI both as an independent construct and as an antecedent of effective leadership (Boyle et al., 2010; Miao, Humphrey and Qian, 2018). These are bold claims and, despite the undeniable amount of research evidence that exists to support these views, they are not shared by everyone in the academic community. Critics state that the assertion that EI is a contributor to leadership effectiveness is not backed up by sufficient empirical evidence (Antonakis et al., 2009; Cavazotte, Moreno and Hickmann, 2012; Dasborough et al., 2021). Others suggest that unanswered questions regarding what makes an effective leader present difficulties in the objective measurement of leadership effectiveness (Rosete and Ciarrochi, 2005). Their argument is, if you cannot measure leadership effectiveness, how can you confirm that EI increases it? This is a logical challenge and indicates the need for an alternative approach to research in the field. Performance of a qualitative study among leaders can ascertain what they think about EI in leadership through the gathering of rich data from practice-based experience.

The constructs of EI have been strongly challenged since they were first put forward in the late 1990s and continue to be the subject of debate and disagreement among scholars. Principally there is a lack of agreement regarding how EI is defined (Lincoln, 2009; Matthews et al., 2004, 2010), with significant debate over the three streams of EI (ability, self-report and mixed) and whether or not they are too diverse to represent a single construct (Humphrey et al., 2012; Locke, 2005; Matthews and Roberts, 2001).

Locke (2005) argues that three of the four elements of the Salovey and Mayer construct (stream 1, ability EI) are unrelated to intelligence, and only stream 2 (using emotions to support cognitive thought) is linked to cognitive ability. Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) suggest that practitioner literature and measures have taken a much broader approach to EI than did the original Salovey and Mayer model, and that a mixed-method (stream 3) approach may be potentially useful in organisational management but is significantly different from the purist definition of EI.

In 2008, Salovey and Mayer (2008b) acknowledged the rise of mixed EI models and the criticisms that surrounded the multiple definitions of the EI construct, noting that later interpretations of their work had confused the underlying construct. In addition, they criticised subsequent creators of EI models for diluting their four-branch model by including a range of broad and unrelated traits and behaviours. In 2016 they updated and reviewed the EI construct, again presenting EI as an ability closely linked to intelligence and re-affirming that their definition of EI was specifically NOT linked to behaviour. They remained of the opinion that behaviour was directly associated with personality rather than intelligence. They conceded that there had been little evidence to support branch two of their model (using emotions to support cognitive thought). Given that this branch was the most closely linked to ability and general intelligence, this statement seems to contradict their primary argument that EI is more aligned with intelligence than with behaviours (Schlegel and Mortillaro, 2019).

Locke (2005) highlighted that, in contrast with the Salovey and Mayer (1997) view that EI was a form of intelligence, the trait-based models put forward by academics (Bar-On, 2000; Boyatzis and Sala, 2004; Petrides and Furnham, 2000; Tett, Fox and Wang, 2005) omitted intelligence altogether, which put in doubt the whole concept of EI. Lincoln (2009, p787) asked, in a paper reviewing EI literature: “If I am emotionally intelligent, what do I do?”, which indicated that research had failed to ‘unlock’ the treasure chest of EI despite its introduction as the ‘holy grail’ for success in life (Goleman, 1995). Walter, Humphrey and Cole (2012) highlighted on-going concerns that streams 2 and 3 overlapped with other established personality measures (such as the Five facto model, FFM), and called for more robust research designs that could provide evidence of incremental validity of EI over and

above personality.

The measurement tools used in the field have also been subjected to significant challenges (Conte, 2005; Matthews and Roberts, 2002, 2004; Joseph and Newman, 2010). There has been criticism of the MSCEIT (versions 1 and 2), most notably regarding whether or not it measures reliably the underlying Salovey and Mayer four-branch model of EI (Fiori et al., 2014; Føllesdal and Hagvet, 2009; Keele and Bell, 2008). In a study of Norwegian executives, Føllesdal and Hagtvet (2009) reported significant measurement errors in the test that related to the consensus scoring method used in the MSCEIT. Other researchers question whether answering correctly the MSCEIT photograph-based questions, which indicates an ability to recognise emotions, is indicative of 'real-life' ability to deal with emotional situations in a work or other context (Maul, 2011, 2012; Roberts et al., 2006). In particular, some research has suggested that the ability to read emotions in the expressions of others does not translate across ethnic groups. For instance, Kendra, Debusk and Austin (2011) found, In their study of 87 participants, that individuals were much more able to identify emotional expressions correctly in photographs of others of their own race than they were in those of other ethnic origins. Other critics of the MSCEIT suggest that 'intelligence' in the area of EI is less relevant as a point of measurement than are competencies and behaviours, therefore suggesting that streams 2 and 3 of EI are better tools for practical assessment of EI than is stream 1 (Boyatzis, 2009).

Measurement instruments in streams 2 and 3 have also been challenged in terms of their validity and value. Self-reported measures have been criticised for their lack of objectivity and accuracy, particularly when applied to emotions (Ciarrochi et al., 2002; Shipper et al., 2003). Some researchers have gone so far as to suggest that it is "totally inappropriate to use self-reported measures to assess EI" (Edelman and Van Knippenberg, 2018, p593). A perceived overlap of EI with other theoretical models, in particular the FFM (Conte, 2005; Matthews, Roberts and Zeidner, 2004), has resulted in yet more criticism of EI and it has been suggested that splitting mixed and ability models into streams has added unnecessary complexity and confusion to the field (Zeidner, Roberts and Matthews, 2008).

Studies on EI to date have generally been small. Supporters of EI have used meta-analysis

as a way to consolidate empirical evidence to validate findings on a broader scale (Boyle et al., 2011; Joseph and Newman, 2015; Miao et al., 2018). However, some meta-analysis has produced unfavourable outcomes. In a meta-analysis of studies that investigated the relationship between EI and transformational leadership, Kim and Kim (2017) concluded that, due to the lack of a consensus view on EI as a construct, its contribution to transformational leadership was questionable. Equally, a meta-analytical study into the relationship between EI and transformational leadership by Harms and Credé (2010) found little correlation between the two constructs. The use of meta-analysis as a methodology to build knowledge is another area of debate; critics suggest that, rather than validating findings, the consolidation activity of meta-analysis has the potential to dilute results and create "'amorphous, less interpretable variables" (Dasborough et al., 2021, p5).

Given such criticism, some researchers have suggested that EI holds no value at all as a construct (Antonakis et al., 2009; Dasborough et al., 2021; Locke, 2005). The extract below from an article by Dasborough et al. in *The Leadership Quarterly* (2021) presents a highly derogatory picture of EI. Whilst the article was written somewhat in jest, it indicates that EI is still failing to attract serious academic attention in some quarters and remains controversial as a field of study.

> *"The EI literature is something of a projective test. Depending on who you are and what you believe, you will see different things in the evidence presented. Some will see an increasingly mature field that is growing and building knowledge. Others will see a misguided and moribund field stagnating under the weight of poor measures, poor design, poor analysis and poor theory. We fall into the latter category … EI as we have known it is like a magical fairy; it can appear beautiful but it is sick and if you stop clapping it will die. It is time to stop clapping."* (Dasborough et al., Does Leadership still not need emotional intelligence? Continuing the great EI debate. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 2021, p8).

There is a school of thought that research in the fields of EI and leadership has been insufficiently 'scientific' to be credible (Antonakis et al., 2009). Critics suggest that both fields have been flooded by research conducted through application of weak

methodological designs. The leadership field in particular is accused of having greater interest in the quantity of publications than quality (Alvesson, 2020). Others state that there are so many variations in the competencies that researchers suggest relate to leadership and EI that the positive associations made between the two constructs are, at best, questionable (Burcea and Sabie, 2020). One of the problems identified in the literature is that most research studies on both EI and leadership have focused on specific constructs. With three streams of EI and numerous leadership constructs, this presents obvious issues in drawing comparisons across studies. In addition, the limitations of the definition provided by these constructs do not exist in practice. Leaders are freely able to adopt multiple 'styles' as and when they find them appropriate. Many studies in the literature, however, have tested single leadership styles or EI constructs, with outcomes that are open to criticism in terms of operational validity (Hannah et al., 2014).

From a philosophical perspective, questions have been raised regarding the proliferation of positivist research in the leadership field. It is suggested that authentic leadership, which forms the root of modern leadership constructs, is in danger of obsolescence unless practice-based research can support the theoretical model (Iszatt- White and Kempster, 2018). The literature also suggests that even the leadership scholars who use published measures in their research question the validity of those measures (Spoelstra, Butler and Delany, 2021). Spoelstra et al. (2021) performed qualitative interviews with 82 leadership scholars in the US and the UK and found that, whilst loyal to the scientific potential of leadership research, these scholars struggled to convey confidence in the theories and models that were prominent in the field. The researchers concluded that positivist scholars had strong beliefs in leadership concepts rather than a proven, evidence-based foundation on which to base their research. Something of an oxymoron.

Some concluding thoughts on EI and leadership

Since its launch in the 1990s, EI has been embraced by practitioners in the field of leadership development, despite the conflicting and inconclusive research that continues to cause academic debate (Dasborough et al., 2021). Indeed, there is a view that

consultant practitioners do not have the patience to undertake research that shows the rigour required for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Such a view only serves to fuel the distrust within the academic community of 'evidence' that is said to support EI in management practice (Boyatzis, 2009). It seems a shame that academics and practitioners operate as distinct and separate units in this field.

The world of business and management moves ever more quickly and, without clear definitions of EI and leadership, practitioners have taken matters into their own hands. Leadership development and EI courses are available commercially that contain scant if any reference to academic research. There is, however, some hope for a re-alignment of research and practice. While the research for this thesis was undertaken, a significant volume of new literature was published in the areas of EI and its relevance to leadership. Researchers are now turning their attention to the practical applications of EI, such as how it can support leaders in times of crisis (Yuste, 2021). With the recent global instability caused by Brexit, the pandemic and international conflict, this type of research will be welcomed by the management practice community and may pave the way for more studies that provide insights that are useful to academics and practitioners equally.

One of the key issues that is highlighted in this literature review is the dearth of qualitative research on EI and leadership, and specifically on EI in relation to leadership. The dangers of over-reliance on theoretical, top-down, construct definitions and measures have been highlighted concerning authentic leadership, with warnings that failure to incorporate practice-based, bottom-up research into construct development could ultimately render theory useless (Iszatt-White and Kempster, 2018). The research that does exist breathes some much-needed life into the practical benefits of EI for leaders; however, it barely scratches the surface in the creation of a body of research with the depth and breadth of insight needed to understand EI fully in the context of leadership as a socially constructed phenomenon.

Mindfulness – how it has evolved as a construct

There is no single, universally accepted definition of mindfulness; indeed, the lack of a definition has led to widespread misunderstanding of the phenomenon (Bautista et al., 2022). Rather, the phenomenon has emerged through a series of overlapping thoughts and theories that suggest it manifests as a present-centred awareness combined with an accepting and non-judgemental stance (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2005, Langer, 2015). Advocates of it state that, with regular practice, mindfulness can aid concentration and focus, reduce stress, and enable us to increase our connection with our environment (Bishop et al. 2004; Paulson et al., 2018). Since we are constantly bombarded with 'noise' in both the literal and metaphorical sense, mindfulness has been presented as an antidote to the stresses of the modern world (Shapiro et al., 2018).

Mindfulness originates in Buddhism as a form of 'insight meditation' (Kumar, 2002). Buddhism comprises many different rituals and practices and its nebulous nature has been described as more akin to a philosophy than a religion (Shapiro et al., 2018). The strong meditative element of Buddhism has been extracted as a stand-alone practice, which has led to the creation of mindfulness as a separate concept (Crane, 2017). Meditation is also a critical element of traditional forms of yoga, such as Hatha and Yin, and yoga has become an accepted way to practise mindfulness both as an independent practice and within mindfulness-based training interventions (MBIs) (Salmon et al., 2009). Despite its roots in Buddhism, mindfulness has assumed its own identity. As Kabat-Zinn (2003, p145) points out, "*there is nothing particularly Buddhist about paying attention or awareness … it has more to do with the human mind than with ideology, beliefs or culture".* In recent years, mindfulness has become a widely used practice across multiple disciplines that include therapy and organisational training programmes (Roche et al., 2020).

It is claimed that only a few minutes of focused breathing exercise are required each day to gain the benefits associated with present-centred awareness (Tatar et al., 2021). Those who practise mindfulness have reported an improved sense of well-being, enhanced creativity, improved work-life balance and overall higher levels of life satisfaction (Langer et al., 2015).

Academic interest in mindfulness exploded from the mid-2000s (Baer et al., 2004; Bishop et al., 2004; Brown and Ryan, 2003; Feldman et al., 2007) as academics sought to apply a construct definition to this ancient art in a way that could be translated to the modern world. Studies performed to date have been exploratory and, as an academic construct, mindfulness remains in the fledgling stages (Hülsheger and Alberts, 2021). Over the past 20 years, a range of construct definitions and self-reported measurement tools have been developed (Reb et al., 2020). To aid understanding of the applications of mindfulness within an organisational, leadership context, and to critique the literature successfully, it is useful briefly to visit the main measurement tools that are used in this research field. For ease of reference the tools referred to are summarised in Table 2.2.

Measurement instruments put forward to date have focused predominantly on trait mindfulness. In line with other trait-based social science models, this construct assumes that certain individuals have base personality facets that support a mindful approach to life and its challenges (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Trait mindfulness has become the most common method of measurement used in academic study (Tanay and Bernstein, 2013), since it can be applied to all individuals whether or not they have an active meditation practice.

The mindful attention awareness scale (MAAS) was one of the first to be developed and remains one of the most cited trait-mindfulness measurement tools (Brown and Ryan, 2003). This measure presents mindfulness as the use of naturally occurring characteristics, specifically being attentive and aware of the present moment. Baer et al. (2004) subsequently introduced the Kentucky inventory of mindfulness skills (KIMS), according to

which, mindfulness comprises four elements: observing, describing, acting with awareness and accepting without judgement. The Philadelphia mindfulness scale (PHLMS) (Cardaciotto, Herbert et al., 2008) used two of these factors, present moment awareness and acceptance, in their measurement of mindfulness; whilst Feldman et al. (2007) introduced the cognitive and affective mindfulness scale (CAMS-R), which breaks mindfulness down into attention, present focus, awareness and acceptance. There are subtle differences among the definitions of mindfulness used in these models, but the areas of awareness and acceptance are common themes.

Table 2.2 – key measures of mindfulness

Construct	Measure	Author	Content	Type
Mindfulness attention awareness scale	MAAS	Brown & Ryan, 2003	Assesses the presence or absence of attention to what is happening in the present moment using a single factor construct. Correlates moderately with EI	Trait
Kentucky inventory of mindfulness scale	KIMS	Baer et al., 2004	Measures four factors - observing, describing, acting with awareness and accepting without judgement	Trait
Cognitive and affective mindfulness scale	CAMS	Feldman et al., 2005	Four subsets of mindfulness: attention, present focus, awareness and acceptance	Trait
Philadelphia mindfulness scale	PHLMS	Cardaciotto et al., 2008	A bi-dimensional measure: present moment awareness and acceptance	Trait
Southampton mindfulness questionnaire	MQ (SMQ)	Chadwick et al., 2008	Measures a mindful approach when faced with distressing thoughts. Presented around four areas: mindful observation, letting go, non-aversion and non-judgement. A uni-dimensional model	Trait
Five-factor-model questionnaire	FFMQ	Baer et al., 2006	Measures: observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judgmental, non-responsive	Trait
Toronto mindfulness scale	TMS	Lau et al., 2006	Measure of self-regulation of attention and openness to experience	State
Freiburg mindfulness inventory	FMI	Walach et al., 2006	Mindfulness has both a cognitive and a process element: accepting experience and taking a non-judgemental stance	Trait
Mindfulness process questionnaire	MPQ	Erisman and Roemer, 2012	A process-based measure to assess how engagement in mindfulness supports quality of life and well-being	Trait
State mindfulness scale	SMS	Tanay and Bernstein, 2013	Two-factor solution- objects of mindful attention (what) and qualities of mindfulness as a meta-cognitive state (how)	State
Langer mindfulness scale	LMS	Langer, Pirson,Bodner and Zilcha, 2013	Multi-component construct available in short and long form. Assesses novelty seeking, engagement, novelty producing, flexibility and general mindfulness	Trait
Solloway mindfulness survey	SMS(2)	Solloway and Fisher, 2013	Neither a trait nor state mindfulness. Created for the purpose of tracking the progress of mindfulness students as they begin to engage in the practice.	Neither
Mindfulness@work	M@W	Hülsheger and Alberts, 2021	Four-factor model designed for use in the workplace. Describing, non-reactivity, nonjudging, acting with awareness	Trait

Chadwick et al. (2008) took a slightly different approach in their development of the Southampton mindfulness questionnaire (SMQ), which was designed specifically for use in clinical psychology. The SMQ is focused on people's use of mindfulness to support their detachment from distressing thoughts and is therefore helpful to assess the contribution of mindfulness to the management of mental health. The Freiburg mindfulness inventory (FMI) was designed and tested by Walach, Buchheld et al. (2006) with the help of experienced meditators to reflect a close link to the Buddhist roots of the practice. Use of the FMI aims to measure people's abilities to observe cognitive and emotional thought processes with conscious detachment and a lack of judgement. Recognising that the FMI was most suited to study into traditional Buddhist mindfulness, Walach et al. (2006) also presented a short-form version of the FMI for use by those without meditation experience.

In response to the plethora of measurement tools that had been introduced over a short period, Baer et al. (2006) examined the most common mindfulness measurement scales (the MAAS, CAMS, SMQ, KIMS and FMI) to assess their consistency. They found significant positive correlation and overlap. In a study of 613 undergraduate students who had little or no meditation experience, Baer et al. (2006) analysed collectively their responses to the key measurement tools mentioned above. Analysis of the facet structure of the measures and the data from completed questionnaires led to the identification of five key facets of mindfulness: observing, describing, acting with awareness, not being judgemental and not reacting. As a result of this study, the five-factor mindfulness scale (FFMQ) was presented by Baer and colleagues as the most accurate assessment tool for trait mindfulness at the time. The FFMQ remains popular as an EI measurement tool but some researchers have discounted it as too far removed from Buddhist origins to provide a comprehensive evaluation of mindfulness in its true form (Bayot et al., 2020).

More recently, the Langer mindfulness scale (LMS) (Langer et al., 2013) and the mindfulness@work (M@Work) measure (Hülsheger and Alberts, 2021) have been developed to measure non-meditative mindfulness, particularly in an organisational context. Langer et al. (2013) recognised that many of the measures had been developed either based on Eastern Buddhist influences, or with the objective that they would be used in a clinical capacity. The LMS was created to "serve social psychologists and organisational scholars interested in the effects of mindfulness" (Langer et al., 2013, p2). The Langer study made a clear distinction between Eastern and Western interpretations of mindfulness, suggesting that modern, Western mindfulness was a socio-cognitive construct that should be measured in terms of potential or capacity rather than an assessment of observations and thought processes. Hülsheger and Alberts (2021) discounted this work and presented a measurement tool that was designed specifically for use in organisations in the West The M@Work scale was produced from research on 4,977 working adults from across the globe. The researchers concluded that mindfulness in the workplace could be measured through the use of a four-factor model that comprised: describing, not reacting, being non-judgemental and acting with awareness.

Other researchers (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Feldman et al., 2007) recognised that participation in meditative practice created a 'state' of mindfulness and created measurement tools for such a state. An example is the Toronto mindfulness scale (TMS) (Lau et al., 2006), which is administered directly after meditation. Other state-mindfulness measures that are cited infrequently in academic studies include the state mindfulness scale (Tanay and Bernstein, 2013) and the mindfulness process questionnaire (Erisman and Roemer, 2012). Another tool, the Solloway mindfulness survey presented by Solloway and Fisher (2007), is identified as neither a state nor a trait mindfulness measurement method. It was designed to measure the progress that those new to mindfulness can make over a period of training and practice.

Over recent years, mindfulness research has moved beyond the development of measurement tools. The literature now suggests that the construct can be broadly encapsulated by the four facets of attention, awareness, non-judgement and acceptance (Kang, Gruber and Gray, 2013), and researchers have extended their reach to investigate relationships between the Buddhist philosophy of mindfulness and more modern fields of neurobiology, psychology and behavioural science (Choi et al., 2021; Khaury, Grégoire and Dionne, 2020; Rogge and Daks, 2021). These researchers have attempted to unpick the processes[2] of mindfulness (Rogge and Daks, 2021; Rogge et al., 2022) and suggest that presentation of the construct as a process-based model is key to understanding the links between the phenomenon and positive effect in so many areas of life (Choi et al., 2021).

Mindfulness in an organisational context

The benefits of mindfulness in the context of general well-being, particularly in the areas of stress reduction and resilience, are supported by empirical study in a clinical setting (Dane, 2011). There has been less research into mindfulness in an organisational context; however, there has been a surge of scholarly activity over the last ten years (Daniel, Walsh and Mesmer-Magnus, 2020) as researchers seek to understand how the benefits of mindfulness can be applied to the workplace. A large proportion of studies in this field explore the effects

[2] Mindfulness as a process is covered later in the chapter

of MBIs (Hülsheger and Alberts, 2020; Hyland et al., 2015), and these have already been embraced by several international organisations such as the multinational software company SAP and Google. Research is lagging behind practice, however, and without a sound body of robust empirical evidence to support the positive effects of mindfulness in organisational settings, these training programmes may ultimately fail (Jamieson and Tuckey, 2017). That said, the literature presents some encouraging empirical evidence to support the benefits of mindfulness in organisational contexts, which is explored next.

The ability of mindfulness users to mediate stress at work is well evidenced in the literature. Studies have found that trait mindfulness is associated with reductions in levels of emotional exhaustion and increased resilience in employees (Bullis et al., 2014; Hülsheger et al., 2013). Since organisations seek constantly to do business faster, better and cheaper than before, investment to increase the capacity of employees to cope with stress is potentially attractive. Similarly, empirical studies have reported increases in employee performance linked with the practice of mindfulness. A research programme conducted in the US on 98 employees at seven restaurant chains found a positive correlation between trait mindfulness (measured through the use of the MAAS) and job performance as assessed by the participants' managers (Dane and Brummel, 2013). A review of the impact of state-mindfulness practice on task performance among workers in dynamic environments was found to have positive effects (Dane, 2011); however, this was balanced by recognition from the author that too much focus on present moment activity could detract from observation of wide organisational matters.

Scholars and managers are both interested in employee engagement and how it can be increased, and a number of studies present positive correlations between the practice of mindfulness and employee engagement levels (Leroy et al., 2013; Reb et al., 2014). Research has found that having leaders who score highly on trait-mindfulness scales increases the engagement of their staff (Nübold et al., 2020; Reb et al., 2015). There is also some support in the literature for mindfulness training to increase levels of empathy (Winning and Boag, 2015), a quality often positively associated with leadership capability and follower satisfaction (Holt and Marques, 2011; Lee, 2019). Ultimately, engagement is a difficult concept to identify, with multiple antecedents; however, mindfulness has been positively

associated with a host of positive workplace outcomes including improved relationships and teamworking, increased flexibility and enhanced well-being, all of which have been associated with improved engagement of employees and positive organisational outcomes (Blanke, Riediger and Brose, 2018; Good et al., 2016; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2017).

The attentiveness that mindfulness practice encourages has been found in some studies to support worker engagement with tasks and ultimately to improve the overall reliability of organisational processes (Hales and Chakravorty, 2016). However, this benefit appears to diminish as workloads increase and fatigue sets in, according to the results of a study into 168 workers who completed diary questionnaires (Hülsheger, Walkowuaj and Thommes, 2018).

Mindfulness as a process

From a research perspective, scholars remain perplexed by mindfulness as a phenomenon (Daniel et al., 2022). In an attempt to deepen understanding, the latest research is taking a new direction, shifting the focus away from the measurement and effect of mindfulness and towards an understanding of the processes of which it is comprised. Literature in this area has started to extend into complex neuroscience, which is beyond the scope of this study; however, a summary of recent theoretical contributions in the area of mindfulness as a process is relevant to the research objectives and findings of this work. The following paragraphs provide an overview of recent studies into mindfulness as a process-based phenomenon (Khaury, Grégoire and Dionne, 2020; Rogge and Daks, 2021). These studies offer a new perspective on how mindfulness can be of benefit in work contexts (Badham and King, 2021).

Mindfulness can be viewed as a method of engagement that involves processes that help individuals to manage thoughts and emotions (Choi et al., 2021). Rogge and Daks (2021, p704) suggest that mindfulness processes begin with observation of thoughts and feelings, followed by an acceptance phase, which subsequently supports active 'life-enriching, values-driven behaviour'. Fouchi and Voci (2020) also support a process-based view of mindfulness.

Their theory considers mindfulness as de-automation of cognitive processes (Kang et al., 2013), which ultimately enables behavioural responses to emotional experiences to become more considered than was previously the case. As an example, individuals may have an automatic (learned) response to anger, which involves them raising their voices. De-automation would help an angry person to recognise the emotion and to choose how to respond rather than immediately shouting. Kang and colleagues (2013) and Fouchi and Voci (2020) suggest that the de-automation that can be triggered due to mindfulness helps individuals to recognise and control their thoughts. The process of de-automation can be broken down into de-centring (Bernstein et al., 2015; Gecht et al., 2014) and metacognition[3] (Kudesia, 2019). De-centring can be defined as the ability to observe experiences objectively without judgement or reaction (Rogge and Daks, 2021); metacognition is a method of information processing that enables the disconnection of the self and the mind, to be viewed as two separate sources of thought (Kudesia, 2019).

This is newly emerging theory, which highlights the complex nature of mindfulness as a construct. Research on mindfulness as a process may enable scholars to make progress in understanding what makes mindfulness so powerful as a defence against the challenges of the modern world (Shapiro, 2018). Early indications are positive. Some empirical evidence suggests that a combination of training in both mindfulness and metacognition can help individuals to challenge thinking, work collectively on tasks and be more situationally aware while carrying out their duties in the workplace (Kudesia, 2019; Reina and Kudesia, 2020). There is much scope for further research into mindfulness as a process and how its influence extends across multiple areas of life. During the conduct of the research described in this thesis, bottom-up insights on mindfulness processes have been collected which provide a valuable contribution to knowledge in this new branch of mindfulness research.

Development of mindfulness in leadership

Leaders are required to deal with ever-changing and often unforeseen circumstances (Yuste, 2021). Mindfulness can support them as they manage unexpected events. Evidence suggests

[3] Metacognition is an awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes

that leaders who enjoy high levels of mindfulness can accept situations without judgement and maintain objectivity as they deal with challenging situations (Baron, 2016; Götmann and Bechtoldt, 2021). Such is the need for the skills that mindfulness has been reported to support that some researchers have suggested that employers should actively recruit leaders who show higher levels of trait mindfulness, as this can be used as an accurate predictor of leadership capability (Hülsheger and Nübold, 2019). The relationship between mindfulness and leadership, however, is not well-known and research in this area faces the same challenges as were discussed in the section of this review that considered the association between EI and leadership. Studies on mindfulness in a leadership context are neither prolific nor broad in scope (Good et al., 2016); however, there have been some interesting empirical studies that lay the foundation for discussion and further study.

In common with EI, the leadership constructs that are most commonly associated with mindfulness as either antecedents or consequences are authentic leadership and transformational leadership. Links between authentic leadership and trait mindfulness were established in a multi-source field study of 221 leaders. After a 30-day app-based, mindfulness-based intervention, leader and follower ratings of authentic leadership and trait mindfulness increased, as measured through the application of the MAAS and the authentic leadership inventory (ALI) (Nübold, Van Quaquebeke and Hülsheger, 2020).

Empirical study has also demonstrated a positive link between mindfulness practice and authentic leadership as perceived by followers (Hülsheger and Nübold, 2019). These researchers conducted two separate studies (as a subset of a wider study into leadership and mental health) of 221 leaders and 841 subordinates across a range of industries and organisations in Germany. In the first study, participant leaders applied the MAAS to themselves (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Their staff were then asked to rate their authentic leadership skills through application of the ALI (Neider and Schreischeim, 2011). The results showed a correlation between mindfulness and authentic leadership, as perceived by followers. The authors noted that perceptions of authentic leadership can vary between leaders and followers, and that therefore the initial study was limited in its findings because only followers' feedback was included. To test further the association between the two constructs, the researchers undertook a second study to test leaders' and followers'

perceptions of authentic leadership, before and after the completion of several mindfulness interventions. The interventions took place over a period of weeks and consisted of self-guided, app-based mindfulness training over 30-day periods. The study comprised 99 participants from across Europe and the US. The results showed significant increases in both self-reported and follower-reported levels of authentic leadership after the interventions. The researchers concluded that, despite the limitations of the research, particularly the lack of a control group, the study provided encouraging findings that were of practical value to organisations that sought to develop authentic leadership as part of their cultures.

In methodological contrast to these studies, a longitudinal mixed-method study (Baron, 2016) established through the use of bespoke measurement tools that authentic leadership and mindfulness had improved consistently over a three-year leadership development programme that incorporated the core elements of both. In addition to positive correlations between the training interventions and quantitative, measured outcomes, qualitative findings revealed that participants found the programme enormously challenging but ultimately highly effective in their development as leaders.

Transformational and authentic leadership were found to be closely aligned with trait mindfulness in a recent study of 390 managers in South Africa, in which the FFM questionnaire (FFMQ) was used to measure mindfulness and the MLQ and ALQ to measure transformational leadership and authentic leadership respectively (Konte and Xiaohjui, 2021). Also of note is a recent, though small, mixed-method study of military leaders in the US (Ihme and Sundstrom, 2021). Thirty-six research participants were asked to evaluate the impact of mindfulness training on their self-perceived effectiveness as leaders by using the four components of transformational leadership as a measure. After a four-week training programme, the participants reported that they considered that their personal resilience and stress management had improved, and that their ability to engage effectively with others had been enhanced.

From a more general learning and development perspective, some research findings support the incorporation of mindfulness training into all leadership development programmes as standard (Ruderman and Clerkin, 2015; Sanyal and Rigg, 2021). However, others suggest that

before such a move is made, deepened understanding is required regarding how mindfulness supports leaders in an organisational context to ensure that training interventions are effective (Good et al., 2016; Jamieson and Tuckey, 2017).

Leadership itself remains an evolving construct within academic literature and "'leaders develop through a process we do not fully understand" (Bennis, 2007, p5). Therefore, the opportunity for leadership development through the use of mindfulness remains open to further exploration. Reb et al. (2019) state that more qualitative research should be performed to gain deeper insights into how mindfulness manifests in leaders in terms of their interactions with followers. Such research in turn would provide details regarding how it could be incorporated into leadership development to best effect.

Criticisms of mindfulness

Mindfulness has become something of a buzzword in recent years, and academics lag behind practitioners in their provision of contributions to the debate on what it is and the benefits it can provide, while the number of explanations supplied from other quarters continues to grow (Carlson, 2018; Cresswell, 2017). As with EI, research interest has shifted from an initial focus on construct definition and development of measurement tools, towards the testing of theory for validity, antecedents, consequences and mediation effects. With research to date predominantly comprised of quantitative study, there is an opportunity for exploration into mindfulness using qualitative methods to extract rich data and explore the nuances of the practice from the experiences and perceptions of those who engage in the practice. Given the challenges that mindfulness has presented in terms of definition, the addition of qualitative study will support exploration of individual interpretations of the practice, allowing for subjectivity and personal understanding to be expressed and explored through the analysis process (Cunliffe, 2011). Through qualitative study there is an opportunity to deepen understanding on how mindfulness is experienced which is currently missing from the literature. Research on mindfulness to date is lacking the deep phenomenological insights into how and why mindfulness is practised from the stories and experiences of leaders.

Mindfulness continues to present challenges in terms of definition (Baer, 2015). Most mindfulness measurement scales take the form of self-reported psychometric tools, which have been criticised for the subjectivity of their questions and responses (Baer, 2011; Bergomi et al., 2012). In particular, the language that is associated with mindfulness can be open to interpretation in areas such as observing and describing emotional thoughts (Christopher et al., 2014).

As mindfulness has become more mainstream as a practice and has infiltrated clinical, business and learning environments, there has been criticism that this rather nebulous construct is becoming watered down and has lost the significant benefits that the practice can deliver (Purser and Milillo, 2015; Shapiro et al., 2018). One particular concern is that mindfulness is gaining significant press coverage as a 'quick fix' (King and Badham, 2018a) to reduce stress and improve well-being through attendance at a host of 'Buddhist-inspired' training courses, although there is very little evidence that any positive effect is more than a fleeting feel-good factor (Hülsheger, 2015). In terms of the construct itself, a relationship between the two categories of state and trait mindfulness has not been fully established by studies to date (Bravo et al. 2018), and there is some empirical research that points to negative effects of mindfulness-based interventions such as reduced job satisfaction, increased anxiety and decreased task motivation (Brooker et al., 2013; Hafenbrack and Vohs, 2018).

Some scholars have criticised the appearance in the West of a reductionist type of mindfulness that diverges from its Buddhist origins and damages a practice that requires regular, focused engagement over a sustained period (Grossman, 2011; Lee, 2018; Purser and Milillo, 2015). There are also concerns that the ethical elements of mindfulness contained within the Buddhist practice, which promote kindness, acceptance and lack of judgement, are being lost in the more modern concepts and that the result is less effective outcomes (Bayot et al., 2018; Kumar, 2002; Monteiro et al., 2014).

From an organisational perspective, the evidence that the practice of mindfulness can be an antidote to stress has resulted in a keen interest in its beneficial properties at work. However, academics have struggled to work out the specifics of the mindfulness construct and how it

makes a positive contribution in the workplace (Hülsheger and Alberts, 2021), despite some promising indications (Leroy et al., 2013; Reb, Allen and Vogus, 2020). Although the literature indicates several areas in which mindfulness can add value in organisational contexts, there is a consensus that research is lagging behind the practical application of mindfulness in the workplace and that the field remains in its infancy from an academic perspective (Badham and King, 2021; Reb et al., 2019). Despite a lack of empirical evidence, an increasing number of organisations are embracing mindfulness as part of their leadership and development offers. Since mindfulness is a complex and poorly understood phenomenon, the literature is clear that there is a need to understand why mindfulness is beneficial in a particular setting before companies or individuals embark on investment in training and development programmes (Roche et al., 2020). As an example, Iani, Lauriola and Cafaro (2017) advise that introduction of training on what mindfulness is (observing, describing and acting with awareness), without explanations of how the phenomenon should be practised, will fail to deliver the full range of potential benefits to home or work life. These researchers suggest that, for mindfulness training to be effective, individuals must understand the basic, practical components of mindfulness practice, such as sitting quietly and observing the internal and external environment. However, they also highlight that the way in which mindfulness is practised is equally important if its effects are to be maximised. For example, observing and describing emotions should be undertaken in a non-judgemental, non-reactive manner to release the true benefits of mindfulness practice.

Digital mindfulness-based interventions, which are often accessed via an app, have proved popular as quick and inexpensive ways for organisations to provide training (Mrazek et al., 2019). Some empirical research indicates that app-based mindfulness training delivers positive results. In a study of 221 randomly selected participants in an eight-week app-based mindfulness programme (Lu et al., 2021), participants reported significantly improved levels of mindfulness through completion of the MAAS (Brown and Ryan, 2005). However, the literature contains mixed opinions on the ability of this medium to provide sustained benefits to users (Bruder, 2022). More research is necessary to establish the effects of digital training in the area of mindfulness.

To date, a large proportion of organisational research into mindfulness has centred on how individuals manage themselves, with recognition that this affects interpersonal elements of operation and culture in the workplace (Reb et al., 2019). It has been suggested that, whilst mindfulness may be helpful to those who perform work that requires focus, people who perform different types of work may benefit from letting their minds roam freely (Dane, 2015), and therefore mindfulness in the workplace may not be desirable in all settings or contexts.

Some exploratory studies have indicated that mindfulness can exist both at the individual and collective/organisational levels, and there is a suggestion that the perception of mindfulness in organisations has become too narrow and overly focused on the individual. To embrace fully the benefits of mindfulness in an organisational setting, there is much more work to be done to understand how individual and collective mindfulness may interplay (Badham and King, 2021; Sutcliffe et al., 2018).

In an attempt to 'pin down' mindfulness, academics have called for more 'scientific' methods of quantification; some scholars have noted issues with small sample sizes and a lack of methodological rigour that includes a lack of control groups (Cresswell, 2016; Jamieson and Tuckey, 2017). However, the application of more 'science' to the field, which suggests greater use of positivist-based research methods, may present further challenges to gaining knowledge on the subject. Mindfulness cannot be observed effectively by a third party and may present quite differently, in terms of experience, to each of those who practise it (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). This observation suggests that it is qualitative rather than positivist or science-based research that is required to further our understanding. Empirical research supports the theory that there is a link between mindfulness practice and positive outcomes for those who engage in it (Solloway and Fisher, 2007). From a leadership perspective, although some research studies have suggested that mindfulness can support authentic and transformational leadership (Kroon, Van Woerkom and Menting, 2017; Nübold, Quaquebeke and Hülsheger, 2020), the quantitative nature of research does not explain how this translates into practical day-to-day events of mindfulness in a leadership context.

For some, the attempt to apply academic definitions and positivist measurement criteria to an ancient Buddhist practice in order to bring it into a modern Western culture misses the point of mindfulness completely (Grossman, 2011). There is a school of thought that, if mindfulness can be quantified at all, it can only be 'measured' by those who practise it in relation to their own experience at that time (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). The gaping hole in a qualitative study, taken with the intangible and personal nature of mindfulness, presents an obvious opportunity for qualitative research. This will build deeper levels of knowledge on the practical uses of mindfulness through exploration of how it is practised and capture of the experiences of those who engage in it. Through the performance of qualitative study, there is an opportunity to clarify the impact of mindfulness on those who participate in it through their detailed accounts. In building a body of qualitative data, real-life experiences of this phenomenon will emerge. By adding qualitative studies to the existing literature, bridges can be built between research and practice to answer questions that are too complex to be dealt with using questionnaires (Baer, 2011).

Some concluding thoughts on mindfulness in a leadership context

Leadership and mindfulness have their supporters and critics in the literature, both as independent fields and as a combined set of skills/traits/states. Both authentic and transformational leadership require elements of awareness of the self and others that support practical leadership application in a context-sensitive manner (Afsar and Umrani, 2020; Wei et al., 2018). Scholars who have hypothesised that the constructs are related have found evidence to support their theories, and empirical studies have found encouraging links between mindfulness and positive outcomes (Baron et al., 2018; Reitz et al., 2020), but questions remain regarding how mindfulness can contribute effectively to leadership.

The evolution of mindfulness from its Buddhist origins into Western culture requires more investigation to understand whether and how the resulting construct relates to its historical predecessor. Fundamentally, as mindfulness has become a recognised practice in its own right it may have become different things to different people in different contexts. To understand how leaders have embraced mindfulness practice, researchers must engage in

discourse to gain insights into the presentation of mindfulness in leadership practice. This can be achieved only by broadening the epistemological approach to mindfulness and building qualitative research methods into the field as a complementary addition to existing quantitative methods of study.

The interconnectivity of mindfulness and EI

As yet, few researchers have attempted to study the relationship between EI and mindfulness; however, there is growing interest in how the constructs might interact. On the basis that mindfulness encourages individuals to be aware of the present internal and external environments at both physical and emotional levels (Baer et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2005), this likely extends to emotional awareness in the self and others (Pekaar et al., 2018). This capacity for emotional awareness is fundamental to all three streams of EI, and. therefore the question is, how may the two constructs inter-relate? The research described in this thesis explores the relationship between mindfulness and EI in leaders, so the literature that pertains to both EI and mindfulness, though modest in terms of the number of studies, provides relevant background.

A potential correlation between EI and trait mindfulness was first tested empirically on a significant scale in a meta-analysis performed by Miao et al. (2018) of previously conducted quantitative work. The findings demonstrated a significant association between EI and trait mindfulness, although the mindfulness measurement instrument was found to be a moderating factor. The study found that the FFMQ and FMI demonstrated stronger correlations with EI than other mindfulness measurement instruments. Miao et al. (2018) concluded that the strong focus on emotional awareness that was contained within the FFMQ and FMI mindfulness measurement instruments resulted in a higher correlation with EI than did the measurement tools that had less focus on emotional observation and management. This finding indicates the difficulty of exploring links between emerging phenomena when the field involves the use of multiple constructs and measurement tools that have different areas of focus.

Charoensukmongkol (2014) investigated the effects of mindfulness practice on levels of EI, self-efficacy and perceived stress that were reported by 317 research participants in Thailand. The study revealed that mindful practitioners had significantly higher levels of EI (as shown by application of the WLEIS measurement tool, Wong and Law, 2002), and lower levels of perceived stress. In this study, 63% of the participants reported that they practised mindfulness; they reported that they spent an average of two hours per day engaged in mindful meditation and had been practising for an average of five years. This mindfulness practice provides a stark contrast to the open-access mindfulness that is prolific in the West, which promises all the benefits of mindfulness for sessions that last ten minutes per day and are provided via apps (Mrazek et al., 2019). Given the differences in how mindfulness is now practised around the world, the study also poses questions on the validity of comparative studies on mindfulness.

There is further empirical evidence to support the notion that mindfulness, in conjunction with EI, can reduce stress levels (Lui et al., 2020) and help to prevent occupational burnout (Xie et al., 2021). Other studies have made wider claims, associating higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of negativity with those who have both high levels of trait EI and mindfulness (Schutte and Malouff, 2011). These researchers suggest that the shared components of the constructs in the areas of emotional awareness and acceptance can produce synergies that extend into various areas of work and home life. The research groups of Lui et al. (2020) and Schutte and Malouff (2011) used students in their research; therefore, we cannot be sure that the findings would be replicated in a leadership context. Looking specifically at EI and mindfulness in the workplace, Janssen et al. (2018) and Enns et al. (2018) performed quantitative studies and reported that the results showed that both EI and mindfulness independently moderated the effects of stress as their use aided in the management of negative emotions. It would be useful as a complementary study to use qualitative research to explore whether relationships were apparent between the two.

A study by Bao et al. (2015) that was conducted in China on 380 randomly selected adults (59% female) found that the practice of mindfulness combined with EI brought broad benefits. This research used the WLEIS, which measures trait EI, and the MAAS mindfulness questionnaire (Brown and Ryan, 2003). They also used the perceived stress scale (PSS)

(Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein, 1983) to assess the degree to which EI and/or mindfulness impacted the perception of stress in the research participants. Data was gathered online through the use of self-report tests, and analysis indicated that trait mindfulness was positively associated with increased levels of trait EI and reduced levels of perceived stress in participants. The researchers suggest that mindfulness supports the understanding and regulation of emotion (two components of the Wong and Law EI model), which, in turn, supports improved stress management. This was the first study to introduce the role of emotional management as a key factor in the relationship between mindfulness and stress management.

Later studies have built on the theory that EI and mindfulness are positively associated and that such association results in a broad range of psychological benefits. In a study of 341 university students in Islamabad, Taromi and Parandin (2017) investigated how mindfulness and EI might be related to metacognitive beliefs (how thought processes are viewed and the assumed level of control we have around our thoughts). The researchers used the FFMQ (Baer et al., 2006) and the Bar-On model of emotional and social intelligence (ESI) (2006), plus a bespoke measurement tool designed to assess the strength of metacognitive beliefs. Students with higher scores in mindfulness and EI than their peers held stronger metacognitive beliefs and demonstrated fewer negative psychological symptoms. They chose to observe and describe feelings rather than to evaluate and judge. The researchers suggested that students with higher levels of EI, trait mindfulness and metacognitive beliefs might perform better in their studies through utilisation of social and emotional skills to manage stress and build relationships with others that supported academic learning. There is, however, no specific evidence to support these claims in their paper.

Similar synergies between mindfulness and EI emerged in three separate studies by Robinson et al. (2021), who evaluated the inter-relationship between EI and mindfulness in a work context. Their studies found that those with high levels of EI and trait mindfulness were happier in their jobs, more committed to their work and demonstrated more affiliative behaviour than colleagues with low scores in both areas, or with scores of high EI and low mindfulness. This study was the only paper that was found to have explored the relationship between mindfulness and ability EI, and the researchers acknowledged that a significant

amount of basic research was required to provide an understanding of the true synergies across what were already “billion-dollar industries” (Robinson et al., 2021, p785).

From a leadership development perspective, there is some evidence in the literature that mindfulness training can work with EI to an overall positive effect. The case study by Boyatzis et al. (2013), which was discussed earlier in relation to EI, offers the only qualitative evidence of a link between mindfulness training and enhanced EI. Leaders who participated in the First Bank executive development programme (which contained specific modules on mindfulness and EI) reported that it provided significant positive benefits, including increased awareness of their own emotions and those of others. More recently, Nadler et al. (2020) carried out a study of employees in a US Fortune 100 company who undertook an eight-week online mindfulness training programme. The results demonstrated increases in levels of both mindfulness and EI after the training intervention. The course comprised short videos and guided meditations, in which participants were required to engage for six out of seven days per week over the eight-week period. Mindfulness was measured before and after the training through the use of the short-form FFMQ (Baer et al., 2012). EI was measured through application of the multidimensional emotional intelligence assessment for the workplace (Tett et al., 2006) and each participant was also asked to complete a positive and negative affect schedule (Watson et al., 1988) to measure mood. Results indicated a stress reduction, increased levels of trait mindfulness and increased self-perception of EI in participants after training. A control group was used to validate the study. However, most of the participants failed to complete the training exercise in both the control and study groups (only 63 of 275 starters completed the course). No reasons were given for the high attrition rate of participants. The study raises the question of the suitability of online training interventions for the widespread development of mindfulness as a practice.

Notwithstanding the challenges of ensuring that delivery methods are effective, both EI and mindfulness are presented in the literature as skills that can be learned (Salcido-Cibrián et al., 2019). Chapman-Clarke (2017) has called for mindfulness-based interventions to be incorporated into workplace training, based on the ability of mindfulness to support EI, as shown by the Charoensukmongkol (2014) study.

Although the research described in this thesis was designed to explore EI and mindfulness in a leadership context, the emerging empirical research on the wider life benefits associated with these traits, states or skills is leading researchers to ask whether these constructs should be introduced to the education system from an early age (Rodriquez-Ledo et al., 2018). There is no doubt that significant opportunities and rewards will be offered through the deepening of our understanding of EI and mindfulness, but there is much to do in terms of further research before a clear picture emerges of these fields, both as independent and collective phenomena.

Conclusion

Theory built from one epistemology and lacking a practice-based viewpoint ultimately misses a critical perspective that can support a well-rounded understanding of concepts as understood by those who experience them (Iszatt-White and Kempster, 2018). Academic contributions to management research across the fields of leadership, EI and mindfulness risk a loss of credibility unless practitioners can place value on the output. Criticisms in the areas of ontological bias, methodological inconsistency and conflicting data (Antonakis et al., 2009; Creswell, 2016; Dasborough et al., 2021; Jamieson and Tuckey, 2017) are all warning signs that change is required. It seems timely that a piece of practice-based research should be injected to inform theory by engaging with leaders and understanding how these academic constructs present in everyday acts of leadership. Understanding how EI and mindfulness are experienced by leaders, either individually or collectively, as described by individual research participants is as yet unexplored territory. We can improve our understanding of how these fields inter-relate, deepen our insight into the nuances of leadership and propose new theory through the synthesis of deductive and inductive research processes.

This review of research has revealed contradictory opinions on the developments of EI and mindfulness as academic constructs (Daniel et al., 2022; Dasborough et al., 2021), but it has also provided an evolutionary insight into the scholarly journey that has been undertaken so far. It has highlighted the previous work on which this research project can build to provide a valid contribution to knowledge.

Chapter 3 Methodology

At the start of this chapter, the selected methodology is positioned within the literature to provide a rationale for the research design. In order to explore the lived experiences of leaders in the areas of EI and mindfulness a qualitative research approach was adopted and this chapter explains the development of the methodology and supporting arguments for the selected research design. There is an explanation of the research strategy, including the methodological choices, participant selection, data collection and analysis methods which are aligned to the research questions. The data analysis process is then explained to demonstrate how the data themes were developed and interpreted to result in the construction of the final theoretical model. Finally, limitations associated with the methodological approach are addressed to highlight potential flaws or bias inherent within qualitative studies that may have impacted the findings.

Background and context

Given the lack of consensus on what constitutes EI and mindfulness, and similar debates in the field of leadership (Alvesson and Einola, 2019), this research is presented as an exploratory study. Qualitative research is well-suited for exploring complex, nuanced, or poorly understood phenomena, allowing researchers to investigate subjective experiences, social processes, and contextual factors that cannot be easily quantified or measured (Eastbury-Smith et al., 2008). Qualitative research provides rich, detailed, and context-specific insights into individuals' experiences, beliefs, and perspectives. It allows researchers to explore the "how" and "why" behind certain phenomena, uncovering underlying motivations and meanings (Smith, 2003).

Most of the research performed to date in the fields of mindfulness and EI has been conducted through predominantly quantitative methods, to define constructs and to measure their contributions to work and life outcomes. However, as early as 1939, Lewin stated that the performance of psychological and sociological research through the observation and collection of facts about individuals, predominantly through the use of quantitative methods, was flawed. Lewin suggested that the use of qualitative research

through analysis of inter-dependent objects and events offered broader perspectives and superior research outcomes. In line with this theory, this study aimed to build a picture of mindfulness and EI through the collection of rich data from the experiences of practitioners and by gaining insight through descriptive language and discourse.

A qualitative study presents the opportunity to further knowledge through an injection of bottom-up, real-world experience and perspective from practitioners operating in the field of leadership (Iszatt-White and Kempster, 2018). From an epistemological perspective, this requires researchers to collect rich or 'thick' (Geertz, 1973) data through the use of methods such as observation, interviews, focus groups or diary accounts. The collection of this type of data enables researchers to answer different questions to those answered by quantitative study. The use of qualitative research techniques can provide nuanced data that may fail to be uncovered through quantitative enquiry (Irshaidat, 2022). Qualitative research helps researchers understand social and cultural contexts by examining individuals' behaviours, attitudes, and interactions as they present in every-day life (Smith, 2003). On this basis it supports a deeper understanding of EI and mindfulness, as they present in the context of leadership.

Answering the research questions

The over-arching aim of the work described in this thesis was to deconstruct EI and mindfulness in a leadership context to explore how these constructs are experienced both independently and in relation to each other within leadership practice. Given the exploratory nature of the research, and the desire to capture rich data, it was suited to qualitative research techniques. The objective of this study was to take phenomena that have previously been presented as fixed, measurable constructs, and to use an inductive approach to understand them through the perceptions, views, actions, and experiences of those who engage in them. To achieve these objectives, the study was broken down into three separate research questions, which are shown here.

- How do individuals working in leadership roles experience EI in the workplace?

- How do individuals who identify as mindfulness practitioners, working in leadership, roles experience mindfulness in the workplace?

- What is the relationship between EI and mindfulness in the context of leadership practice?

The epistemology appropriate to answering broad, experiential research questions, such as those in this study, consists of observation and enquiry performed through the use of a range of qualitative research methods to look into activities, thoughts, opinions and actions (Petit and Huault, 2008). The supporting assumption is that human behaviour is highly malleable (Gergen, 2015) and subject to change dependent on influences such as age, cultural environment and situational context. This study recognises the contribution of research conducted in the fields of EI and mindfulness from the positivist perspective and seeks to provide further insights by exploring the phenomena as a set of context-sensitive thought processes and behaviours that are experienced uniquely by individual subjects. These research aims are supported by the epistemology and methodology used in the study in keeping with a methodologically robust research design (Smith, 2003).

The positivist viewpoint within the field of social science suggests that views and/or beliefs contribute to knowledge through the scientific measurement of specific, observable data (Turyahikayo,2021). Knowledge in the area of human behaviour is deemed to be an objective reality which can be extracted using quantitative data gathering, often in the form of surveys (Irshaidat, 2022). If behaviours, thoughts and opinions are fixed, as positivism suggests, then data can be analysed without consideration of situational context (Hogan,2009). In contrast, qualitative researchers in the field of social science take the stance that humans exist in a socially constructed reality (Petit and Huault, 2008). From the perspective of the qualitative researcher quantitative analysis of data misses the complexity and diversity of thought and experience, which is only accessible through qualitative investigation (Edmonsdon and McMannus, 2007).

Ultimately, research methodology should align to the objectives of the study (Edmonson and McMannus, 2007). For this work, understanding the lived experience of leaders was a central facet of the study and, as such, aligned to a qualitative approach. This study does not attempt to present qualitative research as superior to quantitative work; rather, it suggests that the two approaches provide answers to different questions. On this basis, quantitative and qualitative methods are not considered mutually exclusive, but as equal contributors to knowledge-building.

Research design considerations

Qualitative research contains an inherent element of subjectivity (Eastbury-Smith et al.,2008) which has resulted in some criticisms on its ability to deliver quality research outcomes (Bryman and Bell, 2007). As such it is important to ensure that the research is conducted in line with recognised methodological frameworks to provide rigour and trustworthiness to the findings (Williams et al., 2020).

In creating the research design for this work, four key requirements were central to the process. The study was designed to be transferable, credible, reflexive and transparent (Williams et al., 2020). Transferability required that the research design could be applied to other contexts and settings to explore whether the findings extend to wider populations than the current research group. To be credible, data must be honestly provided by the participants and appropriately interpreted by the researcher through the analysis process. Every effort was made to ensure the collection of honest data and to analyse it using robust techniques appropriate to the aims of the study. Credibility of data analysis is supported by reflexivity. The researcher should consciously and repeatedly be aware of how they may be influencing the research process through pre-existing knowledge, bias or approach to the research study. In this case the researcher was conscious of her own mindfulness practice and how it had provided benefits to her personally in the management of emotions as a leader. In recognising her personal beliefs she was able to consciously seek a data driven approach to the study, whilst recognising that qualitative research is subjective. As such the interpretation of data is naturally influenced by the researcher's perspective.

Finally, to ensure a transparent approach a full description of the research process, including the analysis of data, development of themes and the creation of theory is detailed in this chapter and those that follow.

Epistemologically, the design included evidence in the form of written and verbal language-based data from the research participants. This enabled exploration of a socially constructed world (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997). From a methodological perspective, the performance of a qualitative, inductive study (Cunliffe, 2011) would contribute to knowledge by taking a bottom-up view of the rich data collected and through the building of a picture of EI and mindfulness in practice. The research design was developed to answer the proposed research questions in the context of the epistemological assumptions. The paucity of qualitative research across these fields of study has resulted in something of a void in terms of personal interpretations and nuances, which can only be accessed via the use of qualitative methods. The fields of EI and mindfulness are recognised as extremely complex (Boyatzis et al., 2018; Shapiro, 2018) and research to date has resulted in as many questions as it has answered regarding how these phenomena are perceived to occur in organisational contexts (Daniel et al., 2022; Dasborough et al., 2021). The aim of this study was to provide insight into the practical day-to-day experiences of EI and mindfulness among leaders, deepening understanding of what these constructs mean to the individuals who experience them and exploring how they were reported to be interconnected in the context of leadership.

Chosen methodology and rationale

Within a qualitative research study, there are a range of methodological options and data collection methods which, critically, must be appropriate tools to address the specific research topic and related questions (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Participants in qualitative research are given a 'voice', which permits greater levels of self-expression than is possible through the completion of quantitative questionnaires (Hyers, 2018). For this piece of work a diary study was selected (Clarkson and Hodgkinson, 2007; Waddington, 2005).

Shank (2002) describes the diary researcher as having three roles:

> 1) that of a lantern – shining a light on stories. Wherever the light shines, a small reality is revealed. However, it is understood that lanterns can only shine light on certain parts of a phenomenon at any one time;
> 2) that of a window – providing views of experiences. The clearer the window, the better the view, therefore the researcher should be detached and act purely as a vehicle to show what is there rather than making assumptions or interpretations;
> 3) that of a mirror – reflecting what exists. The mirror should capture the stories and accounts as they are presented by the participants, avoiding distortion.

The diary study was supplemented by the performance of semi-structured interviews (Mazanderani and Paparini, 2015). The supporting rationale for the use of these data collection methods is explained next.

Diaries have been used in organisational research to capture information in areas such as motivation, job satisfaction, emotional labour and work-life balance (Fisher and To, 2012). A diary study enables the capture and description of events as they happen, in real-time, while the associated thoughts and emotions are fresh in the mind of the research participant (Lennie et al., 2020; Wickham and Knee, 2013). From this perspective, a diary study was ideal for the collection of data on how EI and mindfulness were experienced. In any quality diary study, the research skill is in the extraction of meaning from stories and finding the elements of the 'plot' (Bruner, 1991; Fincher, 2013). This process can reveal unique and valuable insights into lives, as lived by the research participants (Bolger et al., 2003).

Sociology researchers have used diaries for nearly a century as a method to collect qualitative data. The use of diaries is consistent with the contextualised and fluid view of individual experience over time and form a superior method of data collection compared with 'one-off' questionnaires (Blumer, 1969; Wheeler and Reis, 1991; Wiseman, Conteh and Matovu, 2005). A significant part of our historical knowledge-building has been extracted from diaries, which provide unsolicited insights into the lives of those who wrote them (Jones, 2000). They have been adopted as a primary research tool that supports both qualitative

and quantitative studies (Hyers, 2018). Diary studies are well suited to studies involved with emotions (Lennie et al., 2020) because their real-time capture of events solicits thoughts, reflections and causal relationships that may not be discovered through the use of other qualitative techniques (Radcliffe, 2013). A diary captures a phenomenon of interest on a regular basis over time and in context, enabling the capture of data in areas that may otherwise be dismissed as inconsequential - seemingly trivial but of regular occurrence (Clarkson and Hodgkinson, 2005). The capture of events as they happen enables the emergence of a picture of real-life, with a mix of regular but seemingly mundane and rare but highly significant occurrences, all of which are important for the researcher to gain full understanding of the subject matter as experienced by the research participant (Bolger et al., 2003).

One of the major advantages of the diary method of data collection is the ability to access contextual details to support events. Indeed, some researchers have found that, on analysis, the context becomes the main focus of the research data rather than the events themselves (Poppleton et al., 2008; Radcliffe, 2016). Ambiguous or subtle, but significant, phenomena may be captured by a diarist, since the act of writing a diary account requires reflective thought (Grossmann et al., 2021). Hyers (2018) describes the diary as a unique tool that unlocks personality and behaviour to reveal their transitory nature. This was key to the aims of this study, which involved 'deconstruction' of EI and mindfulness to understand clearly how the phenomena were experienced by leaders in practice by capturing personal accounts of their emotions in the workplace over the course of the study period. Movement away from quantitative analysis shifts the focus from the measurement of the world as a 'concrete structure' (Morgan and Smircich,1980), to enable researchers to expose a bigger picture, which may comprise a number of smaller, more nuanced real-life examples. Ultimately, in the case of this research, this emerging picture represents a socially constructed reality of EI and mindfulness experiences in leadership.

Diary studies are well suited to exploratory research, particularly as they can help to uncover processes that cannot be understood easily through the use of rigid quantitative methods. Diaries are particularly useful to expose the "ephemera of daily life" (Hyers, 2018), which can be overlooked during other methods of data collection. Diaries have been used

extensively by researchers who have employed either quantitative or qualitative approaches, and they can be of equal value to both, depending on the structure and analysis techniques used. On the basis that research of both EI and mindfulness are at exploratory stages, particularly in the context of their inter-relationship with each other and with leadership, there is a good methodological fit with the diary method of data collection. In addition, the literature notes that diary studies have been used successfully in qualitative research to extract deeper meaning in areas that have previously been studied using quantitative methods (Clarkson and Hodgkinson, 2005). There is also support in the literature for the use of diary studies in social sciences to overcome "methodological deficiencies" that are linked to over-reliance on self-reported quantitative studies (Radcliffe, 2013). Given that this research would add qualitative data to an almost exclusively quantitative knowledge bank, which has been criticised for containing methodologically weak studies, a diary study was a good fit.

Diaries may be unstructured, semi-structured or highly structured. Many researchers consider structured/semi-structured diaries to be more efficient for the extraction of information that is relevant to a research study as they facilitate and explore the surface narrative to expose nuanced detail (Dolczewski, 2022). On this basis, a semi-structured approach was used for this study. Weekly diaries are effective to ensure that events are captured before they are forgotten but allow for some reflection time. This makes them particularly well suited for regular events such as work (Hyers, 2018).

It would have been impractical to expect leaders to collect data on every emotion they experienced during the five-week study period, so critical incident theory (CIT) was applied (Clarkson and Hodgkinson, 2007; Kostamo et al., 2019). CIT directs research participants to focus on areas that are of most relevance to a research study. In this case, these were the notable emotional experiences observed in the self and others and the effects of mindfulness that were experienced during the working week. CIT was originally presented by Flanagan (1954, p327) following a review of studies by the US Air Force during the Second World War. He said: "The critical incident technique consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles." Flanagan

identified four methods of data collection for CIT: interviews, group interviews, questionnaires and forms. However, a challenge of CIT as a data collection method is the reliance on an individual's recollection of incidents that may have happened some time ago (Bott and Tourish, 2016). In this study, this risk was mitigated through the use of the diary method to allow events to be written about in near real-time, when recall would be at its best (Bolger et al., 2003).

This research also included semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. Interviews are one of the most widely used methods of data gathering in qualitative research (Symon and Cassell, 2012). They are used across multiple fields that include social sciences and organisational studies. They provide access to the reality of a setting as seen by those who inhabit it (Symon and Cassell, 2012). Interviews can vary greatly in their composition, from highly structured, 'scientific' interviews that can be used in quantitative and qualitative studies, to free-form interviews in which participants talk about a subject from their own perspective (Smith, 2003).

The semi-structured interview is particularly useful when subjects are interviewed to obtain supplementary data (Hyers,2018). In this study, interviews facilitated the gathering of insights into diary entries as their use enabled a secondary exploration of recorded events. The interviews provided opportunities to test understanding of complex diary entries, so that the researcher could ensure that correct meaning was extracted from the text. A semi-structured format provides researchers with sufficient flexibility to extract rich data from individual subjects within the context of their reality (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Inclusion of some structure in the process offers interviewees the freedom to express themselves comfortably but reduces the chances that they will go 'off piste' in terms of relevance to the research question (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It was considered very risky to allow participants to capture diary information without any supporting structure, since the resulting data may have been irrelevant or lacking in sufficient detail (Cao and Henderson, 2021).

Participant selection and preparation

The research participants were 16 adults who were working at senior management or executive levels within UK-based organisations. In order to obtain diversity, participants were deliberately chosen to provide a range of ages and a mix of males and females. Ages ranged from 35 to 59 years and of the 16 participants, seven were male and nine were female. To recruit participants to the study the researcher reached out to her network via LinkedIn to ask for volunteers. The study was presented as research into emotions in the workplace and interested parties were requested to contact the researcher via the LinkedIn platform.

Potential research candidates who contacted the researcher were asked to provide an e-mail address so that the researcher could correspond with them directly. They were also asked to indicate if they engaged in mindfulness practise. There was deliberately no context provided to this question in order to avoid any assumptions by the participants in terms of how mindfulness might relate to the study. Eight of the participants (five male, three female) identified as mindfulness practitioners. Participants were all known to the researcher in a work capacity through business networking or previous consultancy assignments. This did present a risk that participants might try and present themselves in a positive light during the study through a desire to provide the 'right answers'. This risk was mitigated by the researcher in emphasising the need for honest accounts during the initial briefing meetings, explained below. No incentives or remuneration of any kind was provided; however, the participants will receive a paper that contains a summary of the research findings.

Each participant was invited to a briefing meeting at which the researcher explained the nature of the study and its objectives. The study was positioned as research into understanding emotions and (for those who identified as mindfulness practitioners) mindfulness in the context of their work as leaders. A written synopsis was provided to allow potential participants to consider whether or not they wished to take part. The researcher explained that participants would be required to keep a diary for a five-week period in order to capture information on emotions they experienced or witnessed in the workplace. Participants were asked to report honestly, and assured that the research would result in no judgement of their leadership capability, thoughts or behaviours as reported by them in the

diaries or at interview. Participants were assured that all data would all by anonymised. The term emotional intelligence was not introduced to the participants until the interview stage of the data collection process to avoid early bias or data contamination due to participants' pre-conceived ideas of how their interpretation of EI might present in the workplace. This allowed the study to explore a deconstruction of EI.

References to mindfulness were made only to those who indicated that they engaged in the practice. Participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners were advised that, in addition to capturing information on emotions at work, they would also be asked to comment separately on their mindfulness practise and if and/or how they felt it had influenced any of their experiences during the course of each week. They were reminded that this was exploratory research relating to mindfulness. As such it was not attempting to evaluate their leadership capability, make direct comparisons between individual participants as leaders or to pre-suggest any connection between and mindfulness and leadership capability. The researcher emphasised to all the participants that the study was exploratory and therefore all experiences were valid and of interest from a research perspective.

Data were collected in two tranches, six months apart. Each tranche consisted of a five-week diary study followed by an interview with each participant. Diary data were initially read to highlight areas of significance in terms of events captured or complexity in the narrative of emotional experiences, to prepare for further exploration through the interview process. Tranche one was completed and reviewed before the commencement of tranche two. This splitting of the data collection into two tranches enabled testing of the data collection process. It also kept the work-in-progress to a manageable level as it restricted the number of participants who were actively involved in the study to eight at any point in time. Had any significant issues occurred during the course of tranche one, the methodology would have been revised for tranche two. This was not required.

Tranche one comprised eight participants, from whom data were collected between October and December 2020. Tranche two commenced in February 2021 and was completed in April 2021.

In line with ethical guidelines, the participants were advised of the end-to-end process, which included data collection methods, and storage and use of the data over the course of the research period and beyond. Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time, up to and including one month after the final interview.

Data collection

A pre-templated Word document[4] was provided to support the data capture. Participants were given a diary template and a set of instructions on how to record data. To provide structure and to ensure that data most relevant to the study was captured, prompts were provided, through which participants were asked to capture information on emotions observed or managed in the self or others. Participants who indicated that they used mindfulness were asked to capture how and why they engaged in the practise during the research period and how their mindfulness experiences influenced their emotions, thoughts and behaviours. A five-week timeframe was chosen to allow sufficient data to be gathered. The use of a longer timeframe might have failed to engage sufficient research volunteers or resulted in participants not completing the study (Cao and Henderson, 2021).

Participants were asked to document experiences that had the greatest emotional impact on them as leaders each week. Participants were asked to note events that had impacted them emotionally and events in which they had observed emotions in others. The template dedicated a page of A4 for the capture of each of these events. Participants were then asked to choose the most significant event in each category and write more extensively about it; another page of A4 was provided on the template for this purpose. The participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners were instructed to capture details about their practise over the course of the week and if and/or how they felt it had affected the emotional events they had noted. The diary templates were sent out as Microsoft Word documents. Templates were chosen as vehicles to capture data for several reasons. Firstly, as the managers all worked in business environments, they were familiar with Microsoft Word. Secondly, in line with the epistemological assumptions that underlay the research, participants had sufficient

[4] See appendix for an example of the diary template

freedom to capture events in their own 'voice' (Hyers, 2018), and to include information regarding the context and ephemera, which were key to the objectives of the research.

Interviews were held subsequently with each of the research participants to explore further the information captured in the dairies. Interviews were arranged at least two weeks (and up to six weeks) after the end of the diary collection period to give time for the researcher to read the diaries and prepare for the interview by noting any questions or areas for explorative discourse. The primary purpose of the interviews was to ensure that the researcher had interpreted what had been captured in the diaries in the way intended by the participants. In addition, the interviews provided opportunities to explore participants' views on EI and (if relevant) mindfulness in relation to their leadership practice. The term 'emotional intelligence' was introduced at interview to obtain thoughts from the research participants on what it meant to them and how it related to their experiences over the research period. Participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners were asked to reflect on whether it supported or influenced their emotional observation or behavioural management in the workplace.

Interviews lasted for 40 minutes to an hour. Due to the pandemic interviews were all conducted with the use of Teams video calls. All participants agreed that the interview process could be audio-recorded to aid transcription. As the researcher had previously met all of the participants both before the study (through her business network) and at the initial briefing sessions, an initial relationship had been established with the participants. This helped in creating a relaxed environment where the researcher could gain rich data using a semi-structured interview technique. In building trust and rapport the researcher could reduce the risk of social desirability bias (Bergen and Labonté, 2020), where participants may present themselves in line with pre-conceived ideals. At the start of the interviews participants were reminded of the exploratory nature of the study, assured that there were no correct or incorrect answers to questions and advised that their transcripts would be anonymised.

Data relating to the diaries and interviews were separately identified through the course of the study. The diary accounts were recognised as more personal documents, written by

the participants in their own environment, with the reflection on events that this data collection method encourages. The interview data were by nature more reflective and considered, since interviews took place two to six weeks after the diaries had been completed. The interview data would also be affected by the presence of the interviewer and the semi-structured format of the interviews, which involved engagement of the participants in discourse on specific topics. The interview data were no less valid than that of the diaries, but the environment in which they were collected made them distinct from the diary data. Data relating to the mindfulness practitioners were also distinctly identified, since the exploration of the similarities and differences between the behaviour of the mindful practitioners and that of their non-practising colleagues was a key element of the study. From a research perspective, the data collection period of five weeks was of relatively short duration and, as such, this study is presented as cross-sectional rather than longitudinal (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

Data analysis methods and rationale

Qualitative data can be analysed through the use of a range of accepted methods. To ensure the study is methodologically robust, the analysis techniques that are applied must be appropriate to the epistemology and methodology, which should align to the research questions (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). The analysis process poses a challenge in qualitative studies, given that the data collected is significant in volume. The researcher is tasked with "finding a path through the thickest of prose" (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p571) and, because of this thickness, a thorough analysis is essential to draw out knowledge from the raw data. There is a consensus in the literature that qualitative data should be coded, and these codes are then consolidated into key themes (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019; Symon and Cassell, 2012). Ultimately the analysis process should align with the epistemology, support the research aims and and provide answers to the questions posed by the study (Gläser and Laudel, 2013).

For this study, thematic analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2007) supported by template analysis (Symon and Cassell, 2012) was selected as the most appropriate method through which to analyse data from both the diaries and interviews. Thematic analysis offers flexibility in

terms of sample sizes, research questions and even ontological philosophy (Clarke and Braun, 2017). It is particularly useful during analysis of large quantities of data to identify similarities and differences in perspectives to support inductive theory building (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was an appropriate method for the exploration of how EI and mindfulness were experienced by leaders, which then allowed the researcher to compare data between mindful practitioners and their non-practising colleagues in leadership.

Thematic analysis offers a method which is "unbounded by theoretical commitments" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p297), allowing researchers to identify broad patterns in data which may evolve over the coding and theme development process. The flexibility inherent in this method has led some researchers to question the rigour of the approach and subsequent trustworthiness of studies produced through its use (Nowell et al., 2017). In response to criticisms and perceived misconceptions around thematic analysis, a six-phase process has been proposed to help researchers ensure that their papers meet the rigorous challenges put forward by reviewers of quality journals (Braun and Clarke, 2021). The authors of the six-phase process were keen to ensure that thematic analysis maintained its flexible nature, so the process was intended as an overall guide to the data analysis rather than a set of strict procedures. The six phases are listed below, followed by an explanation of the data analysis carried out in this study, which was steered by this process.

1. Data familiarisation and writing notes.
2. Systematic data coding.
3. Generation of initial themes from coded and collated data.
4. Development and review of these themes.
5. Refinement, definition and naming of themes.
6. Writing up the findings in a report.

To align with the principles of quality thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021), data familiarisation and note-taking were undertaken at two points in the process. Firstly, diary entries were read and annotated to highlight key points or areas that would benefit from clarification at interview. Notes were also taken during the interviews, in addition to them being recorded and transcribed. Data were systematically coded using an inductive

approach in preparation for the identification of themes. The initial data coding process was focused on the diaries and interview transcripts of the first six research participants (three with a mindfulness practice and three without). The initial coding process was iterative and resulted in a regular review of emerging themes as more data were gathered and coded.

As a pragmatic but robust and methodologically sound option, template analysis was used to complement the thematic analysis process. Template analysis is not a methodology in its own right; rather, it is a technique that researchers can use in conjunction with other methods to support the data analysis process (Symon and Cassell, 2012). Template analysis is recognised as a complementary tool during the performance of thematic analysis and is well suited to and widely used in organisational and management studies (Brooks et al., 2015). Template analysis enables researchers to pre-define codes that are appropriate to the research question. Codes may be assigned through the use of researcher experience, the literature or a sample of early data, which can be used to determine trends. In this case early data was used as the basis for template creation. Once a coding template has been created, it can be applied to the entire dataset. Combining initial bottom-up, inductive analysis with a subsequent top-down template approach to coding provides a practical option for exploratory research that involves large amounts of data (Symon and Cassell, 2012).

Data analysis process

In the first instance, the diaries and interview transcripts for six of the participants (three who identified as mindfulness practitioners and three who did not) were read by the researcher. This initial read through allowed the researcher to engage with the stories being told and to understand the context of the narrative. On the second read through codes were assigned to key words, phrases and/or paragraphs in the data. In recognition that there is "no one correct approach to coding data" (Bryan and Bell, 2007, p587), coding was aligned broadly with the research questions; all references to emotions experienced or observed, thought processes, actions and outcomes were areas for scrutiny. In relation to EI, narratives were examined to explore the situations in which emotions were reported,

the language applied by participants to describe emotional experiences and explanations of how emotions featured in the context of the work of a leader.

To analyse the experiences of mindfulness, codes were assigned to descriptions of the phenomenon, how the participants engaged in mindfulness and what were the perceived outcomes. Careful attention was paid to ensure that any references to the inter-relationships between mindfulness, emotions and EI were all captured. All coding was completed by the researcher and codes were applied to any words, phrases or situations of note in terms of strength of language (positive or negative) or repetitive events. An excerpt from a raw transcript is demonstrated in figure 3.1.

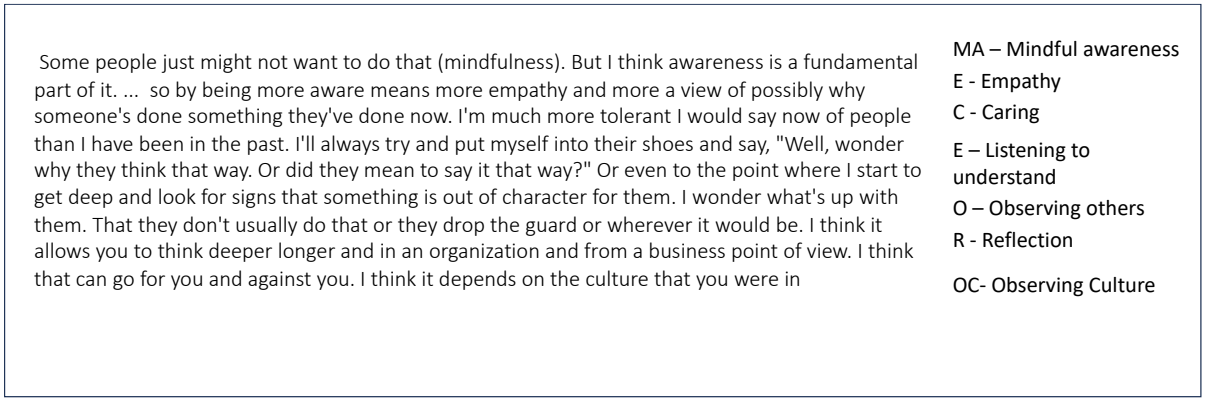

Figure 3.1 Example of early transcript coding

The fragments of text from the transcripts were added to an Excel spreadsheet with their assigned code. This initial coding process on six participant datasets resulted in the production of more than 100 codes. In line with the approach to template analysis suggested by Symon and Cassell (2012), the coded data were then reviewed to identify recurrent and similar codes. This was done by moving the columns of code categories within the spreadsheet to group similar descriptions together and then reviewing the data to establish how it was connected. This allowed the initial codes to be assigned to clusters and renamed to encapsulate a broader description of the data, or assigned to one existing code which was representative of all the codes within the cluster. As an example, a detailed review of data contained within the initial coding process under ‘sympathy’,

'listening to understand', 'caring', 'protecting' and 'supporting' (some of which are included in the example provided in figure 3.1) were clustered into a higher-order code of 'demonstrating empathy' which eventually became a theme in the analysis of leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners. This process resulted in a reduction of the number of codes from 100+ to 35, and these were then used in the coding template[5].

The process of initial inductive code allocation, although time-consuming, utilised the flexibility and practicality of template analysis (Brooks et al., 2015; Symon and Cassell, 2012) without compromising the data by prematurely allocating pre-defined codes to the template. The coding template was used to assign codes to the data from the remaining ten participants using the same process of reading through transcripts first to understand stories and context before assigning codes.

The coding template was maintained in the form of a spreadsheet (Excel) with quotes from the texts, which were clearly referenced to provide an audit trail to the source data. The names of participants were changed to ensure anonymity. Participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners were identified as such and diary data were identified separately from interview data to support comparative analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

The template analysis process resulted in a large data table of coded extracts from the diaries and interview transcripts. Thematic analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2007) was initially conducted on the data relating to EI using all sixteen research participants. This process was aimed at answering the first research question 'How do individuals working in leadership roles experience EI in the workplace?'. This required the researcher to revisit the original transcripts at regular intervals to examine the sentiment and context of the base data of quotes and diary extracts before assigning codes to themes. This was an important step designed to preserve the integrity of data as it progressed through the analysis process. It also aligned with recommended processes for the validation of qualitative data analysis in the literature (Smith, 2003). At first, themes were not obvious; however, digital mind-mapping through the use of Microsoft Whiteboard enabled the

[5] The codes used in the coding template are included in the appendix for reference purposes.

researcher to explore connections among similar codes to establish patterns and connections. To undertake this task the researcher used digital post it notes to capture all of the codes and then manipulate them on the virtual whiteboard to work with the codes and establish themes. Use of two screen monitors allowed the whiteboard activity to be conducted whilst maintaining visibility of the data fragments supporting each code. This enabled the researcher to keep referring to the narratives whilst moving from codes to themes, therefore maintaining contextual references that might otherwise have been lost. By engaging with the data through this process, patterns began to emerge through repetition of similar codes or strength of language in the base data which made quotes notable in the context of the research questions. In analysing the diary entries on emotional experiences, insights began to emerge on how emotional situations in the workplace presented in the data and how participants recorded responding to them. This was supported by analysis of interview data where the concept of EI was introduced and discussed, which allowed participants to reflect on how they felt EI had or had not featured in the situations they had described.

As themes emerged the researcher highlighted the key data fragments that were representative of each theme within the excel database. These quotes were included in the data chapters. The thematic analysis of EI data resulted in four key themes which are explained in chapter four of this thesis.

Separate analysis was carried out on the data from the participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners to explore their experiences of mindfulness using the same approach. This supported the second research question 'How do individuals, who identify as mindfulness practitioners, working in leadership roles experience mindfulness in the workplace?'. Again, digital mind mapping software was used to arrange codes into themes, with regular cross checks back to the base data to add rigour to the analysis process and to highlight the data fragments for inclusion in the thesis. Through this process four key themes relating to participant experiences of mindfulness emerged which are explained in chapter five of this thesis.

When viewed together, the analysis to answer the first and second research questions indicated some areas of inter-connectivity and overlap of themes, particularly in the areas of emotional awareness. To fully explore the relationship between EI and mindfulness and answer the final research question a second level of data analysis was required. This process required the researcher to revisit the analysis of EI and mindfulness and combine them as a single data set. On the second round of analysis the data from the mindfulness practitioners was analysed separately to that of the non-mindfulness practitioners. This additional analysis enabled the researcher to re-examine the data with the aim of uncovering nuanced detail in the areas of inter-connectivity and differences in the data between the participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners and those who did not. This required the researcher to engage with the data fragments within themes and codes to draw out the subtle differences in the reports of emotional situations. These nuances were interpreted from the narratives, emerging through choice of language by the participants in explaining experiences and/or beliefs and the repetition or absence of messages in the personal accounts across the two groups. At this point in the data analysis EI and mindfulness emerged as a set of processes. Whilst EI was identifiable as a process in all of the participant data, the leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners described engagement in additional processes when enacting EI[6]. This supported the third research question 'What is the relationship between EI and mindfulness in the context of leadership practice?'.

To explain this process further, a key theme which presented in the data relating to both EI and mindfulness was self-awareness. Figure 3.2 reflects how the theme of 'observing self' was revisited in the second review of data to compare responses from participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners with those that did not. This allowed the researcher to explore how the research participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners described emotional events and experiences in the workplace compared to those who did not have an association with the practice.

[6] An illustration of the mapping of EI and mindfulness codes to highlight interconnectivity is contained in the appendix

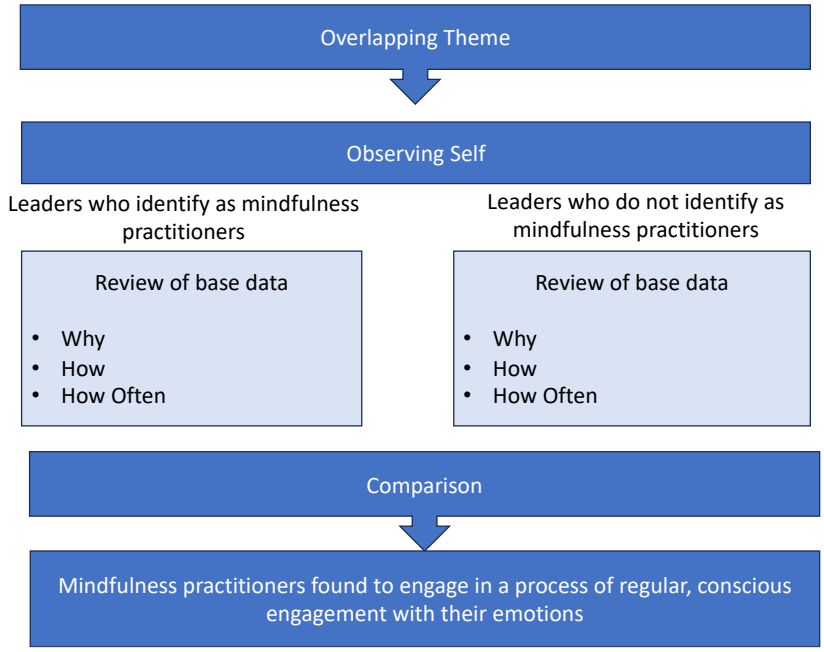

Figure 3.2 – Example of how overlapping themes were analysed

The analysis indicated that the participants who identified as mindful practitioners engaged in more regular conscious engagement with their emotions. The processes of mindfulness, as described by the research participants, could be distilled from the data and overlaid onto the processes of EI so that a picture of the inter-relationship emerged. This identified mindfulness as a positive, additive to the EI construct as perceived by those who identified as practitioners. Those participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported that the practice supported them in recognising and managing emotional situations, in real time, more often, and with greater levels of empathy than they would without it. This comparative analysis process was key to understanding how those who identify as mindful practitioners believe the practice relates to EI in the context of their leadership practice. The process of template enabled thematic analysis used in this study is illustrated in figure 3.3.

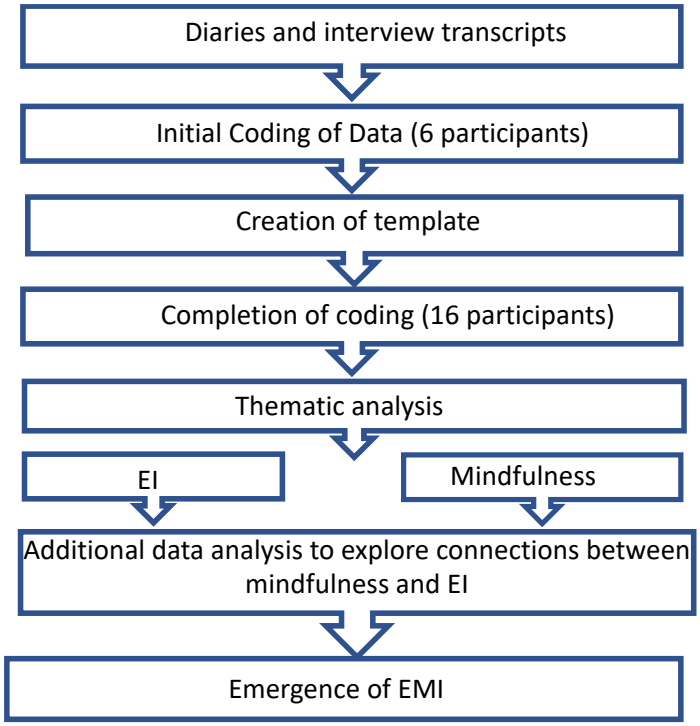

Figure 3.3 Data analysis process

Once the researcher had established that the participants who identified as mindful practitioners reported engaging in a more complex enactment of EI, and identified where mindfulness processes interacted with EI processes, the theoretical model of emotionally mindful intelligence (EMI) emerged. The model is presented and discussed in chapter 7.

Methodological limitations

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure methodological rigour, limitations and risks are inherent in every research project. The limitations and challenges associated with this study are identified below.

Participants and data collection methods

One of the key issues identified with solicited diary studies is that they are contrived in nature (Hyers, 2018). Participants write their accounts in the knowledge that their words will be read and analysed by a researcher. This in itself may influence what they write and the style in which they write it, which may result in a change to the choice of words or 'voice' that the participant uses. The time required of participants to provide sufficient diary data is significant, so there is a risk that their entries are superficial or that they

abandon the study mid-way through the process (Bolger, Davis and Rafaili, 2003; Cao and Henderson, 2021). However, with the advent of social media over the past 20 years, the process of publicly documenting details of daily life in diary format has been normalised (Hyers, 2018). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are used to capture everyday events as a matter of course and millions of people across the world have embraced this behaviour. This cultural shift has increased the popularity of diary studies, so that these, whilst not the most common form of qualitative data gathering, are now more accessible to researchers as a credible research tool (Cao and Henderson, 2021).

Of greater concern is the risk that participants may feel they need to produce something interesting for the researcher and therefore embellish or fabricate events (Hyers, 2018), or provide data that conforms with a pre-conceived confirmation bias (McSweeney, 2021). In order to mitigate these risks, participants in this study were advised that there was a need for honest, open and accurate accounts of everyday events. The participants were given information on ethical approval and how their identities would be protected in order to build trust. It should be noted however that despite the assurances given that accounts would not be subject to any form of judgement, participants may have felt the need to present themselves as good leaders, or to justify their identification as mindfulness practitioners by over emphasising its effect on them as leaders.

Interviews also have their weaknesses and limitations. Participants may feel uncomfortable talking to a researcher, particularly around the sensitive subject of emotions (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997). To conduct a good piece of research using an interview technique, the researcher must ensure that they obtain information that is relevant to the study. This requires significant skill in terms of managing the interview process so that the subjects feel relaxed and uninhibited but so that the researcher can make sense of the discourse. Trust between participants and researcher has been identified as an antecedent to the provision and collection of quality data (Potter, 2018). Since the participants were known to the researcher in a professional capacity and had volunteered to take part in the study, it is recognised that this might have impacted their responses; for instance, they may have tried to portray themselves in a favourable light or presented a view that they believed would satisfy the researcher. During the data analysis, there was no indication of this; however, the

risk was valid and as such should be noted. The research process was based on mutual trust and respect between the researcher and participants in terms of confidentiality of data. Whilst every effort was made to ensure that the interviews in this study resulted in the production of high-quality data, the limitations remain regarding any form of verbal communication.

Analysis and Interpretation of data

Qualitative research methods provide insight into a socially constructed reality. The constructs of EI, mindfulness and the field of leadership in which this research is situated are subject to a host of different views in the literature (Antonakis et al., 2009; Creswell, 2016; Dasborough et al., 2021) and the perceptions and beliefs attached to them by individual research participants will be influenced by many factors which are unknown to the researcher and unrelated to the research process (Hughes and Sharrock,1997). As such, this research can only present an interpretation of EI and mindfulness based on the beliefs and experiences of the research participants and interpreted by the researcher, who identifies as a mindfulness practitioner herself.

Qualitative studies require researchers to engage with large quantities of data that should be analysed using robust and accepted research techniques to reach meaningful conclusions (Eastbury-Smith et al., 2008). This requires a significant element of interpretation and it should be noted that other researchers could reach different conclusions in analysing the same data set (Symon and Cassell, 2012).

The researcher has sought to explore EI and mindfulness as independent constructs, and to understand if and how these two phenomena might inter-relate in the context of leadership practice. There was no attempt or suggestion at any point during the research that EI or mindfulness have a direct impact on leadership effectiveness per se, rather the research sought to establish how the constructs may or may not be helpful to leaders when they encounter emotional situations in the workplace.

Conclusion

Every effort was made during the research design, participant selection, data collection and analysis to ensure that there was consistent alignment among the research aims, questions posed and subsequent findings. To support the aim of deepening understanding of the experiences of leaders in the areas of EI and mindfulness, a qualitative methodology was selected to provide rich data. The use of a primary (diary study) and supplementary (interview) data collection process supported the analysis and exploration of the data over the course of the study period, which facilitated interpretation of the data by the researcher.

With so little qualitative study in the areas of EI and mindfulness in the context of leadership, this research is very much exploratory in nature. Whilst the data analysis supported a theoretical contribution, it is recognised that the study is modest in terms of participant numbers and further research is required to establish whether the findings extend to broader participant groups.

As with every piece of research, there were some limitations and risks involved in the choice and use of the chosen methodology. These have been identified and mitigative action taken to preserve the integrity of the research results wherever possible.

Chapter 4 How Do Individuals Working In Leadership Roles Experience Emotional Intelligence?

The findings chapters have been structured to correspond with the three components of the research question. In this chapter, the key themes that related to how all the leaders experienced EI are presented, with supporting evidence that emerged from analysis of the data. In Chapter 5, data themes related to the experiences of mindfulness from leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners are discussed. Chapter 6 explores thematic evidence which supports the relationship between EI and mindfulness in a leadership context.

The research explored EI from the perspective of leaders in a work context. It involved the gathering of rich evidence from practitioners to develop knowledge in the field. During the analysis of the data, the focus was on establishing the range and prevalence of emotions that were experienced and observed by leaders as they carried out their day-to-day duties. This led the researcher to examine how those emotions affected the behaviours of leaders at work. Did they report 'acting intelligently' and, if so, what did that entail? Most importantly, what did the phrase 'emotional intelligence' mean to leaders in the context of their work?

Despite the plethora of measurement tools and the recognised 'three streams' of EI (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2005), recent thinking is that the root of all EI constructs is "the ability to perceive and manage emotions, both within oneself and about others" (Pekaar et al., 2018b, p138). This broad definition captures the foundation of EI and enables exploration of the construct through qualitative study, as it presents EI in simple terminology that can be understood and applied in a real-world context. In the diarised accounts, research participants were asked to comment on the circumstances in which emotions presented themselves and how they played out during the working week. Analysis of the many examples of emotions that were experienced and the situations in which they presented themselves enabled the provision of insights into the emotional demands placed on leaders. Leaders were asked to describe how they managed their emotions and behaviours; from these accounts, empirical evidence was gathered regarding how and why leaders are able to manage emotion intelligently. This provides a deconstructed view of the EI construct, as presented through the everyday acts of leadership in the workplace.

Four key themes emerged during the data analysis process, and these are discussed individually in this chapter. Firstly, awareness of one's own emotions and subsequent management of one's behaviour was seen as a fundamental part of a leader's role. Secondly, these leaders used awareness of others' emotions and consequent management of those people with the aim of achieving desired business outcomes. Thirdly, the participants considered EI to be essential to successful leadership and believed that it could be developed through training. Finally, in their recall of critical incidents that happened during the research period, participants reported far more negative emotions than positive. This data theme is explored to understand the significance of negative emotions and events that surrounded them, as experienced by these leaders.

Since a key research aim was to understand how mindfulness and EI work both independently and in relation to each other in the context of leadership, quotes from th leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners are indicated by the inclusion of (M) next to the participant's name. This enables the reader to place quotes in the context of the participant group.

Theme 1 – Awareness and management of emotions in the self supports leaders in the course of their duties

It was apparent from participants' diary accounts and interviews that recognition of emotions in the self, and (potentially) choosing how to act as a result of those emotions, can support leaders in the course of their duties. Experiences varied in terms of how this presented in practice, and some participants seemed much more aware of their emotions than others. Equally, the participants responded differently to their own emotions, and these differences provided valuable insight into 'real-life' EI in management practice.

All participants were able to provide quite detailed accounts regarding how they experienced emotions in the workplace, although the accounts varied widely. All participants are given pseudonyms to afford them anonymity.

Lynn relayed an incident in which she received a rude and critical email from a colleague:

Lynn (diary)

The consultant sent a particularly rude email to me to complain that she was having to pick up issues that were not her fault with a clear undertone of "I told you so" relating to some recent changes to process in the hospital. I was absolutely livid! This consultant is known for being rude, but I have not seen it personally myself before.

The phrase "I was absolutely livid" indicates a very strong emotional response. This diary entry was discussed further in the interview to explore the strength of feeling that Lynn had experienced.

Lynn (interview)

Actually, reflecting on what I've written … actually, I'm guessing it was just absolute frustration. Yeah, I was absolutely flipping livid [inaudible]. I was absolutely furious that "How dare you?" So yeah, I was furious that she felt that she was hard done to and actually we were trying to make her life easier.

It was clear from the conversation with Lynn that, even after the passage of time, she could recall a very strong emotional response that had been attached to the situation. During the conversation with her about the diary entry, it was possible to observe her emotion building as she remembered the events that had occurred, at this point, several weeks in the past. If anything, Lynn seemed even angrier during the discussion of the situation at interview than the diary had portrayed her to be at the time, as she added the comments "absolutely furious" and "absolute frustration" to her original description.

Lorna indicated strong emotional responses both in her diary accounts and during the interview. Her language was bold, reflecting the strength of emotions she had experienced.

Lorna (M) (interview)

I do have a tonne of emotion going around. This horrific feeling of letting everybody down, and that's just my own personal battle with the decision that I've made … and it's irrational,

and it's not something that I need to keep hold of. I know I've got to let go of it, but I think everything at the moment that I'm doing, I am probably over-analysing that into "how could I have done that better?" I will let those emotions happen naturally if and when it's an appropriate time for it to happen …

At the time of the study, Lorna had just accepted a job offer with another organisation and she felt guilty about leaving her colleagues at a difficult time. Her use during the interview of the word 'horrific' to describe her emotional state during the study period indicates that she felt a heavy weight of emotion as she tried to carry out her work. Lorna's comment "I know I've got to let go of it" referred to the negativity she was feeling.

Lorna was able to reflect clearly during the interview on the emotions she had experienced during the study period and on how she had responded at the time. This showed her awareness of her emotions, possibly to an exaggerated extent, as she suggested that she was 'over-analysing'. Lorna indicated that she was actively controlling her emotions. This can be observed in her statement "I will let those emotions happen naturally if and when it's an appropriate time for it to happen". This statement suggests that Lorna was suppressing the guilt and associated feelings she had that were connected with her leaving the team.

Tony demonstrated in his diary how leaders can be quite deeply affected on a personal level by events that occur in the workplace. The extract below describes a difficult case that he was working on in his role as a senior mental health professional.

Tony (M) (diary)

Realisation that Client A that had been referred with respect to depression, may in fact have schizophrenia, and that they may be treatment resistant. Prognosis for such medication-resistant form of this disorder is not very good, so I felt very sad for the patient concerned (a former teacher in his mid-20s), if this is the case. I was aware of the impact immediately. Spent quite a while wondering whether we should have spotted something earlier, however, given the tight remit of our treatment windows, plus the fact that several other health professionals had not spotted this, I was able to rationalise this through.

Tony's career choice involves greater exposure to emotional situations than most people face. It seems from this excerpt that he is not immune to the emotional impact of experiences at work. Tony's account demonstrates a process of emotional recognition. For instance, he reported: "I felt very sad for the patient", and this was followed by feelings of responsibility for the delayed diagnosis. These feelings are evidenced by the statement "spent quite a while wondering whether we should have spotted something earlier". Tony indicated that he was able to manage his emotional response by applying logic to the situation, using the phrase "I was able to rationalise this through" to explain that he knew he was not responsible for the client's situation. This is an example of the conflict between emotion and logic that occurs in the day-to-day working life of a leader; the diary shows that logic had to prevail to keep the leader focused on their duty to deliver the organisational mission.

In contrast, Dawn, a managing director, explained in her interview that she was aware that she had become less affected by emotion at work as the years had passed. She stated that she was no longer as strongly affected by events at work as she had been in earlier years, particularly when things went wrong.

Dawn (interview)

I'm generally fairly neutral (emotionally) from a work perspective … and it didn't used to be the case … for a long time. For the last ten years or so, I've gradually managed to just feel more neutral in a lot of ways. I sort of figured that, by the time you reach some type of senior level, you have learned to control it (emotion) very well, so you don't react or feel it (emotion) in the same way. I don't get anxious in the same way over decisions. I don't get fear in the same way of failing. So … anything can happen, whether that's negative or a positive … it doesn't create a big reaction in me because failure happens. You learn to kind of let go, accept it's going to happen in the course of things and, in fact, you know what, if you're not failing, you're not really trying hard enough.

Dawn's account suggests that over time she "learned to control" her emotions, "so you don't react or feel it". The use of the words 'control' and 'react' suggest that her emotions had not completely left her; rather, they do not present as strongly as they did earlier in her career.

Dawn suggests that she has come to see failure as a positive indication of trying out new ideas, learning to “accept that it is going to happen in the course of things”.

In terms of the management of emotions and how this presented in terms of behaviours, it was notable that every research participant reported that they engaged in a form of personal behavioural management in response to emotions that they experienced. This was generally undertaken with the aim of achieving a desired outcome in the context of their work as leeaers. The following quotes are selected from dozens of examples that were available in the diaries and interview transcripts. They provide real-life insights into how leaders adapt their behaviours after they have recognised an emotional response in themselves. The first extract contains Alice’s explanation of how she avoided talking over others in meetings when she felt impatient.

Alice (M) (interview)
I'm the world's worst for waiting for my chance to speak or even finishing people's sentences because I’m feeling impatient and want him or her to move on. So, I have a little sticky that I have stuck to my computer. That says: ‘Listen to understand, not to reply.’

It is of particular interest that Alice had found a way actively to manage her automatic response when she felt impatient. She was aware of her tendency to feel frustration with colleagues in meetings if she felt that the conversation was not moving quickly enough. By placing the sticky note on her computer, she acted positively to intercept her natural behavioural response to impatience and frustration. The note reminded her to recognise emotion as it presented and to respond in a way that she felt would result in a positive outcome.

Clive wrote in his diary that he usually managed to suppress the urge to send angry emails. His account indicated an ability to manage his behaviour when experiencing emotion. On this occasion, however, he failed to do so.

Clive (M) (diary)

I often find it better to shut email down if I'm getting an emotional response, leave it overnight, and then respond with a more refined message. The one I sent was curt and direct, and probably expressed my annoyance at the interference. I think the annoyance stemmed from the messages sent by my colleague which seemed to suggest I wasn't doing my job properly and/or wasn't on top of my remit.

Here, the dynamic element of behavioural management in relation to emotions is evidenced. Whilst leaders may be able to manage successfully a behavioural response to emotions some or even most of the time, there can still be occasions when they react too quickly to allow due consideration of their response. In Clive's account, there is recognition that in this situation he would have benefitted from resisting the urge to send the angry email. This would have provided the time required to allow his emotions to settle so that he could "respond with a more refined message". The inference the reader can make here is that time can be a helpful aid in the effective management of behaviours so as to achieve positive outcomes.

Robert also identified an instance in which he had failed to control his emotions at work, and that this failure had resulted in behaviour he later regretted. He confirmed during his interview that in this episode, he had deviated from his usual conduct as a leader, in which he normally displayed a calm and professional manner that he felt was appropriate to his position.

Robert (diary)

Due to the stress from the workload and the team member not doing their fair share, I became increasingly angry and vented my frustration and anger to a few employees. At the time I realised I was stressed and angry and realised I was venting but I couldn't stop myself. The release was what I needed at the time, but on reflection, I wish I could have controlled myself. I know the way I choose to respond to a situation reflects on me and impacts those around me. I have worked hard to be aware of how I'm feeling and how I choose to respond to situations and haven't 'lost control' like this for quite some time. I prefer to be more

constructive to these things and organise the solution to my problem rather than complain about it.

This is an example of the forceful effect of emotions on behaviour. Robert reported that he had "worked hard to be aware of how I'm feeling and how I choose to respond". His report indicates that he has learned consciously to manage his behaviour in response to emotions at work. There is evidence of a process of emotional awareness followed by behavioural management; however, on this occasion he failed to execute the latter. It is clear that Robert felt that, on this occasion, his behaviour had fallen short of his standards as a leader.

In the next example, Amy described how she consciously monitored her behavioural responses to emotions at work to ensure that they were appropriate to situations in which she found herself. Again, this indicates an intervention between experiencing an emotion and taking action in the form of displayed behaviour. Amy used the word 'appropriate' to describe her own behaviours when faced with an emotional situation, implying that context is relevant to behavioural responses in the workplace.

Amy (interview)
Absolutely I will show emotion if required. I'll hug somebody and stuff like that if it's appropriate. Yeah, I think I'm quite good at assessing.

The phrase "'I think I'm quite good at assessing" indicates the use of a conscious thought process that results in Amy choosing the behaviour she should show when she feels emotion at work.

In the final, slightly longer, diary extract from Lynn, she relayed how she had managed her behaviour in response to a rude email from a colleague who had a reputation for poor emotional control. In this account, Lynn demonstrated several active steps that she took, related to recognition of emotion and subsequent behavioural management.

Lynn (diary)

I didn't respond for a couple of days as I needed to ensure that I was professional, and I was so angry that I was worried that I might inflame the situation. I knew that my response needed to convey the fact that I would not put up with that behaviour and that the staff involved could see that I was supporting them in dealing with the consultant.

I eventually responded and pointed out that her email was divisive and unhelpful, that we are a team and need to treat each other with respect and that I would not tolerate rude behaviour. I also pointed out that I am there to support her and was happy to discuss.

I was relieved after I sent the email, I had been mulling it over and had done several drafts which were done in anger and were quite strong. I had also asked my husband to review the response to make sure it conveyed the right message. Later that day a member of my team rang to say thanks and that no one had ever dealt with inappropriate behaviour from this individual before.

Lynn consciously took her time to respond to the email. The phrases "I was so angry that I was worried I might inflame the situation" and "I needed to ensure I was professional" indicate that she knew her behavioural response required conscious management to ensure that it was appropriate to her position as a leader. Once Lynn had taken some time to process the emotion, she was able to build a response to her colleague, although she had to draft several emails which, on reflection, she admits continued to contain expressions of anger. In getting her husband to review her written response, clearly she was trying to ensure that the emotions she felt did not detract from her effective management of the situation.

Theme 2 – Leaders use emotional awareness and management of others with the aim of achieving desired outcomes

This theme revealed that leaders use emotional awareness of colleagues to manage their own and ultimately their colleagues' behaviours in pursuit of what they believed to be positive outcomes. Whether they are successful in this aim is highly subjective and this study

does not aim to determine whether desired outcomes are successfully achieved or whether the outcomes sought are indeed positive. What is of interest in the context of the study is that leaders engage in EI in the hope that they will achieve a desired aim.

As with the management of emotions in the self, emotions must first be recognised to enable the adjustment of behaviour, and this sometimes does not happen. The data suggests that leaders face challenges in correctly noticing and interpreting emotions in others and that the process requires time and effort. Having recognised emotions in colleagues, they are then faced with a choice regarding how to manage the situation, and generally, they focus on how to get what they believe to be the best result from an organisational perspective.

There were fewer diary accounts regarding emotions noticed in others than there were regarding those related to themselves, and descriptions were generally less detailed than in the case of those related to themselves. In many cases, the narrative quickly returned to how the situation had affected the study participant. During his interview, Robert discussed his views on emotions at work and highlighted that a requirement for professionalism could lead to the display and observation of few emotions.

Robert (interview)

I don't want to work in a toxic environment where people think it's acceptable to get angry … go off the rails and lose it … treat people disrespectfully. We're expected to be professional, respectful, courteous. I think you need to maintain constructive workplace relationships … so that business can operate. This week we had a terrible video call with a third party and now we have to offer a mediation meeting … because it was clear that the relationship is breaking down. It is not the sort of work environment that we want … so for us this is not acceptable behaviour.

Robert uses the word 'toxic' to describe an environment in which negative emotions are allowed to be displayed openly. It is clear that he believes that the maintenance of constructive working relationships requires effective management of emotions in the workplace so that any display of anger or, as he puts it, "going off the rails", is avoided.

However, the above example shows that emotions do emerge. Robert describes his video call as 'terrible' and adds "it is clear that the relationship is breaking down".

Emotions can be observable without verbal communication if colleagues experience established relationships. In the following diary extract, Simon referred to sensing 'discomfort' in a member of his team during a meeting.

Simon (M) (diary)

We discussed the performance of a supplier, who is required to provide an individual to fulfil an important health and safety role. They have failed, not for the first time, to appoint somebody and there is now a gap in the team in a very important role. I could see that one member of the team was frustrated and I sense that they felt they were being blamed for the issue.

In the interview, he suggested that he had been able to pick up on this feeling, not only because he looks actively for emotional cues, but also because he knew the colleague well enough to detect their discomfort through their tone and body language.

There is a much more overt display of negative emotion in the account from Tina below. The wording in this account portrays an aggressive exchange.

Tina (diary)

A number of engineers arguing about how to implement a commercial agreement. This went on for most of the meeting and was really just point scoring between different contractors. It felt a very male environment. A number of other team members just switched off whilst the 'rant' carried on. Nothing was achieved not even an agreement in how to address the problem.

During her interview, Tina confirmed that she had felt like "a spectator" during the heated debate between her male colleagues. On this occasion, she had felt it was easiest to let the angry episode play out, although she noted in the diary that the meeting had ended without

any positive resolution or plan to deal with the issues about which her colleagues had argued. This may have been an indication of the futility of anger in the workplace.

Most of the emotions that were reported to have been observed in others were negative, possibly because they are the most obvious when subject to physical observation and more likely to require the intervention of a leader. Anger and sadness were the predominant emotions that had been observed. In Lorna's diary extract below, a colleague demonstrated obvious anger through a lack of cooperation and negative body language. It is evident that this anger caused the meeting to be less effective than had been expected.

Lorna (M) (diary)

I was already aware that my peer is not happy with the proposals for change as they remove responsibility from their area and transfer it to mine. During the planning meeting we were establishing roles, responsibilities, and scope of the project. My peer was obstructive, difficult, and very clearly angry throughout the meeting. She was rude to my project manager and unfortunately, that did not result in a positive reaction back.

In the diary extract from Grace below, we see how leaders can be faced with the obvious distress of colleagues and subordinates in the course of their work.

Grace (diary)

I observed emotion in one of our dental nurses who got quite upset telling me she had decided to leave.

What starts to become apparent from the data is that, as leaders, the participants felt they should be able to control their own emotions at work, although they were regularly exposed to colleagues who struggled to do the same. The implication here is that, as professionals rise to leadership levels, there is a general expectation that they can notice and manage emotions in themselves and others, thereby demonstrating EI.

In Brian's diary account below, he noted the need for leaders to look for nuanced signs that staff were struggling emotionally and he made an interesting point regarding leaders' duty of care towards their staff from an emotional perspective.

Brian (M) (diary)

I took a call from our tender manager who opened up to say she was struggling. She lived on her own in a small apartment, is new to the area and all her family and friends are not local. The longer this pandemic goes on, the more leaders need to up their game to look for any signs or even just checking in and creating support for people.

Brian clearly sees the emotional welfare of his team as a key component of his role as a leader. He comments that others should "up their game" in terms of observing the emotions of colleagues so that they can offer support if necessary; this suggests that he thinks that some leaders do not take this element of their role as seriously as they should.

Some participants reported that they found it hard to pick up on others' emotions over the course of the research period. Many of the research participants were working from home for some of the time and some worked entirely remotely due to the pandemic. In the following extracts, Amy relayed the challenge of trying to read the emotions of others during virtual working, and particularly the difficulty of picking up on nuanced emotional cues.

Amy (diary)

Working from home and only interacting briefly via Skype and Zoom I cannot recall any particular situations in which I have observed emotions in others.

Amy suggests that meeting virtually instead of in person has prevented her from observing emotions at work, although she did confirm in her interview that she had remained actively engaged with colleagues via telephone and email. Dawn described, in her diary extract below, a loss of social engagement as a result of remote working. Without the opportunity to "head for coffee" after a meeting in order to continue discussions, or as she referred to it, "chit-chat" in an informal setting, Dawn started to reflect on the loss of "human connection".

Dawn (diary)

For the second week running, I did not perceive any specific emotions in others. This is making me wonder a lot about the topic of human connection. I don't know if this is because of the virtual situation or because I am particularly insensitive. There is less chit-chat around meetings so the opportunity to glimpse people's states of mind is not there. Also, sometimes people comment after meetings and interactions about what they felt and that happens as you leave the room for example and head for coffee and of course this is not available to us anymore.

In her reflections on work in a world of virtual working, Dawn notes that "the opportunity to glimpse people's states of mind is not there". This indicates her need for physical proximity to others to pick up on their emotions.

The challenge involved in observing the emotions of others during lockdown working were discussed during the interview with Alice. She also articulated how she found it easier to pick up on the emotions of others when she was in close physical proximity to them.

Alice (M) (interview)

Particularly when I am physically close to somebody, I find it quite easy, I think, to switch into their emotions. So, it's almost like they give me waves of electrical impulses of some sort. So, particularly when people are feeling a heightened sense of anxiety or are emotionally upset by something, I can feel the feeling. It's like, there's a process of transference at some point and I can feel it.

Alice uses interesting language to describe how she can pick up on emotions in others. The phrase "it's almost like they give me waves of electrical impulses of some sort" is a powerful indicator of how emotions can be perceived in others through what Alice describes as "a process of transference".

The participants managed behaviours in others after they had perceived the others' emotional states through the use of a range of techniques and styles. However, the ultimate aim of their actions was consistent: to obtain what they perceived to be positive

organisational outcomes. In the first diary extract from Neil, he showed enthusiasm to ensure that a whistle-blower felt comfortable enough to endure a formal investigation process, having reported a bullying situation.

Neil (diary)

The individual that raised the dysfunctional behaviour matter (in Procurement) was both nervous and seemingly distressed. They had never been in my office and didn't know me. I made a particular effort to congratulate them for doing the right thing and to assure them that I would treat the matter sensitively but appropriately and that she would be fully supported if matters came to a head.

Neil's account describes how, on observing that the colleague is nervous, he makes "a particular effort to congratulate them for doing the right thing". This was a deliberate action that he took to make the colleague feel more comfortable so that the matter could be discussed and dealt with effectively.

In the next example, Amy articulated how she had dealt with an angry email from a junior colleague. Despite feeling angry herself, Amy parked her own emotion to focus on managing her colleague.

Amy (diary)

A member of my organisation was particularly unhappy about a recent communication and let me know of this via a very unpleasant email. … so, my first reaction was 'how dare she speak to us in this manner!' But of course, that was not my response to her! I replied in a polite and professional manner, explaining how it would have been easier if she had called me in the first instance (I had tried to call her but her mobile was switched off) and explained briefly the process to date. I received a follow-up email from her today with no acknowledgement of the inappropriateness of her message or explanation for her rant. Her response to the situation has shocked me; I did not expect the level of anger over what was in essence a misunderstanding on her part but also her lack of emotional intelligence demonstrated by her response.

As a leader, Amy demonstrates calm in the face of an angry challenge. She tried to move away from email communication by telephoning the colleague in the first instance. When this line of communication failed, she replied to the email in a "polite and professional manner". Her expression indicates that expressions of anger do not meet her standard regarding acceptable levels of courtesy in the workplace. Amy's junior colleague was driven by emotion when she sent the email "rant", which Amy perceives as a demonstration of a "lack of emotional intelligence". As such, Amy perceives the colleague negatively. Despite feeling angry herself, Amy's response was considered, and her key objective was to calm the colleague and resolve the business issue.

During the interview, Amy reflected on this event and her general approach to the management of emotionally driven behaviours in colleagues.

Amy (interview)
I'd like to think I react in an appropriate way. So, if someone is angry, I will try to calm the situation. I will try to rework something I'm trying to say to them or communicate in a different way to help them understand better and therefore calm them down.

You can obviously misread, but again, you've got to be mindful that you might be misreading stuff, so you can give a tempered approach in how you respond to see how it hits with them.

Amy's phrase "I will try to rework something I'm trying to say or communicate in a different way" in relation to dealing with anger is particularly noteworthy. The implication here is that the choice of words or communication channel when conveying a message to an angry colleague can play a significant role in how they respond. The foremost objective when dealing with anger is to "calm them down". Amy also recognises that the management of emotions in others might involve an element of trial and error. She notes that "you can obviously misread" emotions in others and suggests that this risk can be mitigated through use of a "tempered approach" to gauge the success of leaders' actions in driving desired behaviours in others. This allows for a change of approach if the initial action does not work.

The diary extract below from Lee shows that he had to deal with two angry directors whom each had performance issues in their divisions.

Lee (M) (diary)

I saw two of the surveying directors getting very defensive and quite angry at times when it came to the deep dive into their division.

The next day I had a follow-up with director 1 … he was still angry. I asked him to send the performance graphs over to his managers, with the brief that he needs to discuss some worrying trends and individuals who are neither giving a good service in terms of quality or quantity and to set up a group workshop to go over the data and sampling, to determine next steps in rectifying the issues. He thanked me towards the back end of the week.

Director 2 took the whole issue very personally; he saw it as his failure. He became demotivated and despondent, questioning if he was right for the role, if what he had been doing was correct and if the path he had set for his team and directive was the right one. I reminded him that one failure doesn't define him or his ability, more to the point, what he does with the issue would reveal more. I asked him to park it for the day and we could catch up the next morning. In the morning he was still down / hurt from it, so I had to reel off some of his recent wins and where he had added value to the business, myself, and his team, to build his confidence. We then talked about his plan of action around the issue and broadly followed the plan that director 1 was implementing.

Although both the directors had been angry during the performance review meeting, Lee had noticed very different emotional responses from the two colleagues the following day. He described director 1 as "still angry", whilst director 2 "took the whole issue very personally and saw it as his failure". These different reactions led Lee to adopt different approaches to the management of the performance issue, having evaluated the situation and the individual colleagues concerned.

With director 1, Lee kept a calm but authoritative approach and focused on the practical need to resolve the performance issues. With the second director, Lee noted that the

emotional response the director had displayed related to a loss of confidence, so he took a different tack. He reported: “I had to reel off some of his recent wins and where he had added value to the business, myself and his team, to build his confidence.” After this confidence-building approach, Lee was able to move to the need to improve business performance. He stated in his diary: “We then talked about his plan of action around the issue and broadly followed the plan that director 1 was implementing.”

The two different techniques that Lee used resulted in the use of the same business plan as an outcome. Both directors were able to follow up the performance issues with their own teams, which was the correct organisational result. At his interview, Lee advised that he had initially felt very angry when he saw that divisional performance had dropped; however, on witnessing the emotions of his directors, he knew that to solve the performance issues he needed to deal effectively with the reactions of his colleagues. This could not be achieved successfully through the use of a single approach.

Lee’s handling of this situation indicates the need for leaders to tune into the emotions of their individual team members and to modify their own behaviours if they are to influence successfully the behaviours of colleagues. This example highlights the importance of nuance in leadership. Leaders must notice emotions in others and act appropriately to drive the desired behavioural responses in others and ultimately to produce the required result in positive organisational outcomes.

There is significant demand on leaders in terms of time, effort and skill associated with management of the behaviours of colleagues in response to emotions. The accounts from Lee, above, and Lorna, below, show that the investment of time to evaluate the emotions of team members enables leaders to consider the best course of action to achieve desired behavioural responses in colleagues.

Lorna was faced with a team member who was considering resigning due to the pressure of work. In the extract below, Lorna describes the colleague as “an extremely valued member of the team” and it is clear that she acted with consideration of the colleague’s emotional state of mind while her aim was to prevent the resignation occurring.

Lorna (M) (diary)

I was alerted to a situation emerging with a member of my management team requiring additional support and potentially wanting to resign from their role due to the pressure and workload. I was aware that there were potential emotions involved prior to meeting with the individual. I, therefore, called them to have a private chat with me so we could understand the issues. We met in a relaxed, informal setting and I put them at ease by confirming their line manager had already been made aware of how difficult things were at the moment and would she like to talk about it.

At this point, she became very emotional. She expressed a feeling of failure and that she had let me down by not coping under the pressure of the role. We discussed all of the areas that were not working for her. There were some things we could manage differently but largely this was about the individual just being honest that the role was not for them, and they didn't (and would never) enjoy that level of management. This is an extremely valued member of the team, therefore, I assured her that we would do all that we could to move them into an operational role and would address that as soon as possible as we have vacancies. I also reassured her that there will be opportunities in the future and that we did not want to lose her skills or her as an employee. I am continuing to move this forward to a resolution with the individual. This resulted in them feeling valued, relieved and has already had a positive impact on their mental well-being.

Lorna opens her account with a report that she had been alerted to a need for a colleague to receive "additional support". This notification sparked in Lorna an immediate concern for the well-being of her team member as well as the need (as a leader) to maintain effective business operations. Lorna went out of her way to create a supportive environment to enable her colleague to discuss her work issues; she states that she had arranged a meeting in a "relaxed, informal setting". The account implies that Lorna took time to listen to her colleague as she reports "we discussed all of the areas that were not working for her". Knowing that the colleague was at risk of resigning, Lorna presented alternative work options that she thought would be more attractive to her colleague, to find a solution that did not involve the colleague leaving the business. Lorna concludes that the discussion had resulted in the colleague "feeling valued". She confirmed at her interview several weeks later that the

colleague had subsequently secured a transfer to a less stressful area of the business. This example provides evidence of a way in which leaders can use awareness and subsequent management of emotions in others to cause positive outcomes.

In the extract below from the interview with Grace, she defines what EI means to her and how it can be used to manage emotions in others. This discussion centred around the importance of leaders meeting organisational objectives and the challenges of getting the right performance outcomes from colleagues.

Grace (interview)

For me, it's [EI] about the way you deal with stuff, how you react to other people and how you then analyse how they're reacting, and then how you, let's say, how you deal with that, and what you do if they're upset, how you deal with it, if they're happy, how you deal with it, that kind of stuff. It's being smart about - I'm just saying it's about being smart about all the people's feelings and approaches to whatever situation you're in, that kind of stuff.

Grace used an interesting phrase to describe EI: "It's about being smart about all the people's feelings and approaches to whatever situation you're in." Although she did not directly reference 'intelligence', her words contain a suggestion of thought processes that link the awareness and subsequent behaviours of leaders when it comes to emotions.

Theme 3 – Participants considered EI to be an essential skill for leadership and believe that it can be learned

The diary templates did not refer directly to EI, to enable a deconstructed emergence of the construct through data on emotional awareness and subsequent management of behaviours. In their interviews, however, participants were asked to describe what they understood by the term 'emotional intelligence'. Analysis of these data presented a clear theme. Most of the leaders were able to describe EI, and the vast majority of responses were captured by:

"… the ability to perceive and manage emotions, both within oneself and about others" (Pekaar et al., 2018b)

Data analysis presented the view that EI was essential for successful leadership. From the diary accounts, it was clear that the management of emotional responses in the self and others comprised a significant element of the day job for leaders. The research group members were unanimous in their view that EI exists, although opinions differed on whether it was a trait, an ability, or a skill. The consensus was that regardless of its origins, there were benefits to the inclusion of EI in leadership development. Participant data indicated that some skills related to EI could be learned by anyone.

The data extracts that support this theme are representative of the views provided on the importance of EI in leadership and whether or not it can be developed successfully through training. Whilst the research group had mixed views on EI with regard to whether it was an ability, trait or skill, there was a unanimous view that it is essential to effective leadership. The following extract from Tony neatly sums up how leaders with EI compare with those who do not.

Tony (M) (interview)
I think it [EI in leadership] is critical. It's critical if you want people to follow you. I think you've got two different types of leaders. For me, the best leaders are those who have got good emotional intelligence. I guess you were then asking me if you want me to describe what best means … best in a sense of what's best for the shareholders and best in terms of employee engagement. You know, it's a whole different ball game, isn't it? My short answer to that is, do I think it's important? Yes, I think it's critical because otherwise … what have you got? You've got a robot as a leader. If you start looking at what is a good leader, it's somebody that can take people with them who is intellectually curious and wants to develop people and take people with them. The best organisations are those who have got leaders who get that, would be my view.

Tony describes EI as "critical" to leadership "if you want people to follow you". His comment that "the best leaders are those who have got good emotional intelligence" implies that not

all leaders demonstrate EI, although he believes that leadership capability is reduced without it. He used an interesting metaphor in his description of leaders without EI, referring to them as “robots”, which points to the critical human element of EI in leadership. Tony’s account suggests that leaders’ performances are rated through the application of different criteria depending on who is judging it, with shareholders and employees having very different perspectives; he described it as “a whole different ball game”, the implication being that shareholders may be less concerned with leaders’ EI than are employees.

Alice stated that she considered the importance of EI in leaders to be underestimated in a discussion during the interview.

Alice– (M) (interview)

I don't think you can be a successful, productive leader without emotional intelligence and without high emotional intelligence. I think it's one of the most under-rated qualities required of leaders.

Alice uses the words ‘successful’ and ‘productive’ in relation to leaders with high EI to highlight their positive impact in terms of increasing overall leadership performance.

In discussing the importance of EI, Nicole reflected on the impact of the pandemic and highlighted the need for leaders to embrace the ‘human’ elements of leadership.

Nicole (M) (interview)

Yeah, I think it is really important. I think it is really important to recognise the humanity of the situation. And I think that is what I have come back to over and over again with COVID, is we're dealing with human beings. If you're not treating people as humans, if you're treating them as human capital, it is not important to have emotional intelligence. But if you are really serious about your people, you're really serious about making your business work, you have to have emotional intelligence.

Nicole makes a clear distinction between ‘humans’ and ‘human capital’; the latter is a phrase for people as a resource commodity, whilst the former ascribes far more value to people as

organisational assets. Nicole's account suggests that EI is intrinsic to the human element of leadership. She says "we're dealing with human beings". Her use of the phrase "if you're really serious about making your business work you have to have emotional intelligence" indicates that she considers EI to be fundamental to the success of an organisation.

During his interview, Lee explained his perception of the importance of EI in leadership. He described the need for leaders to demonstrate role model behaviours, which required the emotional management that is associated with EI.

Lee (M) (interview)

It [EI in leadership] is probably one of the most overlooked [requirements] … because everyone looks to you for answers and you're the role model of how to behave. So, if you're behaving like a petulant little child, there's poor behaviours and it flows out down the ladder … and that will become your norm in the organisation.

Lee explains his perception that poor leadership behaviours and in particular the ability to regulate emotion, which he refers to as "behaving like a petulant little child", influence the culture of an organisation by "flowing down the ladder" towards junior colleagues who are likely to copy that behaviour. Lee's words indicate the importance of leaders setting a good example for their colleagues. He also suggests that EI is an "overlooked" but important quality in leadership.

The research group members were broadly split in their views about whether EI was trait- or ability/skills-based. Some considered EI to be a component of personality whereas others described it as a skill. They made no direct reference to EI as a form of intelligence; indeed, some held the view that intellectual ability was very different from EI. The comments from Lynn in her account below describe how she perceives EI to be an inherited trait that presents very differently from cognitive intelligence.

Lynn (interview)

I think a lot of it is nature. It's not nurture. I think a lot of it is how you are as a person. This might be a bit generalist, but a lot of intelligent people, academically intelligent, really don't have those social and emotional skills. I see that a lot in doctors in particular, who are academically brilliant and can diagnose complex cases. Really, really, intelligent people, but they have no insight into how they speak to people and how their actions affect people … and that's really worrying as a doctor. It's unfortunate but the reality is some doctors aren't that good with the people element of patient care. Some doctors just don't seem to understand how things affect people emotionally, and that their behaviour, and other people's behaviour, all matters. They just don't seem to understand that it's a social-emotional interaction …

It is clear from this extract that Lynn, in her role as a leader in the National Health Service (NHS), perceives EI to be less common, but no less important, than the more widely understood "academic" intelligence required to qualify as a healthcare professional. Her comments regarding doctors reflect Lynn's perception that EI is very different from academic intelligence. She described some of her medical colleagues as "academically brilliant", but suggested that they had "no idea how to speak to people, or how their actions affect people". Lynn's description of EI as "nature. It's not nurture" suggests that she believes EI to be trait-based; however, her description of how EI presents in practice contains the word 'behaviours', so she implies that, regardless of the origins of EI, it is ultimately demonstrated in how individuals behave. What can be seen from Lynn's account is that there may be significant numbers of senior medical professionals who, in failing to demonstrate EI, deliver a reduced patient experience. This is an example of the broader implications of having leaders who lack EI and its importance in the achievement of positive organisational outcomes.

There was a general consensus that training in EI as a component of leadership development should be included as standard practice. Amy discussed at her interview how important she considered EI to be in leadership and how it might be developed through training.

Amy (interview)

It [EI] is massively important. It can influence and impact on your relationships with people but also on the business itself. I think certain people will have a bias for being better than others, but I think if they haven't got it, you can certainly introduce them to that thinking and that mindset, and the approaches you can take. I certainly think you can raise awareness of it, whether they apply it, whether they buy in to it, it's another matter. I mean, most leadership programmes have the role as a leader. What that means - but they don't necessarily address the emotional aspect, the impact of your behaviours on other people.

Amy's words indicate that, although certain personality traits may support EI, this does not preclude its development in those who are not born with it. Her reference to the absence of the emotional aspects of leadership in some training programmes implies that these are skills that can and should be learned.

Neil explained in discussion at his interview that he felt there was a "massive gap" in terms of EI as a component of leadership development programmes.

Neil (interview)

–It [the lack of EI training] is a massive gap because I remember the first time I was told to get rid of somebody. I blundered, and I caused all sorts of problems because of the things I said. The only good thing was it was not recorded because I made a right hash of it … so, yeah, the training of it is massive. I think it would be very valuable for people to understand that and to sort of say, 'Look, you know, you might feel this. You have to suppress that. You don't react to it.' It is a skill. I think it's a skill. I think I've learned it over the years, and I am quite good at following my own checklist now.

Neil said he had learned to navigate the emotional elements of leadership 'on the job' but he considered that he could have been much more effective earlier in his career had he been through EI training. Neil refers to EI as a skill. From his language, the reader infers a process approach to the management of emotions at work, since he referred to a "checklist" that he now follows to use EI.

There is further evidence of the capacity for EI to be learned in the following account from Alice, who had observed a significant improvement in a leader's ability to incorporate emotional recognition and engagement with colleagues in the workplace. Here she describes how she had noted a change in the behaviours of her Chief Executive Officer (CEO) over time.

Alice (M) (interview)

… but our chief exec, who I've always found quite cold when I tried to talk to her … I used to report to her directly, and it was difficult to do … because I didn't feel like I could talk to her as a mentor or on any personal level. I felt like she was only interested in performance management … and I've seen a real change in her communication style over the last two years to become much more of an empathetic leader, much more. You see some chief execs, particularly through social media … you see them really connect with their audience, and really … and really show their emotion, and really show their human side, and say how it's all affected them through the pandemic. … and I've seen a real shift in her, from her briefs that were always just factual … 'this is how we're doing on finances. This is how we're doing on performance', now it's about how you're feeling as individuals, how the pandemic's affecting you as a team. And when you've got something like this [the pandemic] … with this effect to the whole … well, a whole generation of people … everybody in the whole world.

Alice's contrast between the initial leadership style of her CEO, which Alice describes as "cold" and "difficult", and the subsequent "empathetic" style is quite stark. Alice said she did not know what had instigated this change, but later in the discussion, she suggested it was probably due to her CEO's attendance at an executive coaching intervention. From this account, it seems that the CEO has been able to increase her EI, which Alice perceives as a positive development in her leadership style.

Tina also identified EI as having a strong trait element in a discussion at her interview (extract below). Ultimately, she decided that EI could be developed through training, but she was circumspect regarding how successful this could be.

Tina (interview)

I think you're born with it [EI], aren't you? Well, I don't know … can you learn it? I'm not sure. (Researcher: should it be taught in business school?) An understanding of it, yeah. Because it will bring some people on. You would bring some people on to a certain point. But I think people have already got it or they haven't and I'm not sure how much more you could develop it … You can only take people so far.

Tina is undecided on whether or how training and/or experience could develop people's EI. She concludes that there would be a benefit in the inclusion of EI within leadership development programmes with a somewhat unenthusiastic comment "an understanding of it – yeah". Tina's struggle to decide whether and how EI can be developed demonstrates the ambiguous nature of the construct. Whilst she supports the principle that leaders should be trained in EI, her comments "people have already got it or they haven't" and "you can only take people so far" indicate a view that there may be limits to the effects of training in EI that depend on natural ability or trait EI.

Theme 4 - Participant leaders reported more negative emotional experiences than positive during recall of significant incidents

"Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" Northouse, 2010 p3.

The quote above provides one of many definitions of leadership in an organisational context. Whilst this research does not seek to engage in the debate around what defines good or bad leadership, the study used leaders as participants to explore EI and mindfulness in the context of their work. As such It is a useful reference to consider during a review of the findings of this research project. In organisations, leaders are generally held accountable for performance. This accountability, as demonstrated in these findings, results in them regularly dealing with problems or issues that could result in failure, in order to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, it might be expected given that the research was carried out during a global pandemic, that the emotions reported were generally negative rather than positive. It may

be that the need for leaders to understand and solve business-critical problems quickly was greater than at any time since the Second World War. Increased workloads in particular raised stress levels, and this situation resulted in the experience of more negative emotions than had been the case before the pandemic in both participants and their colleagues, as new ways of working had to be developed and deployed at pace.

The frequency of occurrence and strength of negative emotions that the data shows contributed to a clear theme. Leaders recognised that negative feelings occurred regularly as they carried out their work over the course of the research period. This applied to duties of all kinds, many of them mundane rather than grand events or obviously stressful situations. In this section, these negative emotions, and the situations that caused them, are explored to understand more about the challenges of leadership and the emotional demands placed on those engaged in leadership positions.

Lorna described how her workload had increased over the research period, and her words suggested that the volume was exceeding her capacity to deliver.

Lorna (M) (diary)
My workload each week is increasingly difficult to manage.

Clive described an unprecedented display of negative emotion that had occurred during a meeting with a long-standing colleague. He attributed this display to the relentless demands of the pandemic.

Clive (M) (diary)
I could see the tiredness in my colleague's body language and hear the emotional strain. It is the only time I have seen this very capable woman close to tears in 20 years. I could see the emotional pain she was going through, trying to hold her team together and get through the sheer volume of work.

Clive's observations are astute and comprehensive. During the encounter, he used his senses to pick up on emotional cues; he states that he could both "hear" and "see" the emotional

pain. Clive's words indicate concern for his colleague and empathy regarding the difficulty she was experiencing in carrying out her duties.

The increase in workloads was also shown by references to weekend working, which regularly appeared in the diaries. This subject was explored further during the interview with Ruth, who articulated her feelings of being overwhelmed by the amount she had to do.

Ruth (interview)

So … when I don't work a weekend, I spend the whole week thinking I still don't even know what's in my diary or inbox. So … it's just a bit like a little hamster wheel. And it tends to be okay, but there's just a lot of curveballs that are big, you know? It's all-day in meetings and then it's another day spent in all-day meetings … and then it's like … having to write a strategy. It's all these big things which I just haven't got the capacity for. It's just a bit mental.

Ruth conveys the relentless nature of the work environment that she experienced at the time of the study. Whilst it was clear that she needed a break from her work, taking time off at the weekend resulted in her worrying about the week ahead. She likens the constant focus on problem-solving to being in a "hamster wheel", with days spent in constant meetings and the arrival of unexpected issues or "curveballs" that she does not have time to manage. Ruth presents a picture of a highly stressful environment.

Some of the research participants tried to avoid working excessively to preserve their well-being, but they described associated feelings of guilt and worry regarding how this would be perceived by their colleagues. Alice explained that she knew she would cause negative consequences for herself if she overworked, so she tried to limit her working hours to maintain her operational effectiveness.

Alice (M) (interview):

Since the pandemic hit, there's been an awful lot of people working ridiculously long hours. Evenings, weekends, and so on. And I've been doing my conscious best not to do that because I know that I suffer when I do. I get grumpy and - you know - ineffective. But sometimes I feel like I am not pulling my weight in the same way that other people are.

Alice tried to balance the amount of time that she worked with the ability to maintain her effectiveness, but this left her feeling guilty that other colleagues were working more than she was. Alice's worry that she would be perceived as "not pulling her weight" is an example of how pressure to adhere to cultural norms can result in negative emotions in the workplace.

In the next extract, Neil explains that he feared a negative emotional experience in relation to a meeting. He describes the regularity of these feelings and the association of negative emotion with specific tasks, in this instance, meetings with the company's board.

Neil (diary)

The end of the week was the Group Board meeting with directors and shareholders. Such meetings always make me tense, I feel exposed if there is criticism, especially since I have only been in the business weeks. In this meeting I am even more knotted inside because it is being led by the Chief Executive, who I have no respect for (nor do the other board members) and who runs the meeting in a wholly disorganised and slapdash manner, I have tried to give him my views on how to run a board meeting and even provided a set of notes but he steadfastly insists on 'winging it' and I feel it reflects so badly on me.

Neil is aware of the effect of these meetings on him. There is an implied level of vulnerability in his use of the phrase "I feel exposed", in this case to potential criticism. In this case, this resulted in a physical stress response to the negative emotion (feeling "knotted inside"). His frustration at the refusal of the CEO to take his advice on how to run the meeting is evident in his language, as he describes the meetings as "slapdash" and comments that the CEO is "winging it". Neil has attempted to mitigate the difficulties by informally coaching the CEO, but he believes his efforts have not succeeded and he is left feeling despondent, which is evident in his phrase "I feel it reflects so badly on me".

Ruth recorded a similar experience of a "bad meeting" in her diary. Both Neil and Ruth provide examples of leaders who worry about how others perceive their performances in

meeting situations. The extract below shows that Ruth felt exposed because she had to represent a senior colleague with insufficient preparation.

Ruth (diary)

I felt under pressure as was covering another Head's role for the meeting and I did not understand the content of what I was presenting. I felt incompetent and a bit embarrassed that I was winging it.

When Ruth discussed this incident during her interview, she saw it differently; she said that, whilst she had felt stressed and uncomfortable at the time, having reflected on the event, she felt the experience was a learning opportunity. In future, she would take steps to avoid a similar situation by ensuring that she was sufficiently prepared.

The most common emotions that were presented in the diary data were anger and frustration. Leaders are required to interact with seniors, peers and subordinates on a regular basis to carry out their duties. Often, they are judged on the performance of those around them more than on their personal progress towards organisational objectives (Cummins and Boyle, 2014). The responsibility for actions outside their direct control can result in negatively charged emotions. The diary extracts below show examples of anger and frustration that were caused when leaders encountered colleagues they perceived to lack capability or ability to deliver, and they considered that ultimately they had to pick up the pieces because they were responsible for the final output.

Brian described his frustration with a fellow member of his leadership team, whom he felt was underperforming.

Brian (M) (diary)

The remaining leadership member from before I started is the sales and strategy director. He is protected by the CEO and is lazy and not very good at his job. In fact, I constantly have to keep doing his job for him. We had a heated discussion over the fact he didn't see the point in a sales budget, nor a forecast, other than his gut feeling. His words were 'the sales will come

in, don't worry'. This angered and frustrated me as we were behind forecast, and I have a responsibility to the employees to safeguard their jobs.

In this case, Brian's emotions were driven by several factors. He felt that the colleague was "lazy and not very good at his job", which resulted in Brian "doing his job for him". Brian's belief that this colleague is protected by the CEO may be driving his frustration, since there is presumably little that Brian can do other than manage around the situation, which causes him additional work. Brian also notes that he feels responsibility to his employees, with the implication that the presence of a weak link at a senior level (in this case the sales director) could lead to job losses.

Even those who reported that they usually could regulate their emotions in the workplace reported feelings of anger and frustration over the course of the study period. Clive reported a situation that had "pushed him over the edge".

Clive (M) (diary)
I am normally very calm at work, but the last-minute interference from a senior colleague who had not been involved in the detail of these discussions for the last seven months pushed me over the edge. His approach was to pick up some issue about timetabling from within his department, talk to one or two heads of other departments (who also have anxiety over the issue, and didn't know the detail of what was actually happening), and develop a solution without consultation with those who had been working on this issue. The first couple of messages went out to staff without my knowledge, causing more problems and issues. I then had to send a 'cease and desist' message to stop any further messages and arrange several meetings to find out what was actually going on, what was driving his concerns, and whether these were justified, which they were not.

At the root of Clive's anger is the belief that the senior colleague is critical of the work that Clive and his colleagues have undertaken, which has resulted in him taking action to change existing plans. The fact that this was done without any direct communication with Clive has added to Clive's feelings of frustration. In order to establish "what was driving his concerns", Clive felt the need to halt all proceedings. Ultimately Clive states that the concerns of the

senior colleague were unjustified. This situation provides several insights into the causes of negative emotions in leadership. It shows that leaders can be subject to challenges from senior colleagues. This demonstrates an element of vulnerability that is associated with leadership in terms of perceptions of their performance, leading to negative emotions as leaders are required to defend their decisions and associated actions. In this case, it seems that the challenge to the work undertaken by Clive and his colleagues resulted in a significant waste of time and effort, which might have been avoided with improved communication.

In the diary account below, Lorna also reports feelings of anger and frustration as a project fails to go to plan. Lorna was responsible for the output of a project, which she had outsourced to consultants. In this extract, we see her reaction as she establishes that work is not progressing as she expected.

Lorna (M) (diary)

In a meeting with some senior consultants, I found out that they had not undertaken a piece of work required – a standard part of their project. This made me feel angry that I needed to guide them through what was required and how to get the project back on track. I was also disappointed and frustrated with myself for trusting that they knew what they were doing, just because they had presented themselves as 'consultants/experts' in their field.

At first reading, it seems that Lorna is angry with the consultants because she feels that their performance has fallen below expected standards. A deeper examination of her account, however, reveals complexity in her emotions. In common with Clive's situation, there is evidence that Lorna's anger with the consultants is driven, at least in part, by her sense of exposure and potentially being open to criticism for the failure of a project she is leading. She describes the work that has not been done as "standard", leaving her feeling "disappointed and frustrated with myself for trusting that they knew what they were doing". There is an implication that maybe she should have done more due diligence on the consultants or been closer to the detail of the planned work. This example demonstrates that leaders rely on the actions of others in the delivery of organisational objectives. Whether things go well or go wrong, the leaders are responsible for the outcome, and this responsibility can be emotionally demanding.

It was noticeable in the diaries that people rather than situations or processes were the key drivers of emotions at work. At the core of expressions of anger and frustration was a deep sense of responsibility regarding the achievement of organisational goals, and the associated vulnerability and stress to which this can lead. All three of the above accounts related anger due to the actions (or lack of them) of colleagues or third party workers, who were perceived to be obstructing performance. These examples highlight the degree to which leadership is reliant on successful influencing the actions of others to deliver organisational objectives.

Analysis of the data on critical emotional events that were reported by the participants showed a paucity of accounts of positive emotions either in the participants themselves or that they had observed in others. This seems to indicate that they were focused on problem-solving, and this focus represents a significant element of leadership in practice.

There were a couple of examples of positive emotions that are worthy of inclusion to provide contrast and balance to the findings. The diary extract below demonstrates how Clive decided to focus on some positive events, having recognised the degree to which his diary was filled with negative emotional experiences.

Clive (M) (diary)

This week I've decided to focus on positive emotions for a change … There has been a lot of humour evident in my meetings this week, and on reflection, every week! This can take a number of different forms. Our usual software used for meetings is Microsoft Teams, which has a gif function. This is where people can find a humorous picture to illustrate a point being made. Several of my colleagues have become very good at this, allowing us to have a wry smile, or even a full-bodied laugh in the middle of a discussion about difficult issues.

Clive and his colleagues had found a way to bring some much-needed humour into their meetings. It is notable, however, that even this situation, which evidences the ability of leaders to be light-hearted, there is an irony in that the humour accompanies "a discussion about difficult issues". This brings back into focus the significant problem-solving element of leadership.

One other positive account was presented in the diaries. This was offered by Lynn, who is a manager in a large NHS hospital. The wording indicates the sombre environment in which she was working at the time and the uplifting effect that a positive patient review supplied across the hospital.

Lynn (diary)

A patient shared their critical care and rehabilitation story on Twitter, and it was so uplifting after a difficult week. The tweet was shared by lots of my colleagues, who were also buoyed by the hope in the story. I saw several members of staff who were on the verge of tears when discussing it, but (and I know this sounds cheesy) not tears of sadness but tears of hope, and many saw it was a sign of things changing. Some of my staff were redeployed to critical care and saw first-hand what the pandemic was doing. Some of them were traumatised and still having nightmares. However, at a staff meeting when this was discussed ... when we are coming out of the other end … It was really seen as an almost symbolic turning point and I think a way of staff to be able to move on. A very emotional meeting.

In her interview, Lynn confirmed that the ripple effect of this positivity ("the tweet was shared by lots of my colleagues") ultimately made it worthy of inclusion in her diary for that week. This good-news story made less positive events (of which, she recounted, there were many) recede for a brief period whilst colleagues were united with a feeling of "hope" and "a sign of things changing". It was clear from the accounts from both Clive and Lynn that these small, but nonetheless positive, emotional experiences provided brief but welcome relief from the stresses of the working day.

Conclusion

In summary, the diary data that were related to the emotional experiences of leaders and their interview comments on EI presented four key themes. Firstly, leaders regularly had to be aware of and manage their own emotions. Leaders were all aware of the need to do this, although the data indicated that the ability both to recognise and to act consciously on the

emotions they experienced varied within and among individuals over the course of the research period. In particular, the transition from awareness of emotion in themselves to active modification of their behaviour presented the biggest challenge for the research participants. The data showed that this transition point presented an opportunity for leaders to change the course of an emotional response, in pursuit of a desired aim. Failure to take this opportunity was perceived as a poor demonstration of leadership and as such was often accompanied by regret.

Awareness of emotions in others was found to be more challenging than that in the self. This was reflected by the presence of a smaller quantity of data. Nonetheless, it could be observed, as leaders used their powers of observation and emotional and situational management consciously to pursue positive organisational outcomes. This generally required leaders to change their own behaviour in response to observed emotions in others. Conscious moderation of their actions meant that leaders were able to influence the emotions and associated behaviours of others.

The research participants were all very clear in their view that EI was recognisable in the actions of leaders; indeed, they considered it to be an essential skill for leadership. The data provided a range of examples to support the view that leaders with EI are more effective than those without it. This supports the exploratory, qualitative, research findings of Blaik Hourani, Litz and Parkman (2020). Whilst opinions were mixed on whether EI was an ability, trait or skill, there was a consensus view that it could be improved through training. Participants felt that EI training should be included in leadership development programmes as standard.

Finally, leaders who recorded critical incidents related far more negative emotional experiences than positive ones. The data indicated that the responsibilities associated with leadership regularly required the solution of problems, and the taking and sometimes defence of difficult decisions. As a result, leaders are routinely required to navigate negative emotions in themselves and others in the course of their daily work.

Chapter 5 How Do Leaders Who Identify As Mindfulness Practitioners, Experience Mindfulness?

Of the 16 participants in this research study, eight identified as mindfulness practitioners. This chapter is an exploration of the reported experiences of mindfulness by these leaders during the course of the research period and how they felt it related to their work as leaders. These findings were used subsequently to inform the analysis of the relationship between EI and mindfulness in the context of leadership. It is important to note that, as previously mentioned in chapter three, this part of the research was presented to the participants as an open exploration into their mindfulness practice and if and/or how it impacted them in the workplace. There was no suggestion given to the participants that the research was seeking to demonstrate causal relationships between mindfulness and emotional intelligence, or mindfulness and effective leadership.

During the five-week diary study, the participants were asked to document what mindfulness practice meant for them in the course of day to day life as leaders. The findings provide insight into the presentation of modern mindfulness, as perceived by those working in leadership roles (none of the participants were Buddhists or formally qualified in any aspect of mindfulness). Findings have been organised into four key themes: mindfulness as an individually interpreted practice; mindfulness as a tool for stress management; mindfulness as a support for emotional and situational awareness; and the impact of mindfulness on empathy towards colleagues. An explanation of each theme is presented, with supporting evidence in the form of diary extracts and interview quotes.

Theme 1 – Mindfulness was reported as an individually interpreted practice

The concept of 'personalised mindfulness' was a key theme in the data, indicating that mindfulness can take on many forms. It was supported by a myriad of views from the research participants on what mindfulness meant for them, and how they practised it. The extracts from diary accounts and interviews demonstrate the range of interpretations that existed even within this very small sample group.

Simon described how he used traditional meditation to practise mindfulness.

Simon (M) (interview)

I believe mindfulness meditation helps me to 'stand back from what is going on in my head'. It allows me to observe my emotions dispassionately, as a set of responses that my mind creates rather than something that is in some way inherently 'me'.

Simon uses interesting terminology here. He implies that he can disconnect from his active thought processes so that he can observe his emotional state without judgement. This indicates the use of metacognition (Kudesia, 2019). In splitting his emotions from his thoughts, he gains additional insight into himself, as described by the phrase "it allows me to observe my emotions dispassionately".

Brian describes in the diary extract below how his meditation practice enables him to clear his mind.

Brian (M) (diary)

I do practise mindfulness and have for some time now. Mindfulness makes me more aware of myself and others. I meditate daily, usually in the evening before bed. I do this after a short reflection time and making notes in a book, so I can clear my mind. I then mainly relax and breathe.

During his interview, Brian explained that he had been introduced to mindfulness via an executive coach and that, for him, it extended further than just meditative practice. The addition of reflection and writing in a journal to the generally accepted breath work of meditation provided him with a range of benefits that extended across his home and work life. Such were the positive effects for him that he had built mindfulness practice into his daily routine.

In her interview, Nicole explained how she used transcendental meditation[7] in her mindfulness practice. She had undertaken specific training to learn the technique and found it hugely beneficial in her daily life.

Nicole (M) (interview)

I like to be outside and just let my mind wander … the feeling of being at one with nature with literally nothing on my mind has been very therapeutic and I feel a sense of healing and well-being… but I have also become very, very good at meditating … transcendental meditation. So what you do is you clear your mind or you sit down and kind of rest, to start with you have like 15 seconds of eyes closed. Just getting yourself into shape and then you open up your eyes and then you do another 15 seconds up with your eyes closed, and then you start using your mantra … so, you close your eyes again, and you focus on your mantra to start with. But then it does not matter, whether you keep your mantra in your mind. Your mantra is just a way to bring yourself back. If you find you've drifted off, or you find that there are lots of thoughts coming in or whatever. All of which is fine. It's a way to bring yourself back to a calm meditative state … and I get to the point where sometimes … I have used the mantra and it's almost like, well, it's like I have transcended. It's like, I have got to a place of no thought where there is nothing, where there is just calm.

Nicole reports practising mindfulness in two ways. In its simplest form, she finds that accessing the natural environment by being outdoors is a source of mindfulness. She describes this type of practice as "being at one with nature with literally nothing on my mind", which she perceives as a positive experience, bringing her "a sense of healing and well-being".

Nicole also uses a mantra to support her more traditional meditative mindfulness practice. She explains the process of transcendental meditation, pointing out "your mantra is just a way to bring yourself back". This implies that, for Nicole, transcendental meditation is a tool to support her mindfulness rather than representing mindfulness per se. Nicole's account

[7]Transcendental meditation is a technique, based on ancient Hindu writings, by which one seeks to achieve a relaxed state through regular periods of meditation during which a mantra is repeated (Dictionary.com)

indicates that her mindfulness practice is a dynamic experience, as she reports that "sometimes … I have got to a place where there is no thought". From this statement, we can glean that at other times, thoughts continue to intrude during her mindfulness practice.

Being outdoors was reported by some of the mindfulness practitioners as an alternative to meditation. Alice discussed at the interview how she found that walking provided her with the opportunity to practise mindfulness.

Alice (M) (interview)

I spent a lot of time outdoors, walking on my own, letting my mind wander and not consciously thinking about anything.

The key here for Alice was that walking enabled her to be alone and free from intrusive thoughts. She articulated the experience with the phrase "letting my mind wander and not consciously thinking about anything".

Two participants in the study group used digital apps in their mindfulness practice. This is particularly interesting since the literature reports a contradiction in the coupling of mindfulness, which involves checking out from the distractions of life (Reb et al., 2021), with digital tools, which have been cited as a major cause of the need to check out in the first place (Dresp-Langley and Hutt, 2022).

The convenience of app-based mindfulness, in terms of the ability to integrate it into daily life, seemed to be the primary draw of this form of mindfulness practice. Despite the criticisms, apps have been embraced by leaders to access the benefits associated with mindfulness practice. The account from Lorna (below) shows how she has used apps to support her mindfulness.

Lorna (M) (interview)

So generally I use an app. I've used a number of different apps before. I don't particularly like paying for them … but quite often just spending time being quiet. I just can't wait to get pyjamas on, get upstairs and just practise my breathing. I've been doing some of that a bit

more lately, even just during the day. I'll log off, get myself a glass of water, and just sit on the sofa and just do some nice breathing, and just some Karma thoughts, rather than somebody talking at me and telling me to relax my feet and relax my legs. I need to just be quiet … and then I can just carry on. It does take just that few minutes, just to chill, and then things feel okay again.

Lorna indicates that she is in the process of moving away from app-based practice, preferring to "do some nice breathing", which she can do at any time, rather than listening to "somebody talking to me and telling me to relax". This introduces the concept of mindfulness apps as a training platform for mindfulness. Lorna finds that she can now access the benefits of mindfulness in a short period, as evidenced in her comment "just that few minutes, just to chill, and then things feel okay again".

Lee is also a supporter of the digital approach. He explained that by using an app for just ten minutes per day, for less than a week, he had experienced benefits that led him to increase the time he spent in guided meditative practice.

Lee (M) (diary)
I have been doing ten-minute meditation sessions through the Peloton app, as I had been struggling to get off to and stay asleep and was aware of how my 'STRESS' or busyness at work was now slipping over into my home life and the issues it was causing with my loved ones. After four nights, towards the weekend I began seeing some benefits. I decided to up the length of the sessions to 15 minutes.

Clive's diary entries provided a different perspective on mindfulness practice. For Clive, mindfulness was less about emptying his head by entering a meditative state, and more about providing himself with the space for calm reflective thinking. Clive suggested that his mindfulness practice enabled him to mull things over, let emotions settle and review current life events in relation to his core values.

Clive (M) (diary)

My mindful practice is done via yoga, walking and Christian prayer. The yoga I find useful to stretch out during and after a busy day, and it can help to calm emotions, but I do not find that it helps me to resolve issues, reflect on them or think them through. Walking does allow me to do this, giving space to mull things over, allow the emotion to go and new ideas to come. Prayer reminds me to forgive, and try to act justly, humbly and mercifully, in other words to always be kind! During the week I did pray for my colleague who was causing the trouble – this helps remind me that we are all trying our best and generally have the best intentions at heart.

Clive indicates that he experiences mindfulness through a range of activities. Whilst yoga is recognised as a vehicle for mindfulness (Salmon et al., 2009), walking and prayer are less conventional methods of practice. Clive uses these mindful activities to enable him to manage his emotions, to "allow emotion to go and new ideas to come". The use of this phrase suggests that emotions may hinder Clive's thinking, so that with their exit, fresh ideas can emerge. This process is helpful to Clive as it enables him to apply perspective to events and to remember that generally "we are all doing our best".

Other research participants also offered examples of personalised mindfulness practice. This involved the association of mindfulness with activities that were not recognised as traditional forms of mindfulness. Nonetheless, these activities enabled participants to benefit from having a focus on the moment and a detachment from intrusive thoughts about day-to-day issues and challenges.

In the extract below, Tony describes how he believes mindfulness can be experienced unconsciously.

Tony (M) (interview)

So I think a lot of people do practise mindfulness without realising it … and I think people get put off because they think it's a load of namby-pamby, cross-legged, elbows on knees and strike a bell or a gong and blah-blah-blah, and that's not me. Mindfulness ought to be what

you make it. You make your own mindfulness. There's lots of apps and stuff out there but I think it's what works for you.

I don't use an app or anything like that. My mindfulness probably is when I'm running. Or even I practise it in the car. I'm actually very good at it in the car now. I'm like a Zen-like figure whenever I drive. You cannot do anything to upset me in the car when I drive.

Tony references stereotypical perceptions of mindfulness practice, which do not represent his experience. He makes this point with the comments "you make your own mindfulness" and "I think it's what works for you". Tony experiences mindfulness through driving or running, when he is able to relax and be a "Zen-like figure".

During her interview, Lorna relayed information that she had recently heard, which promoted mindfulness activity outside formal meditative practice.

Lorna (M) (interview)
There's research that came out [in the] *the last couple of weeks. I'm not sure where it was, but they were sort of discussing on the radio about gardening. I don't know if you've heard that. There's a lot of research and the evidence now suggests that gardening has been proven to be highly beneficial from a mental health perspective because it's very mindful. Even if you're mowing the lawn or weeding or planting, that's what you're doing, you know, you're very much focused on that.*

The research that Lorna mentioned is from an unknown source and therefore could not be verified for this study. However, Lorna's description indicates that less traditional forms of mindfulness are being put forward as effective alternatives to meditation. This is an example of the increasing shift in considerations of mindfulness from traditional Buddhist meditation to broad methods of practice.

These accounts suggest that mindfulness practice can take place in multiple situations and formats. The consistent theme of each activity, which associates it with mindfulness, is a level of engagement that requires focus and which subsequently prevents conscious intrusive

thoughts from invading the mind during the 'practise'. In focusing on the task at hand, there is an opportunity to remove oneself from the constant stimuli of daily life. It was evident from the data that mindfulness meant significantly different things to each of the research participants in terms of the 'practise' element. It was also apparent that they were unconcerned about how their experiences of mindfulness compared with those of others. The benefits of mindfulness were much less about what the practise consisted of, and more about the benefits gained as a result of doing it.

Theme 2 - Mindfulness was reported to help leaders to manage stress

The positive impact of mindfulness practice on stress management was a strong theme in the data. Given that the study was carried out during the COVID pandemic when the need for participants to manage stress was very high, all the participants reported that their mindfulness practice supported them in the management of stressful situations. Most considered it a way to access a place of much-needed calm at a time when life was extremely challenging.

Lorna explained in a discussion about stress at work and the importance of her mindfulness practice in helping her to cope during the research period.

Lorna (M) (interview)

If I didn't have that calm space … if I didn't have that ability to switch off … if my life outside of work was difficult or chaotic in any way … I think I would probably have been signed off by now (sick). There's absolutely no way that I would have been able to cope with this. My mental health would have been quite severely impacted. So yeah, it's got to have a profound impact. That space and that time to just be quiet, be calm, and rest, and just switch off. And I can do that now. There was a time when I couldn't do that, and I can do that now.

The power of mindfulness is evident in Lorna's account. Lorna credits her practice with supporting her through the stresses of work during the COVID pandemic. She is clear in her view that mindfulness practice provides a significant positive effect on her mental health,

evidenced by her words “if I didn’t have that calm space … my mental health would be quite severely impacted’. She even states her belief that, without her mindfulness practice, she may have been signed off work due to sickness.

Lee reported how mindfulness had helped him to reduce rumination and associated sleep issues, which he had experienced when faced with work issues.

Lee (M) (interview)

On the nights I meditated I found I was able to get to sleep without lying awake, playing back what had happened in the day, what I could have done differently and the self-doubt I was developing on whether I was the right person for the job, am I a good leader? Will this get easier etc. It just seems to allow me to let that stuff go.

Lee presents a distinction between the nights before which he had meditated and those when he had not, and he concludes that engagement in meditative practice has stopped his previous practice of mulling over the problems of the day and engaging in self-doubt and negative thoughts. His meditation “just seems to allow me to let that stuff go”.

Nicole (below) provided a detailed account of how mindfulness in various forms helped her to get through the pandemic. Nicole reported that meditation and broad mindful activities such as interacting with nature were key tools that she had used actively to manage her stress levels during a personally challenging time.

Nicole (M) (diary)

I think meditation has helped throughout this process. It has literally kept me sane and helped me work through the situations presented to me by letting my mind wander.

Mindfulness, and especially calming breathing, really helps me when a situation feels overwhelming. Taking time on my own, outside in nature, is also really important for my mental well-being. When I work from home, I make sure I get out in the fresh air after a difficult meeting and allow my mind to wander freely. Walking in trees has become one of my most favourite things.

The phrase “it has literally kept me sane” indicates the strength of feeling that Nicole has in terms of the benefits of her mindfulness practice. She picks out breathwork as being particularly helpful to her “when a situation becomes overwhelming” and reports the positive effects of being outdoors. Placing herself in the natural environment has enabled Nicole to find respite after encounters with challenging work situations, particularly “after a difficult meeting”. To facilitate her mindfulness practice, she has built it into her routine when she works from home.

Discussing the diary extract at interview (extract below), Nicole expanded on what mindfulness meant to her, and she provided further evidence of the stress-relieving properties that she was able to access through her practice.

Nicole (M) (interview)
To me, it [mindfulness] is not a religion or a belief system. It's more of a tool for stress management and for creativity and that kind of thing. And it is really, really helpful from that perspective. Highly recommend it.

After a particularly stressful time at work, Brian had tried standing barefoot in a forest to connect with nature as part of his mindfulness practice. Brian’s account indicates that he had found practising mindfulness outdoors on holiday to be such a positive experience that he repeated the process each day.

Brian (M) (diary)
(A weekend break) came at a great time as I prepared to start a new job, get a break from COVID-19 and connect with the family. Lots of walking, thinking and activities, but I also, based on a recommendation, stood barefoot in the forest at the back of the lodge, something called being grounded. I did this each day, sitting after the first time and watching the sun come up and then meditating and being appreciative of what I have.

There is an element of wistfulness in Brian’s recollection of “watching the sun come up” and “being appreciative of what I have”. When he discussed the diary entry during his interview,

he was able to confirm that he found the stress-relieving qualities of the practice of mindfulness to be heightened when he undertook it outdoors.

Brian – (M) (interview).
Mindfulness in whatever way you access it … for me … it's really about awareness and realising the big picture. You realise your stresses are so unimportant … I think there is definitely something helpful about being outside when you do it [meditation].

Alice made an interesting observation on the mindfulness practice that she had performed during a very stressful week at work.

Alice – (M) (interview)
I craved time on my own, stillness, and to just be. Writing the [study] diary made me want to be better at meditating … it's easy when things are going well but harder when you need it most [when things go badly].

Although Alice recognised her need for the benefits she gained from mindfulness, she failed to prioritise time to practise. During the writing of her diary she felt the urge to devote more time to her meditation practice; she reflected with some irony that she had let it slip when life became difficult and she recognised that "it's harder when you need it most".

Theme 3 - Mindfulness was reported to support awareness of emotions and situations

The research participants who performed mindfulness reported that its practice increased their levels of awareness. By taking time out from day-to-day activities to undertake their mindfulness practice, individuals were able to pay attention to how they were feeling emotionally. From the diary entries and interviews, it became apparent that this group was often able to notice emotions in the moment, rather than relying on reflection to inform them of an emotional state. They also reported enhanced abilities to notice situations and emotional responses in others in real time.

Alice explained in her diary how she felt able to manage her emotions more effectively when she engaged in regular mindfulness practice, feeling able to "step back from immediate response" and to "acknowledge how I'm feeling".

Alice (M) (diary)

Did some brief meditation and yoga poses during the week to help manage my responses. I find overall it helps me to step back from immediate response, acknowledge how I'm feeling and then set it to one side and continue in a (relatively) professional manner.

Here, Alice provides a practical example of de-automation processes that are associated with mindfulness (Fouchi and Voci, 2020; Kang et al., 2013) in her description of how she is able to intercept and acknowledge her emotions rather than allowing instinctive reactions to occur. She references increased emotional awareness, suggesting that her mindfulness practice enables her to recognise her emotional state and then to "set it to one side" so that she can maintain a "professional manner". This indicates that Alice feels that strong expressions of emotion at work may be considered unprofessional.

Simon references the metacognitive benefits of mindfulness in building emotional awareness.

Simon (M) (diary)

Practising mindfulness has given me more awareness of how my emotions arise and gives me more perspective on them. I can 'watch' them, and even if I get caught up in them in the moment, I feel able to quickly move on and not dwell on them. I believe mindfulness is helping me think with more clarity around emotional issues. It helps me recognise and connect to my emotions – but not be caught up in them and allow them to dominate my decision making.

Simon's report of being aware of emotions without getting "caught up" in them suggests that he can disconnect from his emotions while he observes their presence. He uses the word "watch" to describe the separation of himself from his emotions. Simon refers to mindfulness as bringing him "clarity" in terms of his thinking and decision-making. This process enables

him to make decisions with an awareness of emotional influences, but without allowing them to “dominate”.

In the extract below, Tony makes a clear distinction between mindfulness and meditation. He describes mindfulness as “being in the moment” and describes a process of “noticing and being able to describe, without judgement”. Tony references this process twice in the text, which indicates metacognitive processes.

Tony (M) (interview)
Mindfulness is not meditation. Let’s make that clear. It's practising. Just being in that moment and noticing and being able to describe, without judging yourself or what you're seeing or hearing. It's just noticing. So then … if you find yourself in a moment, say at work, where you don't even notice you're angry … if you're very good and practised in mindfulness, then it’s very easy for you then to check yourself and notice what's happening, without judging. And then that allows you to regulate that emotion.

Tony uses the phrase “if you’re very good and practised in mindfulness, it’s easy to check yourself and notice what’s happening”. Here he implies that the performance of regular mindfulness practice extends its benefits into everyday life. This allows emotions experienced at work (or indeed anywhere) to be recognised as they occur. Since awareness of emotion is a prerequisite to emotional regulation, mindfulness can be used as a tool that “allows you to regulate that emotion”.

The data that were collected during the analysis indicated that regular mindfulness practice could support long-term emotional awareness. In Simon’s diary account below, he attributes to mindfulness the support he needed during a challenging period at work. A strong sense of emotional and situational awareness enabled Simon to maintain his composure in circumstances in which he would normally find the retention of such composure very difficult. A senior candidate had pulled out from a job offer at the last minute. As managing director, Simon had already introduced the candidate to his senior team and had made departmental plans that included the new incumbent. The withdrawal of the candidate was a significant setback for Simon, and he reported at his interview how his immediate emotional

response was anger towards the candidate, both for the additional work he would now have to find a replacement and because he felt foolish in front of his team. In his diary, he reports that he "bounced back" from this event quite quickly, particularly since he has a long-standing habit of rumination and self-blame for issues that occur at work.

Simon (M) (diary)

My reflections on this are whether mindfulness has helped me stay balanced in my response and avoided me becoming emotional. I have tried to take the learnings from this situation – to 'solve the puzzle' and develop principles that can improve me for the future …

The alternative course of action would have been to ruminate over this and beat myself up for not having managed it differently. As a result, I would probably have got wound up and stressed. I feel very positive about the way I have responded. I cannot be 100% clear that mindfulness has helped me manage this situation better, but I suspect it has, as I feel more balanced in my management of emotions.

Whilst Simon reflects that he cannot be certain that mindfulness enabled him to manage his emotions in this situation, he feels that awareness of his emotions has allowed logic to prevail in emotionally charged circumstances. This has helped him to "solve the puzzle" as he has focused on finding a practical solution rather than becoming "wound up and stressed" as he may have done in the past. In a discussion during the interview, he built on how he felt that mindfulness had impacted him during this process, particularly in recognising anger and choosing how to respond to it.

Simon (M) (interview)

If you get angry, for example, are you able to think 'I'm feeling angry now' and I need to accept that that's just an emotion, and not let it interfere with how I deal with this situation?

During his interview, Clive recounted an interesting model of "emotional energy" that used self-awareness to balance energy actively. In the model, those who had an active understanding of the situations, activities and people that caused negative emotions in themselves could take steps to balance those emotions with the addition of positive experiences. Clive stated that he had used this technique successfully at work.

Clive (M) (interview)

There was this guy … and he was a church leader in Hawaii who produced a model … like you're a jug. This really has to do with emotional energy. So, it's this jug that you're filling from the top and there's a hole in the bottom of it … and he said, you've got to work out what fills you and what drains you. And it might be a work activity that you have to do. It might be time, you know, if you think it's being taken up by different things, it might be people. And then you've got to think about your week. So, if you think, well, I've got a meeting with that person, and that's really going to drain me. So, what am I going to do before to fill me? What am I going to do afterward to fill me? Is that listening to a piece of music for three minutes because that's the kind of thing that gives you energy? So, it's all about managing the energy, the emotional energy in a sense. Being mindful helps you do that.

Clive describes a process that is wholly reliant on recognition and understanding of emotions and their effects. He presents an interesting way to maintain emotional balance, using the "jug with a hole in the bottom" to demonstrate the positive and negative effects of emotional experiences during the course of a day. Clive suggests that positive emotional experiences can counter the negative and that an awareness of the effects of people and situations can facilitate planning for an "emotionally balanced day". Clive believes that mindfulness supports this process by building emotional awareness, so that the emotional effects of situations can not only be recognised at the moment but predicted and prepared for in advance.

Brian also provided an interesting analogy to demonstrate how he thought that mindfulness helped to build awareness.

Brian (M) (interview)

I think awareness is a fundamental part of it [mindfulness]. We can just … well … life can be like looking at a tree and you can see the tree, but you might not be seeing all the branches. There are a lot of small offshoots that you would only notice if you really tune in and be aware. That's what mindfulness lets you do.

Brian's analogy presents a powerful picture of how mindfulness can enable practitioners to see things that others may miss. The implication here is that people go through life noticing events on a superficial level and missing the finer detail. The phrase "there are a lot of small offshoots that you would only notice if you really tune in" indicates the significance of the less obvious. Brian explained that "tuning in" required the use of every sense. Brian considers that the practice of mindfulness enables him to see the world in high definition.

Theme 4 – Mindful leaders were empathetic towards colleagues

The diary accounts from the mindful group contained multiple examples of empathy. These leaders did not just observe emotions in others to ensure that the organisation ran smoothly; they were interested in helping colleagues to manage negative emotions and in promoting well-being. Significantly, when dealing with work issues, this group displayed at least an equal level of interest in achieving a positive outcome for colleagues as they did in achieving it for the organisation.

In the following extract from Brian, concern for his team is evident as they have to present their strategy to the board.

Brian (M) (interview)

Preparation for the strategy presentation with the team – over the past three months I have been working with the team to pull together a true strategy for the business unit. It is fair to say we didn't have one, nor a clear purpose. So, we carried out the usual assessments and reviews and had an outcome the whole team believed in. The challenge, however, was that the exec all want something different and are not aligned, so that makes the presentation tough, and the team were really nervous.

I was clear and discussed with the team that we have the facts and the tactics to achieve what we needed to. There was a big presentation to the exec, and I told the team we need to focus on what we believe in and not to worry about trying to please everyone … I put in update meetings, and we had dry runs. During the rehearsals we were on Teams and it was good to see people's reactions and hear their voices. I could see they were nervous, second-

guessing reactions and as a result were making mistakes. I tried to ensure I supported and got them as prepared as possible to reduce the anxiety. The dry runs supported in this and in the end, it was a very well-presented piece of work to the exec.

It is evident from Brian's account that he was aware that the presentation to the board would be a challenging experience for his team, particularly since the audience were not aligned in their aims. This is indicated by the phrase "the exec all want something different and are not aligned, so that makes the presentation tough, and the team were really nervous".

Brian's words indicate active appreciation of the stress felt by his team. He invested time to support them in several ways. By telling the team to "focus on what we believe in and not to worry about trying to please everyone", he implies that he has their backs and will defend them in the face of any criticism from executive colleagues. He also mentions that he had arranged rehearsals on Teams, noting "I could see they were nervous … and making mistakes". Having recognised the stress that the situation was placing on the team, Brian went even further in his efforts to help, advising "I tried to ensure I supported and got them as prepared as possible to reduce the anxiety".

Although Brian would no doubt gain favour from the exec if the presentation went well, his account suggests that his primary concern was for the team's welfare as they undertook this piece of work. There is a real sense in this diary entry that Brian was putting his people and their emotional well-being ahead of personal and business goals.

In his interview, Brian expressed a belief that mindfulness had supported him to be a more empathetic leader than he had been previously.

Brian (M) (interview)
Due to practising for so long, it now feels part of what I do. It helps me to be in a good place, so I can lead and be effective. I believe it allows me to be more empathetic to situations and others.

In the account below, from Lorna, there is another example of empathy, as she goes out of her way to make time for a colleague who is struggling at work.

Lorna (M) (diary)
I was alerted to a situation emerging with a team member requiring additional support … I was aware that there were potential emotions involved and we had an upcoming team meeting so I called them to arrange a private chat so we could discuss the issues in a relaxed environment …this resulted in them feeling valued, relieved and has already had a positive impact on mental well-being.

In this example, Lorna proactively helps a colleague who is feeling emotional. Knowing that there is a team meeting on the horizon, she recognises that this might present a challenge for her colleague. In arranging a private discussion, she has given up her time and considered a suitable "relaxed environment" that will encourage the colleague to share their concerns. Lorna describes the outcome of the meeting in terms of how she believes her colleague feels as a result of the discussion, referring to their sense of value and well-being.

It is useful to compare these accounts with some examples from the non-mindfulness group. There was a subtle but noticeable difference in how the leaders responded to emotions in their colleagues. Whilst personality may have been an influence, there was a definite distinction in the data between the reported thoughts and behaviours of the colleagues who practised mindfulness and those who did not. In the diary extract from Neil, below, we see how he deals with the dismissal of a colleague; he treats the emotional elements of the situation as an unwanted distraction to the completion of a business process.

Neil (diary)
Rob's role was to act as the senior finance resource in a business unit that was underperforming, and whose management were in need of direction and some firm implementation of governance norms. Rob's personality meant that he was unable to exert influence over operational management and he had been appointed to an accounting role for which his experience was entirely unsuitable. I resolved to not offer Rob the role following his probationary period.

The finance group were of the opinion that they were carrying Rob and his internal customers were dissatisfied with the service and support they received from him. The overriding sentiment was that Rob was ineffective but a really nice chap.

In preparing for the meeting, I felt a little resigned to the view that this felt a 'tough' thing to do, but I had no qualms because I had fully considered all options before making the decision.

I stuck to the brief and was frankly relieved to end the meeting. I would not have changed the approach to the meeting and, thereafter, I probably felt a slight sense of achievement at having navigated a potentially sticky situation successfully.

Although Neil tries to be sensitive in dealing with Rob, his factual account indicates that, for him, emotions are secondary to business needs. He had established that Rob did not have the skills to carry out his role effectively and the logical solution was for him to exit the business.

We do not see any real empathy or particular concern displayed by Neil in terms of how Rob might have been impacted emotionally. He notes that "Rob was ineffective but a really nice chap", but Rob's personal qualities do not seem to affect Neil's actions at all. The only indication that Neil had considered how the dismissal might affect Rob is in his quote "I felt a little resigned to the view that this felt a tough thing to do". In his recollection of the meeting with Rob, he reports: "I stuck to the brief and was frankly relieved to end the meeting." This indicates a level of discomfort because he had to dismiss a colleague; however, in the quote "I felt a slight sense of achievement at having negotiated a tricky situation", Neil's attention is focused on how the experience had affected him rather than Rob. Any dismissal situation is emotional by nature, but Neil's account indicates a transactional approach. He describes a process designed and delivered to achieve a business result.

Similarly, in the interview extract below from Ruth, we see how she views engagement on an emotional level with her team as a skill, which she admits she is still learning.

Ruth (interview)

I'm learning how to act with colleagues when I start meetings. I'll ask them how things are, 'is everything all right?'… just so I don't dive into a meeting and then they tell me that something really horrendous had just happened. So, I'll try to ask questions to make myself aware.

Ruth's use of the phrase "I'm learning how to act with colleagues" indicates that she is not comfortable with emotional engagement with colleagues and is not confident with this element of her role. She refers to asking her team about their welfare before getting into business discussions with the rationale "just so I don't dive into a meeting and then they tell me that something really horrendous had just happened". This approach assumes that colleagues will be comfortable sharing their feelings in a team environment. The enquiry into colleagues' welfare seems to be a superficial formality to be cleared out of the way ahead of business discussions. Ruth's account indicates that she acts in a way that she feels she 'should' as a leader rather than because she has genuine interest or concern for colleagues' welfare.

Conclusion

In this chapter, insight has been provided into how leaders identified as mindfulness practitioners engage in the practice and how they believe it impacts them in the context of their day-to-day activities as leaders. Four themes emerged from analysis of the data. Firstly, it was evident from the data that mindfulness is an individually interpreted practice. Activities associated with mindfulness were many and varied, and certainly broader than the traditional meditative practice from which it originated. The activities had in common a requirement to focus on 'something' to the extent that intrusive thoughts would recede for a short period. This 'something' could be anything from transcendental meditation to driving. However the participants engaged in mindfulness practice, there was evidence that they felt it developed within them an ability to disengage from peripheral events and to focus on the moment. They also reported that mindfulness could extend beyond active practise and into daily life.

The second theme in the data was the ability of mindfulness practitioners to use it as a tool for the management of stress. Participants referred to the practice as providing a "calm space" and "allowing them to let go" of negative emotions and thoughts. The evidence offered by the participants suggested that physical and emotional benefits in the management of stress could be obtained through the use of mindfulness. These included improved sleep and the ability to manage complex and challenging situations at work and home.

The practice of mindfulness was found to support emotional and situational awareness in the participants and others, and to provide practitioners with the ability to "tune in" to nuanced detail that they may otherwise have missed. Leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported that, with regular practice, their general awareness levels were enhanced, and this group provided significantly more detail of emotional experiences in their diary accounts and interviews than leaders who did not engage in mindfulness practice. This heightened awareness was also evident in their enactment of EI, which is discussed in the next chapter. Finally, leaders who practised mindfulness were found to demonstrate greater empathy towards their colleagues when compared with the non-mindful research group. This was displayed in the form of genuine concern for colleagues who were experiencing difficulties and a concerted effort to minimise stressful situations for team members.

Participants all reported mindfulness to provide benefits to them, particularly in the area of emotional awareness, and it was evident that they believed it supported them positively in their roles as leaders. This positive association with mindfulness practice might be expected, otherwise why would they engage with it? However the aim of this research was to reflect the perspective of the research participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners on the presentation of mindfulness and its perceived effect on their life experience, including leadership practice. As such the findings should be interpreted as providing insight into a complex and multi-perspective phenomena rather than an objective reality.

Chapter 6 Exploration Of The Relationship Between EI And Mindfulness In A Leadership Context

To answer the third and final research question posed in this study, the relationship between mindfulness and emotional intelligence in a leadership context is explored by comparing data from leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners with those who did not. Analysis of data across the two groups of research participants demonstrated areas in which mindfulness and EI overlapped. A pictorial representation of the relevant data themes from Chapters 4 and 5, which expresses overlapping elements of the constructs in the context of leadership practice, is illustrated as a diagram in Figure 6.1.

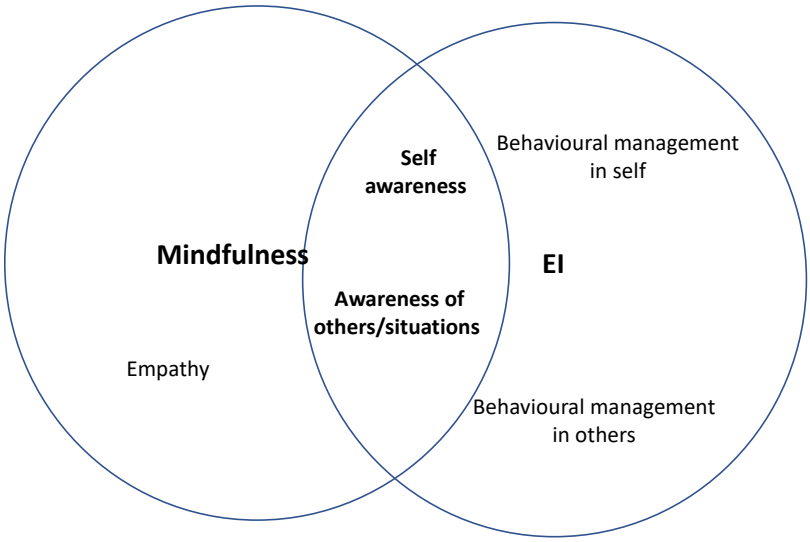

Figure 6.1 Diagram shows how EI and mindfulness themes overlap in a leadership context

The two notable, distinct themes that were found in the data for both EI and mindfulness were self-awareness and awareness of others and/or situations, which appear in the intersection of the diagram in Figure 6.1. Iterative exploration and analysis of nuances in the data were required to reveal how the relationship between the EI and mindfulness constructs impacted the experiences of leaders. This process aided in the understanding of how these overlapping data themes contributed to knowledge about the relationship. Whilst each construct exists independently, there were subtle but distinct differences in the enactment of

EI in the group that identified as mindfulness practitioners when compared to those who did not.

The analysis that supported this chapter focussed on exploring how leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners compared to leaders who did not in reporting their observation and management of emotional experiences in the workplace. This approach allowed the researcher to examine the narratives on the observation and management of emotions at work and identify areas of similarity and/or difference. This deeper analysis of EI as it presented in the context of leadership is explored and explained in this chapter, with data extracts to demonstrate and support the findings.

Everyday acts of leadership occur in a constant stream of situations that drive emotion in leaders and their colleagues (Ashkanasy and Dorris, 2017). This research into EI in a leadership context has shown the regularity with which leaders experience and manage emotions as part of their day-to-day duties. Exposure to this part of the role supports the findings in the literature that present emotional management as a significant component of leadership (Ashkanasy and Humphrey, 2011; Cropanzano et al., 2017). There was a strong belief among all the leaders who took part in this study that EI was an essential component of successful leadership (Barreiro and Treglown, 2020; O'Boyle et al., 2010).

Analysis of the relationship between the constructs of EI and mindfulness in the participant data suggested that those who identified as mindfulness practitioners experienced a positive effect of mindfulness on the enactment of EI in the workplace. This resulted in synergies in the areas of awareness of the self, others and surrounding situations. The relationship is best described as a commensal[8] relationship, in which mindfulness has a positive, additive effect on EI without any disturbance or negative impact on its composition or function as a construct. Those who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported the ability to observe and recognise emotions through metacognition, in the moment, and this ability supported them in their enactment of EI. The relationship between the constructs is demonstrated in

[8] Commensalism – a relationship between individuals of two species where one obtains benefits from the other without harming or benefitting the latter. https://www.britannica.com

diagrammatic format in figure 6.2, in which the additive nature of mindfulness to EI is depicted.

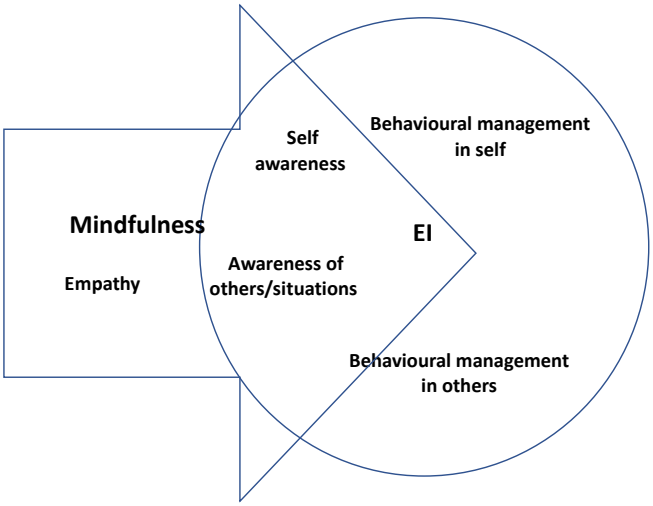

Figure 6.2 A diagrammatic representation of the inter-relationship between mindfulness and EI in a leadership context

To some degree, the relationship between EI and mindfulness was noticeable, not only in the data collected, but also through its absence. It was significant that those who identified as mindful practitioners had significantly more to say than the participants who did not in their recordings of emotional incidents in diary format and their later discussions of events during interviews. Descriptions of emotional events from those who identified as mindfulness practitioners contained more detail than those who did not, indicating heightened awareness and an ability to apply language to emotion competently through effective storytelling. This group were able to describe comprehensively the emotions they experienced and observed, the situations in which the emotions occurred and the actions they took in pursuit of desired outcomes. These detailed accounts and stories demonstrated the importance of recognising emotions in real time to manage situations in the workplace effectively and to support the enactment of EI.

In the current study, both mindfulness and EI were found to present as process-based phenomena. EI was found to comprise two distinct processes: *self and other-focused EI* (Pekaar, 2018a, 2018b). Those who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported the practice as a positive addition to EI, supporting leaders in the enactment of self and other-focused EI by increasing their emotional awareness, which facilitated considered behavioural

responses to emotional situations. The detailed mindfulness processes that emerged from the data as key to the enactment of EI were: *observing*, *describing and accepting emotions* and *acting with awareness*. These elements of mindfulness align with the definitions contained within two well-known mindfulness measurement tools: the KIMS (Baer et al., 2004) and the mindfulness@work measure (Hülsheger and Alberts, 2020).

Next, the relationship between mindfulness and EI processes is discussed in more detail; firstly examining how mindfulness impacts EI in the self and then how it impacts EI in relation to others. This provides further explanation of the nuances that emerged from detailed data analysis and how they have been interpreted.

Analysis of how mindfulness impacts EI in the self

There was a shared view among the research participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners that the practice of mindfulness increased emotional awareness of the self. Analysis of data from these leaders reflected this, supporting the theory that mindfulness practice increases emotional self-awareness (Brown, Ryan and Creswell, 2007). This heightened level of awareness was demonstrated by the recording of more examples of emotional situations, and greater detail regarding the emotions experienced within those situations, in the diaries and interviews of participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners compared with those who did not.

A nuanced analysis of the experiences that were reported in the data revealed that EI in the self presented as a process of *observing, processing and managing emotions*. This finding supported the theory of Pekaar et al. (2018b). EI in the self began with observation of an emotion as it arose, indicating metacognition. Having recognised an emotional response to a situation, leaders had an opportunity to process what that meant for them. Emotional processing enabled leaders to understand the emotions they were experiencing and to make a conscious decision on what behaviour they would demonstrate subsequently. Emotional recognition and processing were antecedents of behavioural change. The objective was for the leader to achieve a desired outcome in the workplace. Whether this outcome was positive in the context of good leadership is unknown. For the purposes of this study

however, EI was found to present as a process engaged by the leader to achieve a desired aim.

Research participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners were clear in their belief that it supported their levels of emotional awareness, and therefore assisted them with associated management of their behaviour. In her interview, Alice provided an example of how she believed her mindfulness practice improved her ability to notice her emotions, describe them and make an informed assessment of her emotional state. She was able subsequently to manage her behaviours.

Alice (M) (interview)

*So, I am always very aware now. And actually I quite quickly … when I'm getting really ****** off with someone … I quite quickly think what is it about this is ******* me off? Why am I getting so irritated by it? And then, I tend to be a bit quieter so that I'm not, you know, I'm not at risk of telling them to **** off. [laughs]*

This quote exemplifies the process of EI in the self as enacted by Alice in terms of an observation of emotion, and subsequent behavioural adjustment. Analysis of this quote at a deeper level, however, shows how the processes of mindfulness emerge to support Alice in the enactment of EI. She is able not only to *observe* emotion building in herself, but also to recognise and *describe* it as anger. Subsequently, she is able to pause *in the moment* and question herself to find out what is driving her emotions. In asking herself "why am I getting so irritated by this?", she demonstrates the use of internal dialogue and storytelling in which she engages to understand what has driven the emotional response. By detaching herself from the emotion she is feeling, Alice appears to deploy metacognitive thought processes, which enable her to identify and *accept* that the situation has made her angry. Passage through this process enables Alice to intercept an automatic response to anger. This finding supports the theory that mindfulness aids in the de-automation of emotional responses (Kang et al., 2013). Having processed her emotional response, she is able consciously to adjust her behaviour and to *act with awareness*, in this case, to "be a bit quieter", which she believes to be the most effective course of action. This 'in-the-moment' process of observing, describing, accepting and acting with awareness (Baer et al., 2004; Cardaciotto et al., 2005;

Feldman et al., 2005; Hülsheger and Alberts, 2020) was not evident in the EI process as described by leaders who did not practice mindfulness.

Nicole, in her interview, also reported the ability of mindfulness to have a positive impact on the processing of emotions in the self.

Nicole (M) (interview)

I find that it [mindfulness] is a tool for when things can seem very fast-paced, to just take a couple of minutes to bring yourself back into control.

In describing mindfulness as a "tool", Nicole references the ability of mindfulness to support leaders in their day-to-day duties, in this instance to "bring yourself back into control". At the nuanced level, this suggests that mindfulness facilitates emotional processing by enabling practitioners to observe and recognise the physical and emotional sensations that arise when life is "fast-paced", without allowing automatic responses to take over. At a practical level, this can prevent emotions from dominating decisions or behaviours. This aligns with the theory that the practice of mindfulness creates a brief 'space' in which calm can be restored before the practitioner re-engages with everyday tasks (Webster-Wright, 2013), and it provides further support to the idea that mindfulness and de-automation are linked (Kang et al., 2013).

Responses from the research participants who did not practise mindfulness were subtly different and indicated a reduced level of self-awareness in terms of emotions they experienced as they undertook their day-to-day duties as leaders. In particular, there was a lack of evidence of any form of 'in-the-moment' observation. For instance, in his interview, Neil indicated that he did not pay particular attention to his emotions at work.

Neil (interview)

I was interested in doing it [the research study] because I don't ask myself those questions about how emotions affect me.

Neil's comment implies that, for him, awareness and management of his emotions do not consciously feature as an element of his leadership practice. As Neil does not recognise how emotions affect him at work, it follows that he cannot consciously process them, nor actively manage his behavioural responses.

Robert highlighted the link between emotional awareness and EI during his interview.

Robert (interview)

The first step for emotional intelligence is knowing what you're feeling yourself and recognising your own emotions. And that's very difficult …

Robert went on to describe what often happened when he failed to recognise his emotions at work.

Robert (interview)

… And very often, when I've lost it and I do not have control, I hate myself … Afterwards. … It's always afterwards because that's the point. At the time, you don't know you're doing it. You're not aware of how you're feeling. Therefore, you have no control over how you react. It's happened. And then, it's like that car crashes. So when you see it happen, it's like 'I regret that'. It's like 'Oh, I regret that.' And it's always afterwards.

The quote above from Robert illustrates how emotions can take over a situation and disrupt the process of EI in the self. Robert describes how failure to recognise or process emotion results in a failure to consciously manage behaviour. The phrase "when I've lost it and I do not have control", indicates that logical thought processes can be overtaken by emotion, which then drives automatic rather than considered responses. The statement "You're not aware of how you're feeling, therefore you have no control over how you react" provides a clear description of the importance of emotional awareness and processing in the self to the enactment of EI. Without this important first step of recognising emotion, the process of EI in the self cannot occur. This is where the differences between leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners and those who did not were most apparent. Those who engaged in

mindfulness practice demonstrated a much greater ability to recognise and describe specific emotions as they presented, in real time.

Since emotional awareness is a prerequisite to emotional processing and behavioural management, it was unsurprising that evidence of 'in-the-moment' behavioural management was offered by leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners. This is key to the relationship between EI and mindfulness, as it demonstrates the additive effect of mindfulness on EI, which supports real-time management of emotional situations in the workplace. The data indicated that leaders who could not recognise and process emotions effectively in real-time were more likely to fail to achieve desired outcomes when encountering emotional situations at work, either because they missed opportunities to manage situations proactively or because they lost control and allowed emotions to dictate their behaviour.

The quotes from both the leaders who identified as mindful practitioners and those who did not provided representative evidence of the nuanced differences between the research groups. EI in the self was found to be a process of recognising and processing emotions to facilitate behavioural management. Participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners demonstrated awareness and acceptance of emotions as they presented, through a process of observing, describing, accepting and acting with awareness. This enabled these leaders to identify and process emotions in real-time and to adjust automatic, emotionally driven, behaviours in favour of considered responses to demonstrate EI in the self. Leaders who did not practise mindfulness were able to demonstrate some evidence of EI in the self, but they offered fewer examples, and these contained less detail regarding the emotions they had experienced and how they had responded as a result. The data from this group contained more examples of reported shortcomings in emotional awareness, or failure to control their behaviour as a result of emotions they had experienced, which was subsequently identified through the reflective process of diary writing,

Analysis of how mindfulness impacts EI concerning others

Mindfulness was also found to impact other-focused EI through the same sequential processes of *observing, describing and accepting emotions and acting with awareness;* however, in other-focused EI, the awareness is focused externally rather than internally. To observe emotions in others fully, leaders must actively look for subtle cues as well as obvious signs of emotion. Only when emotions in others have been observed can they be described and accepted in the context of the situation. These mindfulness processes were found to support leaders as they appraised fully the emotions of others to facilitate considered responses to situations arising in the workplace. In other-focused EI, leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners demonstrated enhanced awareness of emotions experienced by others, which enabled identification, description and acceptance of these emotions in the context of the situations that surrounded them. This enabled leaders to make conscious decisions quickly regarding how to use their own behaviours to act with awareness and to attempt to influence the behaviour of others in the workplace.

EI is a dynamic, constant process, since leaders interact with others consistently, on a daily basis. The participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners in this study reported to be more able, compared with leaders without a mindfulness practice to achieve desired outcomes in their real-time management of emotional situations that involved others, and this group also reported a generally heightened ability to observe situations and their environment. This was evidenced by the inclusion of more detailed storytelling in their diaries and interviews than was offered by those who did not practise mindfulness. This finding aligns with Creswell's (2017) interpretation of the effects of mindfulness practice to increase awareness levels.

Clive described how he believed mindfulness helped him to notice his surroundings, and that these observations provided contextual awareness to experiences. There was a sense that Clive had noticed an increase in his ability to observe and describe his environment since he had begun practising mindfulness. This in turn enabled him to see connections between events and situations and the people within them.

Clive (M) (interview)

On the mental side, it's noticing the mindful stuff. It's noticing what is going on around you. It's having a practice of the kind of learning that happens when you're noticing how everything is interconnected.

Alice's testimony built on the theme of "noticing how everything is connected". She explained that mindfulness brought her enhanced awareness in multiple forms (emotions, discourse, body language and context). This enhanced awareness enabled her, as a leader, to pick up on subtle cues, through the use of a range of sensory perceptions, which together allowed her to access deeper insight into the emotions of others within a surrounding context.

Alice (M) (interview)

They [mindfulness and EI] are, in a number of ways, very interrelated ... because mindfulness is about, for me, focusing on what's happening right now and being fully present and fully engaged in whatever that moment brings. And if you are doing that, then that brings with it your emotions and the emotions of those around you as well as the words they are speaking and the physical actions and - you know - whatever else is going on. So they couldn't not be connected really.

In this quote, Alice encapsulates how mindfulness affects the EI process. She uses the phrases "focusing on what's happening right now" and "being fully present and fully engaged in whatever that moment brings", and both phrases indicate a detailed level of observation of people and situations that she feels is enhanced by mindfulness practice. She goes on to describe how this subsequently "brings with it your emotions and the emotions of those around you". This comment indicates the importance of noticing, recognising and accepting emotions in the self and others. Alice references "the words they are speaking and physical actions"; in this phrase she signals an ability to note both verbal and non-verbal cues as she observes and describes the emotions of others. Alice notes the inter-relationship between the constructs of EI and mindfulness. The quote "they couldn't not be connected really" was delivered as a statement rather than an opinion. This illustrates a clearly perceived link between enhanced awareness that has been developed through mindfulness practice and

the observation of emotions in others and surrounding situations, which is required in the enactment of other-focused EI.

The way in which other-focused EI was enacted by participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners contained nuanced differences from how it was enacted by leaders who did not engage in the practice. Mindfulness practitioners demonstrated greater empathy when they dealt with emotional situations at work. This was displayed through the shouldering of a noticeable duty of care regarding the emotional well-being of their colleagues, which was evidenced in the diary entries and interview discussions. Participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners used language that indicated genuine concern for colleagues and made concerted efforts to observe and identify correctly the emotions that were being experienced by others. In Chapter 5, the demonstration of empathy was highlighted as a data theme in the research group that practised mindfulness, and this is relevant in understanding the relationship between other-focused EI and mindfulness. As well as heightened levels of observation, mindfulness practitioners demonstrated genuine interest in the well-being of colleagues (Kreplin et al., 2018). When they observed (generally negative) emotional responses, participants who identified as mindful practitioners were concerned for their colleagues' welfare and in many cases went out of their way to understand what was driving the emotion and, where possible, to adopt supportive behaviours. On this basis, there were subtle differences in the way they enacted other-focused EI when compared with peers who did not engage in mindfulness practice.

Data from the leaders who did not practise mindfulness showed evidence of observation of emotions in others and situations in the data, but, as with observations of emotions in the self, instances were fewer, and less detail was provided. These leaders did engage in a process of emotional and situational awareness, and there was evidence of adjustment of their behaviour to influence others to achieve desired aims. With this group, however, analysis of nuanced detail revealed that they were primarily enacting a business process. The leaders who did not practise mindfulness regarded emotions in others at work almost as occupational hazards of leadership that required navigation. This group did not demonstrate as much interest in the subject of emotion at work, in either their diary entries or interviews. They also provided less evidence of situational awareness or context when they described

emotions observed in others. Among members of this group, when they had to engage in situations that involved emotions at work, they seemed to regard such engagement as a distraction from business as usual, as a problem that required resolution. They were keen to resolve issues that involved emotions in others quickly, so that normal service could resume. In the data collected from these participants, there was no strong evidence of empathy or concern for the emotional challenges that others might be facing. During analysis of the data at the nuanced level, it became apparent that, for this group, there was a strong leaning towards EI as a business process with a primary objective of managing the emotions of others in order to achieve desired outcomes in the workplace.

Robert provided evidence of this approach when he described himself as more comfortable with business processes than with emotions during his interview.

Robert (interview)

I suppose I would say that my mindset is more process orientated. For me it's about process, process, process, process. So, I have to remind myself about the emotional side and to be aware of my emotions. And also other people's emotions.

Robert's statement that "I have to remind myself of the emotional side" implies that emotions are not at the front of his mind in his day-to-day leadership practice. This also suggests that Robert is unlikely to pick up on subtle cues that surround emotions in others at work or to empathise during his management of people and situations.

Neil provided insight into how EI could be approached as a pre-planned process during his interview. Rather than observe and act in the moment when faced with an emotional situation at work, Neil tried to predict how emotions might unfold in a meeting and to plan his responses accordingly.

Neil (interview)

Say I know an individual who's prone to be reactive or emotional or whatever. I'm about to do something that may stir up those emotions. How will I deal with it? If they walk off the job or they throw their coffee over their laptop or whatever. I do always think of that as a possible

scenario. What will we do if somebody reacts badly, emotionally? But that's again, that's me being the robot that says, I'm thinking how it affects the business. I have to prep in my head how I'm going to say it. I've always done that. I end up talking to myself because I practice my speech. I practice even with my family and friends, if I've got something a bit difficult. I just sort of play the scenario in my head until I realise how I'm going to react.

Neil applies 'what if' scenario planning to situations that involve colleagues whom he describes as "prone to be emotional". He refers to himself (not for the first time in the data) as a "robot" with a plan that can be actioned "if they walk off the job or throw coffee over their laptop or whatever". This approach relies on obvious gestures of emotion from colleagues to indicate how they are feeling and, even then, Neil cannot rely on himself to act appropriately in the moment. There is further evidence of Neil's attempts to pre-plan interactions that might involve emotion in his comments "I have to prep in my head how I'm going to say it" and "I just sort of play the scenario in my head until I realise how I'm going to react". Neil's actions indicate that he has limited ability to pick up on or manage emotions in others. He relies on a process-based approach to the management of such emotions and his concern is for the business rather than people, which indicates a lack of empathy in his actions. This provides an example of the differences between leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners and those who did not in their experiences of noticing emotions as they occur and providing considered and effective responses to manage situations at work.

At a basic level, Neil's account demonstrates that he can enact the process of other-focused EI. He can (with preparation) observe significant emotional responses in colleagues, recognise the situation and adjust his behaviour to achieve a desired outcome. However, it is evident from his description of his pre-planning that he is likely to use this method only in the case of significant events (such as the dismissal he described in a quote given in Chapter 4). It seems that he is unlikely to notice or act on subtle emotional cues in colleagues, nor would he particularly want to. It seems that Neil is only concerned about emotions experienced by colleagues if they may cause a business issue. There is no indication of any empathy in his actions; he is solely focused on achieving business outcomes.

In summary, the subtle but nonetheless significant differences in how EI was enacted by leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners, compared to those who did not, provided new insight into the relationship between these two constructs. The enactment of EI, applied either to the self or to others, requires the recognition and processing of emotions in order for behavioural modifications to occur, and mindfulness practitioners demonstrated enhanced capability which they believe supports them in this process. All of the leaders in the study engaged in EI in the workplace in pursuit of desired outcomes; however, those who practised mindfulness displayed a much more empathetic approach to the emotions of others. Mindfulness had a positive, additive impact on EI in a leadership context as practitioners demonstrated heightened levels of awareness, both of emotions in the self and in others, through their ability to observe and describe emotions and the situations that surrounded them in real-time. This enabled them to accept emotions as they presented and to apply situational context during the processing of emotions in the self or assessment of emotions in others. The processing of emotions in this group involved an acceptance of the situation they were in, and suppression of automatic emotional responses to enable them to take considered action. Most importantly, leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported an enhanced ability to be aware of emotions and situations at the moment, which enabled them to make conscious adjustments to behaviours in real-time and to act with awareness and empathy in order to achieve desired outcomes. Those who did not practise mindfulness displayed emotional and situational awareness less often and less precisely than those who did. The data demonstrated that some of this group planned their words and actions in advance of a predicted emotional event and some expressed regret when opportunities to manage an emotional situation in real time were missed. Whilst those who do not practise mindfulness in leadership positions provided evidence of enacting EI in the workplace, there was sufficient evidence from this study to suggest that mindfulness practitioners demonstrate deeper and more complex emotional engagement when enacting self and other focused EI in the context of their work as leaders.

Linking the findings to the literature

The findings from the study were compared to those in the literature to establish the situations in which the study confirms and/or builds on previous work in the fields of EI and

mindfulness, both as independent constructs and in relation to each other. The leadership context in which the research was conducted is an important factor in the development of the analysis. Whilst EI and mindfulness have been studied by scholars in a plethora of contexts, the application of these constructs to the enactment of leadership practice was at the heart of this study. By linking the empirical evidence from this research with the results of other studies that have been conducted in other settings and through the use of other philosophical approaches, there is an opportunity to build knowledge across multiple fields of research, specifically mindfulness, EI and leadership practice. The literature suggests that emotional situations are an everyday occurrence for leaders (Ashkanasy and Dorris, 2017) and an ability to observe and manage emotions in the self and others effectively in pursuit of desired outcomes is an asset to them (Cherniss and Roche, 2020). This was confirmed by the data from this study; all four core elements of EI (observation and management of emotion in the self and others) were found to be helpful to leaders as they carried out their day-to-day duties.

It was clear in their descriptions of emotional experiences at work and how they handled them, that both the participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners and those that did not engaged in an over-arching process of observing, processing and managing emotions. In many cases, this was followed by a behavioural modification with the aim of achieving a desired outcome. The experiences of managing emotions in the self, however, were different when compared with the observation and management of the emotions of others. This observable difference between self-focused EI and EI in relation to others indicated that the construct was more complex than early research had suggested, and this finding supported those of more recent studies that presented the EI construct as two separate, process-based elements: self- and other-focused EI (Pekaar et al., 2018a, 2018b).

Through the data analysis, it was found that the process of awareness and management of emotion in the self was distinct, and reported more frequently in the data than was the process of awareness and management of emotions in others. The study also highlighted that the ability to recognise emotions and subsequently regulate behavioural responses in the self and others was not fixed or stable. This finding confirmed those of researchers Görgens-Ekermans and Roux (2021). There was evidence that leaders might notice emotions

in the self or others on one day but not the next. Equally, the data indicated that, whilst leaders might have an awareness of emotion either in the self or in others, sometimes this did not result in a considered behavioural response.

Analysis of data from the current research project highlighted that mindfulness was also experienced as a process-based phenomenon. Leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners demonstrated a heightened ability to recognise emotional states in both the self and in others. They described thought processes which aligned to metacognition through their accounts which included observation and naming of emotions as they were experienced in the self or in others. This enabled these leaders to observe situations fully, including the emotions that presented in the self and others. This finding aligns with the recent suggestion in the literature that mindfulness is best explained as a process-based model that enables individuals to "deeply experience life" and to use these experiences to guide their behaviours towards the achievement of goals (Rogge and Dak, 2021, p4).

When leaders were able to recognise and assess emotions and the surrounding situations in the moment, they were able to actively manage their behaviours in pursuit of desired outcomes in the workplace. The current research examined leaders' experiences of EI and mindfulness in order to gain insight into how these constructs inter-relate within the context of leadership practice. The data suggested that EI provided leaders with an effective tool that they could use to manage the people-related challenges that they faced regularly during the delivery of organisational goals. The research findings provided deep insight into how leaders experienced EI and mindfulness in the course of their work. The evidence indicated that leaders who practiced mindfulness found it useful in its own right, in the management of stress, enhancement of general awareness and demonstration of empathy. It also provided a notable positive impact on leaders' enactment of EI by facilitating a deeper level of engagement with emotional situations in the workplace in real time.

In the next section, the presentation of EI as a process-based phenomenon in relation to the self and others is discussed to demonstrate the specific contribution that this work has made to the literature. This is followed by a discussion around the positive relationship between mindfulness practice and EI in a leadership context, again highlighting how this study builds

on previous work. There are some concluding thoughts on the relevance of these constructs to management practice, which is a key output from this research process. This provides the foundation for the final theoretical contribution and overall research conclusions, which are offered in Chapter 7.

EI comprises two dynamic, process-based elements – self- and other-focused

The study found that EI was used actively by leaders in an effort to achieve desired outcomes at work. EI in this study was presented through the appraisal of verbal and non-verbal expressions of emotion in the self and others to support problem-solving. This presentation was aligned with that of the original Salovey and Mayer (1990) model. The research project performed for this thesis explored EI through the experiences of leaders to provide a bottom-up view of the phenomenon as it occurs in leadership practice. This has enabled the emergence of a nuanced, practice-based picture of EI, which builds on the original Salovey and Mayer model. The current study found that EI existed as two processes, self- and other-focused EI. This finding aligned with the work of Pekaar et al. (2018a, 2018b, 2020). Pekaar et al. (2018b) found evidence of self- and other-focused EI processes in the learning behaviours of Dutch undergraduates; their later suggestion (2020) that these processes could be more broadly applied to achieve positive health, social and work outcomes was positioned as an exploratory framework intended to inspire further research, and was not supported by any empirical evidence. The research carried out for this thesis has added an empirically grounded view of EI in a leadership context to the literature, and therefore it has built on and developed some of the elements of the work of Pekaar et al. (2018a, 2018b, 2020). As such it contributes to knowledge in the field.

This study found the process of EI in the self to be more prevalent in the data than that of other-focused EI. This finding confirms the suggestion by Görgens-Ekermans and Roux (2021, p9) that self-awareness and subsequent management of emotions represent a more basic form of EI than the observation and management of the emotions of others. The results of the current research also align with the findings of Görgens-Ekermans and Roux (2021) that EI processes present hierarchically, with the *management of behaviours* in response to emotions presenting as 'higher-order' processes than *awareness* of emotions in the self and

others and surrounding situations. These higher-order processes require leaders to be aware of emotions and to undertake some emotional processing before they can be accessed. For example, emotions in the self or others may be experienced or observed and recognised, but subsequently fail to be processed successfully; therefore, the opportunity to deliver a considered response is missed. In practice this may be demonstrated by, for example, an individual who feels and recognises anger and therefore demonstrates foundation level EI, but fails to manage that anger. In such circumstances, behavioural adjustments, such as the management of voice tone or body language, are either not made or are not made with sufficient consideration to achieve desired outcomes. The higher-order elements of EI have not been accessed in the enactment of the process.

The ability to access higher-order EI processes may fluctuate over time. There were examples in the diaries of failure to access higher-order processes in both the participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners and those who did not. This indicates the dynamic nature of EI and confirms the view of Barreiro and Treglown (2020) that EI and its facets vary. Data from this study suggested however that mindfulness can play a significant role in supporting leaders to access higher-order EI processes, since participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners provided more examples of observing and describing emotions in real-time, which supported them in the subsequent management of their behavioural responses. In experiencing the mindfulness processes of observing, describing and accepting emotions and acting with awareness as they engaged in the processes of EI, these leaders reported more instances of managing emotions at work in real time than leaders without a mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness Practitioners reported that it supports EI

Leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners demonstrated increased awareness of emotions in the self, others and situations when enacting EI compared to leaders without a mindfulness practice evidenced through their diary entries and interview accounts. Data relating to these leaders suggested more complex engagement with EI processes which was highlighted by more instances of emotional events in their diaries, accompanied by complex narratives describing these situations. In discussing their diaries at interview leaders who

identified as mindfulness practitioners were clear in their view that mindfulness helped them in the observation and management of emotions in the workplace.

This supports the theory that mindfulness has a positive effect on EI as presented by Miao et al. (2018) and Charoensukmongkol (2014). These previous studies were based on quantitative data and contained some significant points of difference compared with the current study. Miao et al. (2018) undertook a meta-analysis of studies that included EI and mindfulness measurement tools to establish a correlation. Links were found between the constructs, although the results varied depending on the measurement scales used. As such the link was reported as tentative. The Charoensukmongkol (2014) study was undertaken in Thailand with participants who had been sourced through religious venues and who engaged in traditional meditative practices. They reported that they meditated for an average of two hours per day and had been practising for five years. Although the Charoensukmongkol (2014) study demonstrated a statistically positive link between mindfulness and EI, the differences in leadership culture and mindfulness practice in Thailand mean that it is extremely difficult to apply the findings to a Western leadership context without further empirical evidence.

Studies carried out previous to this one used different methods and participant groups. Despite that, the alignment of their results with those of this research provides an additional level of rigour and depth to support the theory that mindfulness practice positively impacts EI. This study also provides rich data on the application of these constructs within the context of leadership, which has been missing from the literature. The empirical evidence provided by the current study supports the development of new theory through the use of a bottom-up approach to understand how mindfulness and EI are present in everyday acts of leadership. On this basis, the findings go beyond the current literature and contribute to both academic research and leadership practice.

Through in-depth analysis of qualitative data this study found that mindfulness supported EI through four key process elements: *observing, describing and accepting emotions and acting with awareness* (Baer et al., 2004; Cardaciotto et al., 2005; Feldman et al., 2005; Hülsheger and Alberts, 2020). Leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported greater

levels of awareness of their own emotions, those of others and, of situations than leaders who did not practise mindfulness. They were able to observe and describe emotional events in greater detail supporting theory that claims mindfulness heightens awareness (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Leaders with a mindfulness practice were also found to have enhanced capability in the processing of emotions, such that they could not only recognise emotions being observed or experienced, but also they were able to understand why that emotion had arisen and to accept it in the context of the situation (Blanke, Riediger and Brose, 2017). In addition to observing and naming emotions, these research participants were able to recognise and suppress automatic responses to emotion, which indicated that they were able to de-automate (Kang et al., 2013). Since emotional awareness and processing are pre-requisites to emotional management in the processes of EI in the self and in others, it was unsurprising that evidence demonstrated more frequent examples of emotional management, in the form of behavioural modifications, among those leaders who practised mindfulness than among those who did not.

This research builds on previous studies in the literature; not only has it provided empirical evidence that leaders who identify as mindfulness practitioners report a positive effect on EI, but also it has identified how and where in the EI process these leaders differed in their enactment of EI compared to leaders who do not engage in mindfulness practice. At the foundation of self and other-focused EI is an awareness of emotions and situations, and this study indicates that leaders who identify as mindfulness practitioners believe that it helps them notice their own emotions, the emotions of others and the surrounding situations (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Evidence from this study bridges the gap between studies that have been published on mindfulness or EI. Specifically, it highlights how mindfulness as a process can support leaders in their quest to achieve desired outcomes in day-to-day experiences (Rogge and Daks, 2021), in this case through the enactment of EI. Through an enhanced ability to be aware of emotions as they present, leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners were able to consciously modify their behaviours when faced with emotional situations. By focusing on the present moment, these leaders were able to assess and accept their environment in the moment. They were able to observe and describe emotions in the self and others as they arose, apply de-automation (Kang et al., 2013) and create ‘space’ to process those emotions with clarity to make conscious decisions on how to

respond (Webster-Wright, 2013). In comparison, when EI existed in isolation (in leaders who did not practise mindfulness), emotions sometimes presented as unnoticed and/or unchecked at the point of occurrence. When this happened, leaders lost the opportunity to make considered behavioural changes at the time of the event, later reflecting that failure to identify and subsequently manage their emotions had resulted in what they perceived to be a sub-optimal outcome.

Whilst research participants without a mindfulness practice were able to demonstrate understanding and practical application of the fundamental elements of EI, participants who identified as mindfulness practitioners indicated significantly enhanced observation levels that enabled them to recognise and describe subtle emotional cues and to consider broad situational and environmental contexts, as they presented. The ability to pick up on nuanced emotional situations in the moment, and consciously process them in real-time, supported these leaders to move beyond a foundation level EI of emotional awareness in the self and others and to access the higher-order processes of behavioural management (Görgens-Ekermans and Roux, 2021) in the self and towards others more easily and spontaneously than their peers who did not engage in mindfulness practise.

Conclusion

New insights into the practical application of EI and mindfulness within the context of leadership have been uncovered through the exploration of the relationship between these constructs in practice. Through the analysis of qualitative data it has been possible to explore the enactment of EI by leaders who identify as mindful practitioners compared to those who do not.

This study has identified that those leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners demonstrated more complex engagement with EI processes and as a result found mindfulness to positively impact EI in the self and in others. Leaders who practised mindfulness, when faced with emotional situations, reported the ability to observe the presence of emotions, act with real-time awareness of those emotions (Baer et al., 2004; Hülsheger and Alberts, 2020), and adjust their behaviours, as required, in a considered

response. They were also found to be more empathetic towards others in the management of emotional situations. As a result, the data indicated they were more likely to achieve desired outcomes when dealing with emotional situations at work. Whether these outcomes were positive in the context of leadership we do not know. Nor do we know how others might have perceived the same events or the leadership capability perceived to be associated with them, which could be better or worse than leaders who did not practice mindfulness. What can be established however is a qualitatively different approach to emotional observation and management that was highlighted through in-depth analysis of the emotional experiences of leaders who identified as mindfulness compared to leaders who did not. As such this study highlights how the processes of mindfulness add to the processes of EI in the context of leadership.

Building on recent work that has presented both EI and mindfulness as process-based phenomena (Pekaar et al., 2018a, 2018b; Rogge and Daks, 2021), the current study has uncovered demonstrable synergies when the processes of EI and mindfulness present together. This creates a clear opportunity to contribute to academic theory. In Chapter 7 the findings from this research process are consolidated in a new theoretical model, with an explanation of how this model contributes to knowledge from both academic and practice-based perspectives.

Chapter 7 Theoretical Contribution And Conclusion

Qualitative research studies can only gain significance when data is interpreted such as to produce a theoretical contribution (Bryman and Bell, 2007) and this research project has led to the production of a new theoretical process model; emotionally mindful intelligence (EMI). The EMI model has been constructed by the author; taking the findings from this research and building on existing literature on mindfulness and EI. EMI is a theoretical process model which demonstrates how mindfulness processes can provide positive support to leaders in the enactment of EI by facilitating in the moment awareness of emotional experiences.

This study found that leaders who engaged in mindfulness practice reported to experience a positive, additive effect on the observation and management of emotions in the self and others which in turn supported them in achieving desired outcomes when encountering emotional situations in the workplace. The research does not seek to determine whether these outcomes are positive or not, they are merely an outcome that the leader hopes to achieve. Given the small scale of this research and the subjectivity inherent in qualitative study, the EMI model is presented as emerging theory into the relationship between EI and mindfulness in the context of leadership. Further research is encouraged to build on the findings of this study and deepen our understanding of EMI and its use in the context of leadership and beyond.

The use of an inductive approach to theory building has exposed the processes of EI and mindfulness that are most often and usefully embedded into the everyday acts of leaders as they deal with emotional situations at work. These processes have been explored to understand how the relationships between these constructs work synergistically to support leadership practice. The EMI model adds to academic and practitioner knowledge in the fields of EI and mindfulness. In this chapter, it is presented with an explanation of how it has evolved from its parent constructs of mindfulness and EI.

EMI and the models representing the individual constructs of EI and mindfulness presented in this chapter, have all been developed by the researcher as part of this study. Although they build on previously published work, all figures and models represent original content. The

EMI model is presented and discussed in terms of its contribution to existing literature and the potential for its practical application in leadership development and practice. The chapter concludes with a review of the limitations of the study and opportunities for future research.

Development of the EMI model

The research aim of this study was to explore how leaders experience EI and mindfulness in their everyday acts of leadership, and to seek an understanding of the relationship between these two constructs by comparing the data from leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners with those who did not. By using a bottom-up qualitative approach to gather rich data, a nuanced picture of EI and mindfulness and their relevance in a leadership context has emerged. This picture contributes to the literature in the field. Previous meta-analysis of quantitative research (Miao, Humphrey and Qian, 2018) indicated that there was a tentative link between EI and trait mindfulness, and the current study has built on these findings by exploring the nature of the relationship between these constructs in a leadership context, as reported by the participants of the study. Findings identified differences between the two research participant groups; leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners demonstrated enhanced levels of personal and situational awareness that enabled them to recognise emotions in the self and others. The findings indicated that, once leaders had observed emotions, they had to engage in a form of internal 'emotional processing' so that the emotion experienced could be evaluated within the context of the environment. This facilitated the enactment of considered 'in the moment' behavioural responses.

Leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported that their mindfulness practice supported them in the enactment of EI by enhancing their ability to observe and process emotions in the moment and hence to make considered and logical choices regarding how to respond. This suggests that mindfulness practise supports leaders when dealing with emotional situations, both in the self and in others. EMI theorises that leaders who practise mindfulness do not enact EI; they enact EMI. The following sections summarise how the constructs of EI and mindfulness were found to present in the current study and how they contribute to the EMI model.

The EI processes within EMI

Notwithstanding the fact that the study was undertaken during the COVID pandemic and demands on leaders were excessive, it was clear from the diaries and interviews that everyday acts of leadership involve a constant flow of emotions and responses, which leaders are required to manage. In-depth qualitative data analysis illustrated that leaders in the study reported to engage in EI which emerged as a recognisable phenomenon, although the construct presented as dynamic in its presence. This was evidenced by the range of emotional experiences captured by leaders and the many ways in which they reported the situations, actions and outcomes in the context of their work. For leaders in this study, EI in the self was represented by the ability to observe and recognise emotions as they were experienced, to process those emotions and subsequently modify behaviour in the pursuit of desired outcomes in the workplace.

Analysis of the emotional experiences and behavioural responses of leaders resulted in the emergence of a process-based model of EI, which is represented in Figure 7.1. This theory builds on the work of other academics, notably Pekaar et al. (2018a, 2018b, 2020), who identified self- and other-focused EI as distinct phenomena. The data illustrated EI in the self presented more often in this study than EI focused on others. This finding supports those in the literature that suggest that EI is hierarchical in nature, with self-awareness providing the 'cornerstone' of EI on which other facets such as emotion regulation and relationship management are built (Görgens-Ekermans and Roux, 2021). In this study, it was observed that other-focused EI was subtly different to that in the self, in that it required emotions in others to be observed and recognised through the words and actions of others. In other-focused EI, the 'processing of emotions' element was found to comprise a situational assessment, which involved consideration of the emotions that presented within the context of a given situation. This process was reported to facilitate active behavioural modifications in the self, with the objective of achieving a desired outcome. By adjusting their own behaviours, leaders reported the ability to influence the emotions and associated behaviours of others. The EI model that emerged through this research process is demonstrated in Figure 7.1 as a self- and other-focused, two-tier, hierarchical, process model that comprises self and other-focused EI which present at both a foundation and a higher-order level.

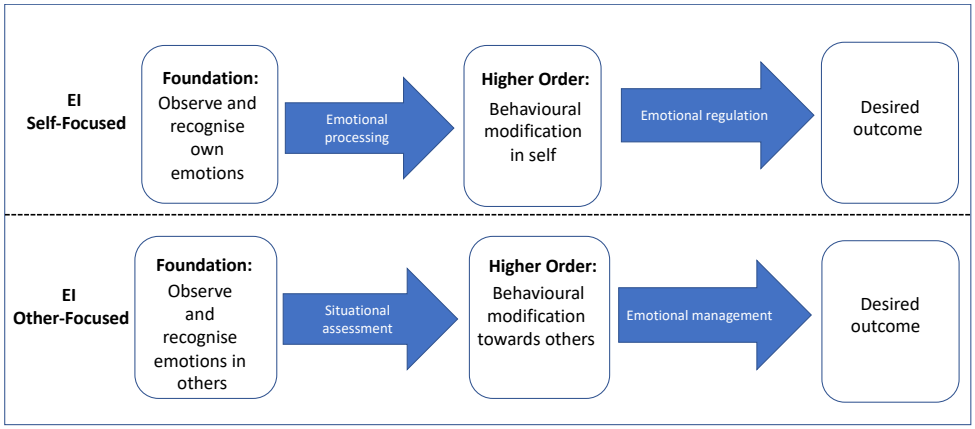

Figure 7.1 Diagrammatic representation of two-tier, hierarchical processes involved in the application of self- and other-focused EI

Data from the current study supported the idea that there is a clear distinction between self- and other-focused EI. It also identified a distinction between foundation level processes, which simply focus on emotional awareness, and higher-order processes, which require that emotions be either processed (in the self) or assessed in the context of the situation (in relation to others) to allow leaders to take conscious action with the aim of achieving a desired outcome. At the foundation level, self-focused EI was found to be more common than other-focused EI; the observation of one's own emotions is generally easier than the observation of those in others. The data showed that the ability to recognise emotion in the self or in others did not always lead to conscious management of behaviours. For example a leader may recognise they are getting angry but make no effort to control it. In this type of situation it is suggested that participants demonstrated engagement in foundation level EI processes only.

The extra processes that leaders undergo to achieve higher-order EI requires them to suppress automatic emotional reactions and actively modify their behaviour to deliver considered responses when faced with emotional situations in the workplace. This model of EI is unique in its combination of foundation and higher-order elements which were found to be utilised by leaders with the objective of achieving desired outcomes in the workplace. As

such, it contributes to knowledge in the EI field and provides the foundation of the EMI model.

The mindfulness processes within EMI

As explained in Chapter 6, analysis of the data highlighted four processes associated with mindfulness presenting in the enactment on EI, reported through the experiences of leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners. These research participants demonstrated processes of *observing, describing and accepting emotions and acting with awareness* (Baer et al., 2004; Cardaciotto et al., 2005; Feldman et al., 2005; Hülsheger and Alberts, 2020) when they enacted EI. For ease of understanding, the mindfulness processes that are incorporated into the EMI model are summarised in Figure 7.2.

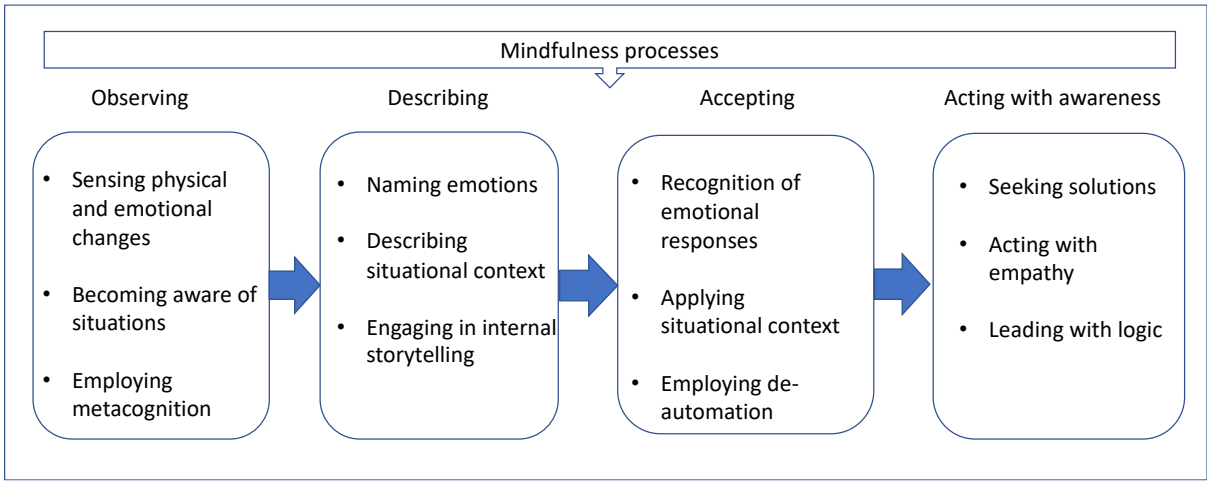

Figure 7.2 Mindfulness processes that present in EMI

The detailed components of these mindfulness processes and how they have been incorporated into the theoretical EMI model are explained next.

Observing emotions

Emotions are required to be observed before they can be processed and managed. Specifically, the mindfulness component of the EMI model presents a process of mindful observation (Baer et al., 2004; Brown and Ryan, 2003; Chadwick et al., 2008) of emotional situations through physical sensations, situational awareness and metacognitive thought processes. EMI theory suggests that the form of observation demonstrated by leaders who

practise mindfulness presents as a more refined process of engagement with emotions and situations when compared to those who do not. The enactment of mindful observation requires a detachment from emotion as the leader draws on metacognitive thought processes and allows emotion to be observed through situational and physical cues and sensations. EMI suggests that the subtle clues that emotion is present, such as increased heart rate or body temperature in the self, or body language displayed by others, can be accessed more easily by people who undertake regular mindfulness practice and therefore have learned to focus on noticing, with every sense, the current environment.

The 'baseline norm', which is representative of the observation of emotions in those who do not practise mindfulness, does not generally involve the full engagement of all the senses. Data from this study suggests that observations are made by all leaders, but they exist at a much more superficial level in leaders who do not practice mindfulness compared to those who do. Leaders who do not practise mindfulness appear to miss out on some of the nuances that surround emotions and may not be consistent in their ability to spot cues. Because these leaders report to observe only the more obvious expressions of emotions, some of the time, they may miss out on opportunities to manage confidently and effectively the full range of emotional situations that present in the workplace. EMI facilitates more comprehensive, consistent observation of emotions.

Describing emotions

Once observed, the mindfulness component of the EMI model illustrates how emotions and situations can be described. This may seem simple, but in practice, data from the study indicated that leaders find this to be a challenging activity. Analysis suggested that most leaders can recognise emotions in a general sense, but the ability to pinpoint those emotions as they arise, through accurate description, is much less common. The ability to describe 'mindfully' within the context of EMI requires an understanding of different types of emotions and how they present. This understanding appeared to be more developed in the leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners. Mindful awareness requires in the moment engagement with the self and the environment to enable the systematic observation and description of experiences (Baer et al., 2006). The naming of emotions has been linked to metacognitive thought processes, as it creates a disconnection between the self and the emotion being experienced (Bernstein et al., 2015). The attachment of language

to emotions at the point that they occurred was found to be more common in leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners than those who did not.

Accepting emotions

Following the observation and description of emotions, the mindfulness component of EMI requires an element of emotional processing and/or situational awareness. Leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners attributed mindfulness practice to supporting them in creating a 'pause' during which a current situation could be accepted (Baer et al., 2004; Cardadiotto, 2005; Feldman et al., 2005; Walach et al., 2006). Acceptance is a natural progression from the observation and description of emotions and situations within mindfulness practice (Kabat-Zinn t al.,2013). The acceptance of emotional responses as they present leads to recognition of the feelings or expressions of emotion in the self and others. Mindfulness involves active noticing without judgement (Baer et al., 2004, 2006), and it is this ability to accept a situation for what it is, in the moment, that creates the 'pause' required for de-automation to occur.

Those leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported a perceived ability to notice emotions, without judgement, when they experienced emotional situations at work. This 'pause' was reported to happen almost imperceptibly, as emotions were checked in the moment to enable rational thought to prevail over automatic, emotionally driven responses. On occasion, usually, when stronger emotions were presented, these leaders would increase the pause for emotional processing intentionally by removing themselves from the situation altogether. In practice, this could present as parking a discussion, or even ending a meeting to reconvene at a later time or date. Analysis of the data suggests that all leaders would benefit from a deliberately created pause to allow emotions to be accepted and to prevent automatic emotional responses from causing potentially undesirable outcomes.

Acting with awareness

The final mindfulness process within the EMI model is acting with awareness (Baer et al., 2004), which works to support the higher-order EI processes of behavioural modification. The combination of these two process elements were found to help leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners to take considered action to modify their behaviours in the

moment when faced with emotional situations. The conscious adjustment of behavioural responses to emotions in the self, or emotions observed in others at the point at which they occurred was found to support leaders in their management of emotional interactions. They were able to park emotional responses and seek solutions based in logic, whilst maintaining an empathetic approach to dealing with the emotions of others. The ability to act consciously and mindfully to navigate emotional responses in pursuit of specific desired outcomes is where the 'intelligent' element of the EMI is demonstrated.

Bringing the EI and mindfulness constructs together as EMI

The theoretical EMI model has been developed through a process of identification and mapping of the EI and mindfulness processes which emerged from the analysis of data from this study. EMI theorises that mindfulness processes support EI processes which in turn help leaders in the management of emotional situations encountered regularly in the workplace. The EMI model is presented in Figure 7.3 as a logical progression in inductive theory which builds on the 'basic' EI model shown in figure 7.1 through the addition of the mindfulness processes identified in figure 7.2. The EMI model depicts the key theoretical contribution pertinent to the research aim of understanding the relationship between EI and mindfulness in a leadership context. This model combines the processes associated with EI and mindfulness to provide a representation of their relationship within the context of leadership practice.

The EMI model emerged through a process of detailed, rigorous analysis of rich data from the experiences of emotions and (where relevant) mindfulness in the workplace as reported by leaders who practiced mindfulness compared to those who did not. The model theorises that leaders who practice mindfulness engage with emotions in the self and in others through processes of observation, description and acceptance which allows them to act with awareness. This supports them in the enactment of EI. All of the leaders in the study reported a belief that the management of emotional situations in pursuit of desired outcomes was a key element of successful leadership, however the research indicated that those who identified as mindfulness practitioners believe that the practice helps them to observe and manage emotions more successfully. As such EMI is presented as new theory

which identifies how mindfulness can positively support EI in the context of leadership practice.

EMI presents in practice as two distinct processes: self-focused EMI, which is related to the ability to observe, process and adjust behaviour in response to one's own emotions; and other-focused EMI, which is concerned with the observation and subsequent management of emotions in others. This model builds on previous work by Pekaar et al. (2018a, 2018b), who presented EI in the self and others as separate process-based phenomena.

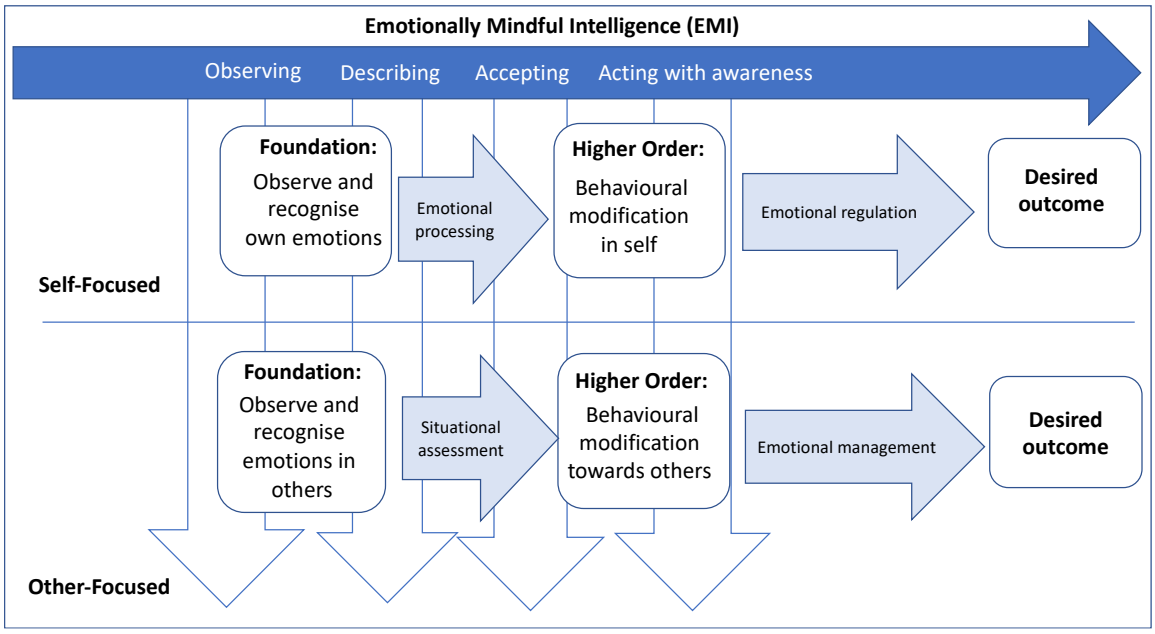

Figure 7.3 The model of EMI that was created through this study.

The model also incorporates and builds on theory that supports a hierarchical ordering of the key elements of EI (Görgens-Ekermans and Roux, 2021; Schutte et al., 2013), to demonstrate how EI in the context of leadership is experienced as a hierarchical set of processes that are utilised by leaders with the aim of achieving desired outcomes. From the perspective of theory in the field of mindfulness, EMI supports the theory that the phenomenon comprises a set of processes (Rogge and Daks, 2021). It also aligns with research that supports the idea of mindfulness facilitating enhanced day-to-day awareness in the moment (Shapiro et al., 2018) and creating 'space' to recognise and process emotions in the self and others

(Webster-Wright, 2013) to enable the de-automation of emotional responses (Kang et al., 2013).

EMI contributes to knowledge by combining elements of the EI models presented by Pekaar et al. (2018a, 2018b) and Görgens-Ekermans and Roux (2021) and overlaying mindfulness processes (Rogge and Daks, 2021) to demonstrate how EI, as a hierarchical process-based model, can be positively impacted by the addition of mindfulness. The application of this theoretical model leads to the notion that leaders who practise mindfulness while undertaking daily acts of leadership will find that they are able to observe and process emotions in the self and others in the moment through metacognition. After observation and description, these leaders will benefit from the ability to accept emotional situations as they process them within the context in which they present. The in-the-moment awareness and ability to process and accept emotions in real time, that leaders who identify as mindfulness practitioners associate with their mindfulness practice, has been incorporated into EMI theory to demonstrate how enactment of EI at both the foundation and higher-order levels can be positively impacted by mindfulness.

In the next section an explanation of EMI processes both in relation to the self and in relation to others, are presented and discussed.

Self-focused EMI

At the foundation level, self-focused EMI relates to the ability to utilise elements of mindfulness and EI to recognise emotions in the self. EMI in the self is a process that engages all the senses to maintain a constant low-level awareness of the physical and emotional elements of the self. Mindfulness practice Is fundamentally concerned with noticing (Kabat-Zinn, 2015), and the engagement of individuals in some form of regular mindfulness practice enhances their ability to notice fluctuations in personal well-being as they occur.

Emotions in the self are observed through recognition of physical and emotional changes in the body. As an example, an increased heart rate, a dry mouth or sweaty palms and a feeling of unease can all be signals that the body is experiencing a stress response of some kind (Allicon, 2019). In EMI, these signals and the surrounding situational environment are

observed metacognitively, which indicates to an individual that there has been some form of emotional or environmental change. Research participants referred to the ability to tune in to their emotional state through metacognitive awareness (Bernstein et al., 2015), which they found to be noticeably improved through the use of regular mindfulness practice. Whilst EI requires an element of emotional awareness, this may be quite basic or take place retrospectively. Mindfulness practice appears to create the ability to observe even subtle emotions in the moment that they occur. On this basis it adds to the EI process.

In EMI, the recognition of a change of emotional state prompts an individual to attach language to their observations, thus describing their emotions and the situations in which they arise. Although many individuals who do not practise mindfulness are able to associate a rising temperature and rapid breathing with an emotional response, this study indicates that their identification of the sensations and the emotion they represent is likely to occur at a lower conscious, or even subconscious, level. In EI, these physical responses may only be recognised as indicators of anger in a descriptive sense after the emotion has passed. In EMI, the addition of mindfulness was found to help leaders who identified as practitioners to describe emotions in the moment, through the use of the metacognitive process of real-time storytelling (Tatar et al., 2021). These individuals report being able to consciously detach from an emotional response and to describe their experience through the use of internal dialogue, for example: 'I am starting to feel anger because my work is being unfairly criticised.' This ability to engage fully in awareness, by utilising the observation of emotional and situational changes with the attachment of language, to make sense of experiences through a process of internal storytelling (Moscado, 2017) creates the shift from EI to EMI at the foundation level.

To access higher-order EMI in the self, some emotional processing is required. This bridges the foundation level and higher-order EMI processes, moving from awareness of an emotional situation to a considered behavioural response. This is a critical point in the process of EI, since it is here that the opportunity occurs to gain control over behaviours that are often automatically enacted in response to emotion. In this study, leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported that mindfulness played a significant role in the

management of emotional responses in the self, thereby elevating the enactment of EI to the more considered process of EMI.

The EMI model suggests that, having engaged in a process of emotional awareness and applying language to emotional responses and the surrounding situations, leaders who practice mindfulness can utilise the de-automation function associated with the practice (Kang et al., 2013) to manage spontaneous responses that are associated with the emotions they experience. Using the example given earlier, 'I feel anger because my work is being unfairly criticised,' an individual who enacts EMI would contextualise their emotion within the situation. In this example, the individual recognises that allowing their automatic response of anger to surface will result in behaviours such as raising their voice or obstructive body language such as folding their arms. These behaviours are unlikely to result in positive outcomes, particularly in a work situation, so the ability to invoke de-automation of emotional response through a metaphorical pressing of the 'pause button' allows acceptance of the current emotional and environmental situation to take place. Only when individuals have managed to exert control over automatic emotional responses can effective behavioural modifications be made to achieve desired outcomes.

It is not easy to deliberately change an automatic behavioural response after an experience of emotion; however, mindfulness is recognised as a mechanism that can be used to interrupt spontaneous reactions (Kang et al., 2013). Data collected in this study supports this theory. Mindfulness is referred to as a practice to highlight the continuous effort that is required to embed the principles into day-to-day thinking. The ability to 'take a moment' and interrupt the physical and mental urge to display anger, and instead remain calm and enter into a logical discussion or park an issue for discussion at a later date, challenged all of the participants in this study. There was evidence that, despite someone's best intentions, emotion can and does take over; however, among the participants in the study this was almost always followed by feelings of regret. Leaders reported a sense of duty to demonstrate role model behaviours, and this did not include obvious displays of uncontrolled emotion.

Those who are able to regulate their behaviour in emotional situations with the aim of achieving a desired outcome are perceived to be demonstrating EI in the self. Analysis of the data indicated that the addition of mindfulness created a more complex and nuanced set of thought processes that supported leaders in managing emotional situations. It is suggested that mindfulness supports leaders in the enactment of EI in the self by increasing their ability to observe emotions as they arise. In this study, leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported an enhanced ability to pick up on physical and emotional sensations and were able to observe emotions building with detachment, associated with metacognition. Leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners were also able to describe emotions competently, recognise nuanced differences in how they felt over the course of a day or week and relate those emotions to situations through effective storytelling.

Many leaders may recognise the value in being able to observe and recognise emotions. Yet those who identified as mindfulness practitioners in this study reported that mindfulness practice enabled them to be notably better at it. The higher-order element of EI processes in the self, which involves behavioural modification, can only be accessed when emotions have been recognised and processed. In addition to supporting emotional awareness through the processes of observation and description, leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners expressed the belief that mindfulness supports emotional processing positively in the self, and this enables these leaders to both recognise and understand their emotional state in real time. The addition of acceptance to emotional processing in the self helps leaders to demonstrate logical rather than emotional responses to emotional situations. In terms of behaviours, mindfulness processes appear to support the use of EI in the self, as reported by leaders who identify as practitioners, to support them in acting with awareness, helping these leaders to make considered choices about their behaviours and actions. This ability to detach from emotions indicates the use of metacognitive thought processes to support logic-based, rather than emotionally driven, solutions in pursuit of desired outcomes. As EI is deemed an important element of practical leadership competence, the additive benefits of mindfulness, reported by those who identify as practitioners and captured in the EMI model, represent a significant opportunity for leadership development in practice.

Other-focused EMI

Other-focused EMI is subtly different from the self-focused process. At the foundation level, it requires observation of others to notice their emotional states. This requires observation of verbal and non-verbal cues. Although the EI construct requires observation of emotions in others, and this observation does not rely on mindfulness practice, mindful observation (Baer et al., 2004; Chadwick et al., 2008) is suggested to exist at a deeper level than the 'regular' form that is experienced by those who do not engage in mindfulness practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2015).

In EMI, emotional cues are picked up at a nuanced level with the use of all the senses. The data collected in this study identified that subtle changes were observable in others, but these minor indications of emotional states are often missed, particularly when people are engaging with each other virtually. Situational observation is important in other-focused EMI. The ability to notice how others are interacting with each other, and with the primary observer, provides clues regarding their emotions at the time. Leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners appeared to be more likely to sense unspoken tension or sadness in the moment than those who did not, possibly because the practice develops deeper engagement of observation in the interaction with others. This allows them to be more empathetic when dealing with the emotions of others.

As with self-focused EMI, emotions in others are observed and recognised at the foundation level through a process of description that uses internal dialogue and storytelling, which the literature suggests is aligned to mindfulness practice (Moscado, 2017). leaders who do not practise mindfulness are able to enact other-focused EI through the observation of obvious emotional gestures in others, but this study indicated that the addition of mindfulness practice creates a more in-depth process that can identify subtle emotions, which would otherwise not be noticed. In EMI, mindfulness processes support leaders in a comprehensive assessment of a situation. The ability to both pick up on and describe the emotions observed in others creates a nuanced understanding of a situation as it presents. For example, a colleague who repeatedly avoids eye contact during a team meeting may at a surface level seem disengaged to a leader who enacts EI. However, with the addition of mindfulness processes such as the use of internal storytelling to describe emotions, a different scenario

may emerge. Assessment of their body language in the context of the broader environment and the words and behaviours of others in the room may indicate that the colleague is experiencing anger, sadness or lack of confidence. It is only through detailed observation of emotional cues and application of context that emotions in others can be fully understood. Mindful description (Baer et al., 2004, 2006) can help with the decoding of emotional situations in order to see them for what they are.

To progress from the foundation level to higher-order EMI processes in relation to others, there is a requirement to evaluate emotions that are observed in the context of the surrounding situation. Here the acceptance phase of mindfulness (Baer et al., 2004; Cardaciotto et al., 2005; Feldman, 2005) was reported to support the leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners in this study by helping them to make sense of the situations that faced them. As with self-focused EMI, this is the point at which the metaphorical pause button is pressed to allow mindful de-automation of reactive instincts to kick in (Kang et al., 2013). At this point in the theory presented, mindfulness processes are critical to evolving from basic EI to EMI, which in turn results in more frequent accession to higher-order EI processes by the deployment of de-automation and metacognition. To illustrate the point, a colleague may be observed to be upset about a work issue in a team meeting. A leader notices this situation and may experience an automatic response that drives them to seek an immediate resolution. This may involve questioning the individual, or others in the meeting, to establish more facts. However, a moment's pause to assess the likely impact of that course of action (which might further distress the colleague) may lead to a different approach. Leaders who do not practise mindfulness may be able to navigate through this type of situation; yet the addition of mindfulness is believed by those who identify as practitioners to create 'space' by interrupting automatic cognitive thought processes (Allicon, 2019; Webster-Wright, 2013). This may be imperceptible to anyone but the person who enacts the mindful response, but the effect is significant because logical thinking is allowed to override automatic, emotionally driven behavioural responses. On this basis, the addition of mindfulness processes to EI in the EMI model supports de-automation of emotional responses, and this de-automation increases the probability that higher-order processes can be accessed.

Only when emotions and the surrounding situation have been correctly observed and assessed, and automatic responses halted, can higher order other-focused EMI take place. This presents as a behavioural modification towards others which is enacted with the aim of achieving a desired outcome. As with EMI in the self, the process of acting mindfully with awareness supports behavioural modification, but in other-focused EMI it is particularly helped by the addition of empathy. This study found that leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners were much more likely than those who did not to demonstrate empathetic behaviours when seeking solutions to emotional situations that involved others. Using the previous example of a colleague who seems to be upset in a meeting, a leader enacting other-focused EMI might switch from a challenging line of questioning to display a more supportive style of investigation. In this way, desired outcomes may be more likely through empathetic behavioural modifications, rather than an automatically driven behavioural response.

In this study, analysis of the data suggested that mindfulness supported leaders who identified as practitioners positively in accessing the higher-order element of other-focused EI processes. These leaders reported that mindfulness enhanced their awareness and processing of emotions in others and situations through the processes of observation, description, acceptance and acting with awareness. As a result they believe they are able to assess emotional situations and modify their behaviour towards others to achieve desired outcomes more frequently, and with greater success, than they would otherwise be able to.

In summary, the EMI model provides a practically useful demonstration of how the benefits of EI can be augmented when the processes of mindfulness are overlaid on it. The model identifies the specific impact of mindfulness processes in the enactment of EI, both in the self and in others. The creation of EMI as a theoretical model builds academic theory at the intersection of EI and mindfulness in the context of leadership. It also has the potential to contribute to management practice; to support leaders in understanding and managing the emotional experiences they encounter in the workplace on a daily basis.

Limitations of the study

Analysis of the findings was undertaken through the use of rigorous methodological processes, yet there remains potential for bias. The researcher is a management consultant who has worked with leaders in the areas of strategy, change and leadership development for over 20 years. She is also a mindfulness practitioner who has found personal benefits from engagement in the practice, predominately through yoga, and these benefits have extended to all areas of her life. She has not been formally trained in mindfulness, nor taught it in leadership development programmes or in any other capacity. Therefore, as with every qualitative research study, influences from and/or experiences of the researcher may have impacted the results in the form of confirmation bias (McSweeney, 2021).

In the methodology chapter the limitations and challenges of qualitative study were highlighted, and they should also be considered in the findings and subsequent theoretical contribution contained in chapters 4 -7. The data analysis process and subsequent findings uncovered a socially constructed picture of EI in a leadership context, as described by the research participants. Had these same events been reported by others present at the time, a different picture may have emerged, however this does not detract from the findings of this particular study which are grounded in the experiences of the research participants.

There is a possibility that in describing their work as leaders, the research participants presented an 'ideal' account of events which may have resulted in social desirability bias (Bergen and Labonté, 2020). It should be noted that in participating in research on leadership and emotions there may have been a temptation for leaders to present themselves as role models.

Whilst the study and the theory presented indicate that leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners experienced positive effects of the practice, it should be noted that in common with other qualitative research in the field of leadership, this is based on the reported beliefs and experiences of the research participants. It is possible that, consciously or unconsciously, in participating in research on mindfulness and its impact on them as

leaders, participants delivered a self-fulfilling positive association between their mindfulness practice and its wider effects on them in the workplace. The limitations of qualitative studies of this nature are unavoidable and as such this study is presented as an initial qualitative exploration into the relationship between EI and mindfulness in a leadership context from which new theory has emerged.

Participants may have been drawn, consciously or unconsciously to present events and stories that would be of interest to the researcher. This is a risk in all qualitative studies and it could have impacted the findings of this work. It is also possible that the participants' views of their ability to manage emotions in the workplace, and their description of events, may not align with views or recollections of colleagues present at the time.

This study involved a small number of research participants; however, the findings were apparent in nature and are therefore presented as significant from a research perspective. The timing of the research is noteworthy, as the world was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is relevant since all the research was gathered while the country was in various states of lockdown. Despite the obvious challenges that were presented, many businesses found ways to navigate 'business as usual' through a plethora of restrictions, the most notable being the advice from the government to work from home wherever practically possible. This is pertinent to the study since all the research participants were engaged in some form of home or hybrid working during the pandemic. At the time of the research, most of our interactions, both from homes and at work, were conducted over video link rather than face-to-face.

The data provided in the diary entries provides insight into the emotional demands on leaders who were operating in a 'new normal' during this unprecedented set of circumstances. Whilst in many respects the pandemic was incidental to this study, its effects on the research participants cannot be ignored, particularly as they were requested to chart emotions when extreme levels of emotional stress were impacting work and home lives. Whilst there was no reason to suspect that the results from the study would have been different had the world been operating under more 'normal' circumstances, the emotional impact of the pandemic should be noted.

Opportunities for future research

Further research should be performed to build on this piece of work and explore further the theory that EMI presents as a distinct phenomenon when mindfulness practice is combined with EI. This study was conducted in the context of leadership; however, the constructs of EI and mindfulness extend into everyday life, and a study in a different setting would provide an interesting test of the applicability of EMI outside leadership and organisational research. In terms of further research into EI and mindfulness, several areas present as opportunities to confirm and build on the findings of this study. Analysis of the diary and interview data that was gathered for this study found that EI presented as a dynamic construct that could shift from day-to-day and even from hour to hour. Whilst mindfulness practice was reported to have a generally positive effect on the ability of leaders to enact EI, this effect could be explored in more detail. In particular, the following questions could be answered in further studies:

- How often does mindfulness impact EI?
- Is the impact of mindfulness more powerful in its effect directly after practice?
- How long do mindful practitioners need to have been engaged in the practice before the heightened awareness which supports the EI process is experienced? Is it days, weeks, or years?
- Is there a cumulative positive effect of EMI as leaders reflect on the outcomes that result from this model and potentially become 'more mindful' over time?
- Can EMI be consciously 'turned on and off' by leaders in the workplace?

Further research is necessary to explore fully the dynamic presentation of EI in leaders and how mindfulness supports it. It would be particularly interesting to include observations of colleagues as well as leaders in a future study to explore alignment between experiences described by leaders in comparison to the reports of those same situations described by others.

There would be value in further research to chart the journey through mindfulness training of those who did not practise mindfulness, using qualitative data collection, to gain insight into

the transition from EI to EMI, and any reflections they might be able to offer on whether and how their approach to EI changed over time. Whilst this research indicated that leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners reported greater levels of awareness and empathy, which they attributed to their practice, it is possible that they were simply more observant and empathetic individuals, or that observant and empathetic individuals are more likely to have an interest in practising mindfulness.

The dynamic presentation of EMI is also an area worthy of further research. This research captured numerous 'stand-alone' instances of emotional interactions in the workplace and it was evident that participants (both leaders who identified as mindfulness practitioners and those who did not) were not always able to observe emotions and adapt behaviours as well as they would have liked. Whilst this study did not attempt to determine whether mindfulness or EI present as skills or trait-based phenomena there was certainly a view from the participants that both could be developed with practise. As such it would be interesting to explore how the EMI model might be used by leaders in their day-to-day work over time to establish how these skills can be developed in leaders. Further research may be able to establish if a 'feedback loop' could be applied to the EMI model to demonstrate how leaders may learn and develop EMI as management practitioners. This may apply to the whole process, or indeed to component parts within it as leaders become better at engaging with emotions at the point at which they occur. Evidence of improved experiences of EMI by leaders who engage in it over time would strengthen the argument for incorporating the model into leadership development programmes.

If EMI does present as a predominantly skills-based model for use in leadership, it may also be assumed that it could be applied consciously and specifically in the management of emotions in the workplace on an 'as required' basis. Whilst the ability to consciously turn EMI on and off at will could not be evidenced through the questions and data collected for this research, this presents an opportunity to develop EMI theory through future study.

The researcher would like to offer the findings of this research to scholarly colleagues in the area of mindfulness thought processes and the links to neuroscience. The insights from this study provide evidence of behavioural demonstrations of the impact of mindfulness on real-

time thinking. This may pose, or help to answer, questions regarding how and why the brain responds to mindfulness practice from a biological perspective.

The contribution to knowledge in the area of mindfulness as a stand-alone practice is in the form of aligning findings with published studies and, in some cases, challenging thinking on the mindfulness construct in relation to leadership and management. The evolving field of mindfulness research remains diverse (Daniel et al., 2022), so it is hoped that the findings from this study provide useful insight into how mindfulness can be of practical use in leadership and management practice. The research evidence provided clear support for the benefits of mindfulness in a leadership context. Leaders who identified as Mindfulness practitioners reported experiencing a range of positive effects as a result of participating in the practice, including an improved ability to manage stress (Baron et al., 2016: Götmann and Bechtoldt, 2021), and demonstrations of greater empathy (Kantor, April and Nilsson, 2020) as well as possession of heightened awareness of the self and their surrounding environments (Webster-Wright, 2013).

Given the small scale and methodological challenges of previous research, which has attracted criticism in the literature (Cresswell, 2017; Jamieson and Tuckey, 2017), larger studies could raise the profile of mindfulness as an accepted and proven tool in a work context. In particular, the study described in this thesis indicated that app-based mindfulness tools were found to be effective by those who used them. This finding challenges the works of scholars who have criticised Western influences on mindfulness (Bayot et al., 2018; Kumar, 2001; Monterio et al., 2015). The benefits of mindfulness were evident in this study, regardless of how participants engaged in the practice. Although the literature has suggested that Eastern and Western approaches to mindfulness are irreconcilable (Daniel et al., 2022), the current study makes it clear that mindfulness is very much an individually interpreted practice, and participants engage in a range of activities that include meditation, walking, yoga and prayer. As a result, there is evidence to confirm that mindfulness is being actively used by leaders, who employ both traditional Eastern and more modern Westernised interpretations of the practice.

Further research into the practices of Eastern versus Western mindfulness would provide a welcome contribution to knowledge in the field. Although both versions of the practice were found to be useful to leaders in this study, contradictions in the literature (Kabat-Zinn, 2015; Ludh, 2021; Roche et al., 2020) indicate that the dichotomy between traditional Eastern and modern Western mindfulness practices is poorly understood. Until this chasm is bridged, the mindfulness construct, and particularly its relevance in an organisational and leadership context, is likely to remain something of an enigma.

Conclusion

Despite the limited scale of this research in terms of participant numbers, this work has provided a comprehensive inductive, qualitative study that straddles three existing fields of research. As a result of this research, the nuances and complexities of the application of EI and mindfulness in a leadership context have emerged. The EMI model provides a new theoretical contribution to both academic research and management practice and presents several opportunities for scholars and management practitioners. From an academic perspective, EMI indicates how constructs from different fields of research can inter-relate within new environments to build an understanding of complex subjects such as leadership. The fields of leadership and EI currently face significant challenges in terms of research credibility (Alvesson, 2020; Iszatt-White and Kempster, 2018); this research brings a fresh perspective to most of the work that precedes it. Whilst research grounded in positivism has struggled to provide clear definitions and to attach absolute causal relationships to the constructs of EI and mindfulness, this study has highlighted the benefits of a qualitative study in an area in which the nuanced complexities of human behaviour require careful navigation. In allowing research participants to contribute to the discourse in the fields of EI and mindfulness, through the capturing of themes and use of quotes, a picture of how these constructs are experienced by leaders has been formed. This has resulted in the production of a practice-based theoretical process model to reflect how mindfulness processes positively impact EI. The use of in-the-moment observation, description and acceptance of emotions developed through mindfulness practice offer support to leaders in their ability to engage with emotions without being influenced by them so that they can act with awareness when faced with emotional situations in the workplace.

In answering the question 'how do individuals working in leadership roles experience EI and mindfulness?', a new theory has emerged. The outcome of this research has built an important layer on previous work in the area of EI by Pekaar et al. (2018a, 2018b, 2020) and Görgens-Ekermans and Roux (2021) and has incorporated elements of the work of Rogge and Daks (2021) in the mindfulness and EI constructs as process-based phenomena. As a result of researching the relationship between EI and mindfulness a theoretical process model of EI has been created (figure 7.1) and developed into new theory to illustrate how mindfulness processes can support leaders in the enactment of EI, through EMI (figure 7.3). The qualitative nature of the research has provided rich data that contains greater detail than was available before on how EI and mindfulness processes manifest in a leadership context, through the stories of those who experience them on a daily basis. The process model created as a result of this work is the first to demonstrate how EI is impacted by mindfulness in a leadership context. The nuances that surround the exact processes relating to self and other-focused EI, the ways in which leaders use EI to achieve successful outcomes, and the differences between leaders who do not practise mindfulness and those who do, have been exposed through the use of bottom-up inductive analysis that could only be provided by a qualitative study. As such, this study represents a genuine contribution to academic knowledge and a useful addition to leadership practice and leadership and personal development. The EMI will be particularly useful in the provision of empirical evidence to support leadership development programmes, in which an understanding of the benefits of EI, its practical application and how it can be positively developed through mindfulness practice will be helpful to those embarking on careers in leadership. Mindfulness and EI have been tentatively linked in the literature (Bao, Xue and Kong, 2015; Miao et al., 2018; Nadler, Carlswell and Minda, 2020), but this research supports the relationship not only by confirming that mindfulness processes are antecedents to higher-order EI but also by providing an explanation of how and why they are able to positively influence EI processes.

It is hoped that this research may go some way towards convincing critics of EI that the construct has not run its course. Despite the controversy surrounding the construct from academics (Antonakis et al., 2009; Dasborough, 2020), from a leadership practice perspective this study has identified the universal opinion of the research participants that EI is an antecedent to successful leadership. There is now an opportunity, given the insights provided

by this work, to undertake more qualitative research to complement and develop knowledge in the field. With more studies from multiple philosophical perspectives, the critics of EI may finally concede that, with a weight of robust evidence to support it, EI can be accepted as a valid field of academic study as well as a recognised element of leadership practice.

One of the big unanswered questions in the literature is what constitutes mindfulness (Baer, 2014). As it is grounded in Buddhism, its roots are found in meditation, but more recently it has been associated with a much wider range of activities. This has given rise to criticism from those who feel that the term mindfulness is now too far removed from its origins (Purser, 2015; Shapiro et al., 2018). Data from this study confirms that mindfulness is being embraced in a plethora of ways, and leaders are no exception to this trend. Whilst some would prefer to stick with a traditional view of mindfulness practice, it is hard to be too critical of an activity that is bringing so much benefit to those who participate in it. In the study sub-group who practiced mindfulness, there was unanimous support for its positive effect; however, it was significant to note that interpretations of the practice differed among the participants. For some, it was a way of thinking that enabled them to view situations dispassionately and without judgement, whilst for others, it involved no thinking at all as they cleared their heads and embraced stillness. Given the positive experiences shared by the leaders who were engaged in this study, it is recommended that organisations incorporate some form of mindfulness training into their leadership development programmes.

This research has revealed previously uncharted insights into the complex emotional demands that are experienced by leaders on a day-to-day basis. Whilst EI and mindfulness are distinct phenomena that provide a range of benefits to leadership practitioners, the combination of these two constructs provides leaders with a much stronger ability to enact EI in real-time. Leadership has been revealed as an intensely emotional and stressful occupation, which requires leaders regularly to manage both their own emotions and the emotions of others within the contexts of the environments in which they find themselves at any given time. Using the process model of EMI, leaders can be educated on how to navigate the emotional challenges they experience at work. This may not be a quick or easy process, since mindfulness is, by definition, a practice, and whilst this research identifies that it plays an important role in EMI, it is not clear how long leaders must engage in mindfulness practice

before they are able to experience the benefits of EMI. From the findings of this study it would seem that, for leaders, mindfulness is worth investing in for the benefits it can offer in its own right as well as in the form of a pathway to EMI.

Leadership practice is a notoriously difficult field of research to understand (Bennis, 2007). Modern leadership theory suggests that leaders must be able to relate to their followers (Ng, 2016; Wei et al., 2018). Although EI was deemed essential to leadership by all the participants in this study, for those who did not engage in mindfulness practice it was perceived as something of a challenge as an element of their role. If EMI is embedded as a standard leadership tool, through the adoption of mindfulness, there is an opportunity for leaders to approach the emotional elements of their roles more confidently. Given the regularity with which leaders identified having to manage their own emotions or the emotions of others at work, the impact of replacing EI with EMI could be of genuine research and practical significance. With a weight of empirical evidence to support it, the hope is that EMI will become a well-used and highly valued model within leadership development training modules and coaching interventions.

Within the confines of this study, there was no attempt to enter the debate on whether EI exists as a trait, ability or skill. Whatever the origin of EI, this research indicates that mindfulness complements the enactment of EI in leadership practice. EMI manifests when the positive impact of mindfulness processes, are combined with the processes of EI in the self and in others. It is recommended that EMI be adopted as a construct by scholars and leadership practitioners. Scholars are invited to test and challenge the construct in pursuit of further knowledge and critical thinking; and for those who work as leaders, EMI is a practical tool for use in the day-to-day management of emotions in the workplace. As a result of this research more leaders may be encouraged to take up some form of mindfulness practice to experience its effects for themselves. Whilst EMI does not purport to improve leadership capability, or to guarantee that leaders will achieve their desired aims at work, it can be used to facilitate the observation and management of emotional situations faced by leaders on a day to day basis through the course of their work.

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Appendices

Participant information sheet

This sheet sets out information about the PhD study that I, Rachel Roberts, will be undertaking as part of my PhD research. I am an Honorary Teaching Fellow and Doctoral Researcher in the Department of Entrepreneurship and Strategy at Lancaster University Management School.

You are invited to participate in a research study which seeks to understand the application of emotional intelligence and mindfulness in a leadership context. This includes how you recognise and manage your own and others' emotions in the everyday things you do in the workplace.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

The focus of my PhD study is to understand the practical application of emotional intelligence and mindfulness in a leadership context. The study seeks to understand how leaders use emotional awareness to influence decision-making and behaviours and, for those who practice mindfulness, how to present-centred awareness affects thoughts and actions in the workplace. This is likely to be unique to individual leaders but may also be influenced by situation and context. Examples might be, but are not restricted to, a decision which you were involved in, a behaviour such as managing a difficult conversation perhaps, or having to balance your logical versus emotional response to a work situation, possibly dealing with emotions of those around you such as colleagues, customers or other stakeholders.

What I am interested in is what leaders actually do on an everyday basis in terms of emotional management. This does not necessarily have to be the 'big' moments or dealing with crisis or making crucial strategic choices. It can be the everyday incidents that you would describe as your way of leading, expressed within the context of emotional awareness and management of yourself and others.

Why have you been asked to participate?

For the purpose of my PhD I am exploring emotional intelligence and mindfulness in the context of leadership. As you have staff responsibility within an organisation, your contribution would be of value to this study.

What will you be asked to do if you participate?

If you agree to take part in this research, you will also be asked to keep a diary to capture your emotional awareness and management in a work context over a period of 5 weeks. During this time you will be asked to

capture and describe instances of emotional influence (observed and experienced) in decision making and/or behaviours as they occur each week. You will also be asked to reflect on if/how you used mindfulness techniques either consciously or sub-consciously in connection with the events you have highlighted. This will be done by answering a number of open questions in an electronic diary at the end of each week and emailing this to me. Diary entries can also be audio and/or video recorded if you would prefer to capture information that way. Following 5 weeks you will allow me to analyse your diary entries, and we will then arrange to meet (this can be done by video) for a one-hour interview to reflect on the content. As a separate exercise you will be asked to complete a short psychometric assessment of mindfulness and emotional intelligence.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What are the benefits of taking part?

If you agree to take part you will gain a personal, in depth understanding of how you use emotional intelligence and mindfulness as a leader. The act of keeping a diary, and of discussing this at the interview will facilitate reflection on your own style of leading including how you recognise, respond to and use emotions to manage yourself and others. This will provide you with an opportunity to review and improve your practice of leading. I am happy to provide you with a feedback session at the end of the research process if this is of interest.

Do you have to take part?

No. There is no consequence at all of you deciding not to take part.

What if you change your mind?

You will be free to withdraw at any time during the data gathering and data analysis phase, up to and including one calendar month after the final interview. After this time it will not be possible for you to withdraw.

Will your data be identifiable?

The diary entries will be stored digitally in encrypted files, anonymised, and only accessed by me. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face or via video link. They will be recorded, and the recordings stored securely in encrypted files .They will be transcribed and anonymised so that the data will not be able to be linked to you. Recordings will then be deleted. Transcribed data will only be accessed by me. In accordance with University guidelines, data will be stored securely for 10 years and then destroyed.

How will I use the information you have shared with me and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the data you have shared with me only in the following ways: for academic and teaching purposes only. Specifically, this will include using it to complete a PhD; to publish academic journal articles/conferences and possibly a book. The data will remain anonymised.

Any sensitive or company-specific information disclosed to me in the course of the research will not be used as part of the data. Similarly, any additional information relating to personal experiences not connected with my research will be excluded from the data.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact me as follows:

Mrs. Rachel Roberts
Doctoral Researcher
Department of Entrepreneurship and Strategy
Lancaster University Management School
Lancaster. LA1 4YX
Tel: 015245 93473
Email: r.roberts11@lancaster.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with my supervisors you can also contact:

Dr Marian Iszatt-White
Department of Entrepreneurship and Strategy
Lancaster University Management School
Lancaster. LA1 4YX
Tel: 01524 594706
Email: m.iszattwhite@lancaster.ac.uk

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

Consent form

Project Title: Exploring Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness in a Leadership Context

Name of Researcher: Rachel Roberts

Email : r.roberts11@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily	☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time in the 2 weeks after taking part in interview at the end of the diary stage, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 2 weeks of taking part in the study my data will be removed.	☐
3. I understand that any information disclosed remains confidential and will be anonymised.	☐
4. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included and I will not be identifiable.	☐
5. I understand that my name/my organisation's name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	☐
6. I understand that any interviews will be video/audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure. Video and audio recordings will be deleted after transcription.	☐
7. I agree to take part in the above study.	☐

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant Date Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____ Date _____ Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University

Research diary template

Study period Monday 7th September – Friday 9th Oct 2020

At the end of each week please spend time describing at least one situation or decision that you have managed in a work context. Consider how this affected you emotionally (e.g feelings of frustration, anger or euphoria). Were you consciously aware of these emotions at the time and did they influence your behaviour? Were there any behaviours you displayed or actions you took that, on reflection you would change, and why ?

Have you witnessed emotions in others during the course of the working week? Were you consciously aware of them at the time or only later, when reflecting on the situation. Did you adapt your own behaviour to manage the emotions observed in others? If not, would you do so if faced with a similar situation again?

I am interested in how emotions are experience and managed in the workplace what leaders on an everyday basis, so an act does not necessarily have to be the 'big' moments or dealing with crisis or making crucial strategic choices. It can be the everyday incidents that you would describe as your way of leading, expressed within the context of emotional awareness and management of yourself and others.

To help you in writing up your diary entries, the following pages contain four questions for you to consider. Please formulate your description around these questions, and write in as much detail as possible, including facts, acts, situational details, people involved, and any emotional reactions. The boxes are not there to constrain you – please write as much as you feel necessary. There is then a section for you to reflect if/how your mindfulness practice influenced your awareness of and responses to emotions in yourself and others over the course of the week.

Each completed record will be considered confidential, and held on a secure, encrypted drive. Any data used from the diaries in my PhD thesis will be anonymous.

Please email your completed diary to me at the end of each week:

r.roberts11@lancaster.ac.uk

Many thanks

Rachel

Week 1
Please describe any work situations this week that affected you emotionally. Please include brief details on the situations and the people involved and the emotions you experienced.

Week 1
Choose one situation/incident from those listed above to describe in as much detail as possible. Were you aware of the emotional impact it had on you at the time, or did this only register afterwards. How did your emotions impact your actions and behaviours at the time and what might you have done differently on reflection?

Week 1
Please describe any work situations this week where you have observed/considered emotions in other others. Please include brief details on the situations and the people involved.

Week 1
Choose one situation/incident from those listed above to describe in as much detail as possible. Were you aware of the emotions involved at the time or did this only register afterwards. How did the emotions of others impact your actions and behaviours at the time and what might you have done differently on reflection?

Week 1
Please use this section to capture anything else about the week. In particular do you feel your mindfulness practice influenced your approach to any of the above? Has the process of writing this diary made you more 'mindful' than you would normally be? If yes, how have you found the experience of noting emotions in a work context?

Codes used in the coding template

Acceptance
Anger
Anxiety
Awareness
Clarity
Consideration
Covid stress
Decision making
Describing
Disconnection
Effectiveness
Empathy
EQ
Influencing
Insight
Investigating
Leadership
Managing others
Managing self
Meditation
Mindfulness
Nature
Noticing
Observing others
Observing self
Protection
Reflection
Relaxation
Rumination
Seeking outcomes
Self blame
Skills
Storytelling
Stress relief
Training

Demonstration of the overlap/inter-relationship between EI and mindfulness themes

EI Themes									
Awareness and management of emotions in the self supports leaders in the course of their duties			Leaders use emotional awareness and maagament of others to achieve positive organisational outcomes			EI is considered an essential skill for leadership that can be learned			Recording of negative emotions	
Self awareness	Managing self		Observing others	Managing others		Skills	EQ		Stress	Anxiety
Seeking outcomes	Decision making		Clarity	Seeking outcomes		Training			Rumination	Anger
Clarity	Effectiveness		Insight	Investigating					Covid Stress	Self blame
			Influencing	Effectiveness						

Mindfulness Themes									
Individual Practice			Stresss Management			Awareness			Empathy	
Meditation	Relaxation		Anxiety	Stress relief		Observing self	Reflection		Empathy	Consideration
Nature	Optimism		Clarity			Describing	Acceptance		Insight	
Connection	Noticing		Disconnection			Noticing	Describing			
Awareness						Observing others	Storytelling			

Overlay of Mindfulness Themes on EI									
Self awareness			Behavioural management in self			Awareness of others & situations			Behavioural management in others	
Self blame	Reflection		Acceptance	Stress relief		Anxiety	Investigating		Protection	Empathy
Covid stress	Insight		Decision making	Awareness		Insight	Covid stress		Acceptance	Influencing
Anxiety	Anger		Consideration			Anger	Observing		Insight	Empathy
Observing self	Rumination		Seeking outcomes			Describing	Investigating		Awareness	Protection
	Describing								Decision making	Consideration
									Seeking outcomes	

Key

Inter-relationship between mindfulness and EI