

# **Exploring the Application of Mindfulness-Based Coaching on the Development of Leadership**

**Research Abstract**

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This study aimed to explore leaders' perceptions and experience of an eight-week mindfulness-based coaching intervention. Current research reveals psychological and physiological studies of mindfulness, and shows a link between emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership. While there is a growing evidence of a link between EI and mindfulness, there is however a paucity of empirical research exploring the relationship between mindfulness and leadership, and the value of mindfulness within coaching for leadership. Accordingly, leaders' perceptions of the role of mindfulness, and especially mindfulness-based coaching, in developing leadership, were explored.

A qualitative phenomenological research design was utilised to uncover meaning in leaders' lived experiences, during and subsequent to their cultivating mindfulness, and being exposed to mindfulness-based coaching. Data was gathered through: summative and continual personal texts written by the participants; interviews with their colleagues; and the researcher's close observations. A thematic analysis was carried out on the data collected.

The emergent themes centred on participants' cultivation of awareness, their cultivation of non-judgment, compassion and acceptance, and their perceived consequences of cultivated mindfulness. The participants experienced a wide range of benefits from their cultivated mindfulness and mindfulness-based coaching, many being corroborated by their colleagues. They noted increases in self-awareness – of their cognition, affect, behaviour and judgment, and interpersonal and systemic awareness. Participants' cultivated mindfulness reportedly increased their capacity to make conscious choices, which in turn translated into enhanced skilful action. They perceived their being mindful as having a positive impact on their leadership. Many competencies developed were found to correspond to core EI leadership competencies, signifying how mindfulness-based coaching appears to develop EI

and leadership. The findings suggest that additional qualitative and quantitative research is needed to clarify the utility of this intervention.