

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in
Management from Nova School of Business and Economics

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

Sub-Project 3:

**EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF MINDFULNESS ON WORK ENGAGEMENT AND
BURNOUT**

LUISE SPENGLER

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Supervisor: Prof. Filipa Castanheira

Abstract Collective Project: Navigating the Future of Leadership

Exploring the evolution of leadership in today's world, this thesis employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the evolving dynamics of leadership in a world reshaped by the pandemic. The first study examines the evolution of leadership roles, focusing on the shift from traditional styles to a more empathetic and adaptive approach. The work project then explores self-leadership and the impact of mindfulness on work engagement and burnout. Finally, the thesis highlights key findings on psychological empowerment, boundary control, and work-life dynamics, and underscores the need for leaders to foster a resilient, purpose-driven, inclusive, and thriving organizational culture.

Key Words: leadership, post-pandemic, remote work, well-being, leadership demands, job resources

Abstract Sub-Project 1: The Evolving Role of Leaders

In an era characterized by the rapid evolution of leadership dynamics, driven by external influences, the Sub-Project 1 examines the evolving skills required to lead effectively in the modern work environment. Based on grounded theory and qualitative insights from interviews with twelve experienced leaders, the study explores key issues such as the role of the pandemic in accelerating digital transformation, the importance of work-life balance, and the various needs of a diverse workforce. The findings demonstrate a shift in leadership approaches, moving away from traditional command-and-control practices towards strategies that prioritize empathy, communication and fostering an environment that promotes self-leadership and overall well-being.

Key Words: changing work environment, leadership skillset, shifting employee expectations, leadership challenges

Abstract Sub-Project 2: Self-leadership at the Core

Previous research confirms a positive relationship between self-leadership and work engagement, but the underlying mechanisms and applicability in post-pandemic times remain unexplored. Building on the Conservation of Resources theory, Sub-Project 2 employs a longitudinal quantitative approach to investigate the mediating effects of meaning of work and psychological empowerment on the relationship between self-leadership and work engagement. Results show that self-leadership positively predicts work engagement and that this relationship is fully mediated by meaning of work and psychological empowerment. The results offer valuable insights for leaders and organizations while also highlighting practical implications for individuals, facilitating overall well-being and organizational success.

Keywords: self-leadership, meaning of work, psychological empowerment, work engagement, COR, job resources, longitudinal study

Abstract Sub-Project 3: Exploring the Impact of Mindfulness

The Sub-Project 3 investigates mindfulness in organizational behavior, focusing on its impact on work engagement and burnout. It examines how mindfulness influences positive spillover in work-life balance and boundary control between professional and personal spheres. Findings suggest that mindfulness enhances work engagement through improved focus and resilience, while also reducing burnout. The study reveals that positive spillover and boundary control act as mediators in these relationships, except for boundary control being ineffective in enhancing work engagement. This study underlines the significance of mindfulness in modern workplace dynamics, especially concerning uprising challenges intertwined with teleworking.

Keywords: mindfulness, boundary control, engagement, positive spillover

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Abbreviations

COR Theory	Conservation of Resources Theory
e.g.	Exempli gratia; for example
et al.	Et alia; and others
FSSB	Family Supportive Supervisor Behavior
H	Hypothesis
i.e.	Id est; that is
JD-R Model	Job Demands-Resources Model
LLCI	Leader-Member-Exchange
LMX	Lower Limit Confidence Interval
MBI	Mindfulness-Based Intervention
P	Participant
PHLMS	Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale
ULCI	Upper Limit Confidence Interval

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1. Introduction

In today's work environment, marked by rapid technological advancements and evolving social dynamics, the nature of leadership is undergoing significant transformation. This shift is particularly evident in the context of remote work, a trend accelerated by global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Microsoft 2022). The rise of remote work, coupled with demographic changes in the workforce, presents unique challenges and opportunities for leadership strategies. With our study, we aim to re-evaluate traditional leadership models, which are largely built around physical office environments and babyboomer-attitudes and examine how leadership can be adapted to meet the needs of a young, diverse, and digitally connected workforce.

The group project is divided into a collective part and three individual parts. The collective part addresses the topic of remote working as the main driver of change and explores generational change in the context of the changing work environment. Building on this foundation, the study branches into three individual parts. Each of these sections delves deeper into specific aspects of leadership in the context of the changing work dynamics brought about by remote work and changing attitudes and values. The first study examines the challenges leaders face in today's work environment and the essential skills required for effective leadership. The second study investigates the concept of self-leadership and its effectiveness as a tool for creating work engagement, meaning of work, and a sense of empowerment. The third study explores the relevance and application of mindfulness as a leadership strategy. It examines how mindfulness can aid leaders in navigating the complexities of today's work environment and can help foster positive work outcomes.

1.1 Remote Work

The first driver of change, remote work, is defined as “a type of flexible working arrangement that allows an employee to work from remote locations outside of corporate offices” (Gartner n.d.). While remote work has been an established concept in companies since the 1970s it has gained significantly more importance in the late 1990s with the rise of the internet and home computers (Tavares 2017). More recently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding country-wide lockdowns, working from home has experienced an extreme boost in attractiveness and forms a major aspect of today’s working world. While in pre-pandemic times only 11% of employees took advantage of remote work settings, in 2021 around 22% of employees were working from home at least some of the time (Llave et al. 2022) and in 2022 around 45% of global participants stated to work remotely (Statista 2023). This is mainly possible because digitalization has enabled companies to redesign their business processes, resulting in new jobs and new business models (Microsoft 2022).

One of the biggest advantages of remote work is the flexibility and autonomy it brings regarding working hours, i.e., workers find it easier to balance home and work life (Tavares 2017). Furthermore, remote work has proven to be time efficient as commuting time is reduced to a minimum. Nowadays, remote work options are a must for companies to attract and maintain talents and remain competitive in the market (Shirmohammadi, Au, and Beigi 2022) as the concept has proven to increase job satisfaction and morale (Tavares 2017).

While most employees are embracing flexible work environments, research and experience unveil several challenges: There is a great tension between the stated productivity of workers and leaders’ confidence in their productivity. While 87% of workers argue that they are productive, only 12% of leaders are convinced that their team works productively in remote settings. Especially hybrid managers state that they struggle to trust their employees to do their best work (Microsoft 2022). Working from home blurs the lines between private and work life

and makes it harder to disconnect from work. Technostress reinforces worker's inability to disconnect, since employees are continuously reminded and distracted by notifications (e.g., e-mails or Microsoft Teams messages). This tension results in a longer number of unusual work hours of employees compared to pre-pandemic office times. Furthermore, connecting with colleagues becomes harder due to a lack of communication which causes increased feelings of isolation (Llave et al. 2022).

In summary, remote work has seen significant growth, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While it offers advantages such as flexibility and time efficiency, remote work also poses challenges related to trust, work-life boundaries, and isolation. As the workforce continues to adapt, addressing these issues becomes crucial for a successful remote work environment.

1.2 Demographic Changes

Modern organizations and leaders of tomorrow must not only maneuver through new flexible working conditions but also adapt to significant demographic changes, that can have a crucial impact on organizations. The rise of generational conflicts can be attributed to changing workforce compositions which go hand in hand with a shift in employer needs and expectations that diverge from traditional notions of leadership.

Being faced with different generations at the workplace is not a new phenomenon, yet the current rise of Generation Z, which is soon to become the most populous and diverse generation on Earth, highlights the importance of the topic (Gomez, Mawhinney, and Betts, n.d.). Generation Z stands in clear contrast to their previous generation, as their preferences, attitudes, and behaviors are radically different and have the potential to have a huge impact on workplaces (Gomez, Mawhinney, and Betts, n.d.). We define generations as an umbrella term for people born in a specific period of time, namely: 1946-1964 Boomers; 1965-1980 Generation X; 1981–1996 Millennials; 1997-2012 Generation Z. Without doubt, having a diversely aged work set-up

with multiple perspectives and approaches to the same problem can be a win for any company. To make it a win, leaders, predominantly in Generation X or the Millennial generation, must adapt to the rise of Generation Z, which brings, as any generation, new values and attitudes, needs, leader behaviors, career experiences and leadership and teamwork preferences (Lyons and Kuron 2013).

Generally, it can be observed that younger generations tend to a “work to live” mindset, as work-life balance is one of their biggest priorities (Lyons and Kuron 2013). Furthermore, younger generations tend to prefer leadership behaviors focusing on individual fulfilment more than on organizational success (Lyons and Kuron 2013). They are hyper-independent, focus strongly on themselves and are less committed to their workplace, which can explain their preference for mobile working solutions (Lyons and Kuron 2013). Whilst for older generations, thinking team- and company-oriented is a key motivation driver, younger generations want to find personal fulfillment (Manpower Group 2020). Leaders and organizations that recognize these dynamics and proactively support individuals in their pursuit of self-fulfillment and finding purpose will inherently become more appealing to them (Lyons and Kuron 2013). The younger generation often experiences tensions between work and family life, a matter often overlooked by their older counterparts, who may not even perceive this as a significant issue, as suggested by Kunreuther (2003). This dynamic effectively illustrates the high intergenerational conflict potential.

In conclusion, it is crucial to understand these nuances in order to keep inventing future leadership styles that do not lead to frustration, misunderstanding and ultimately company success failure, but rather in added value, growth and dynamic new work set-ups.

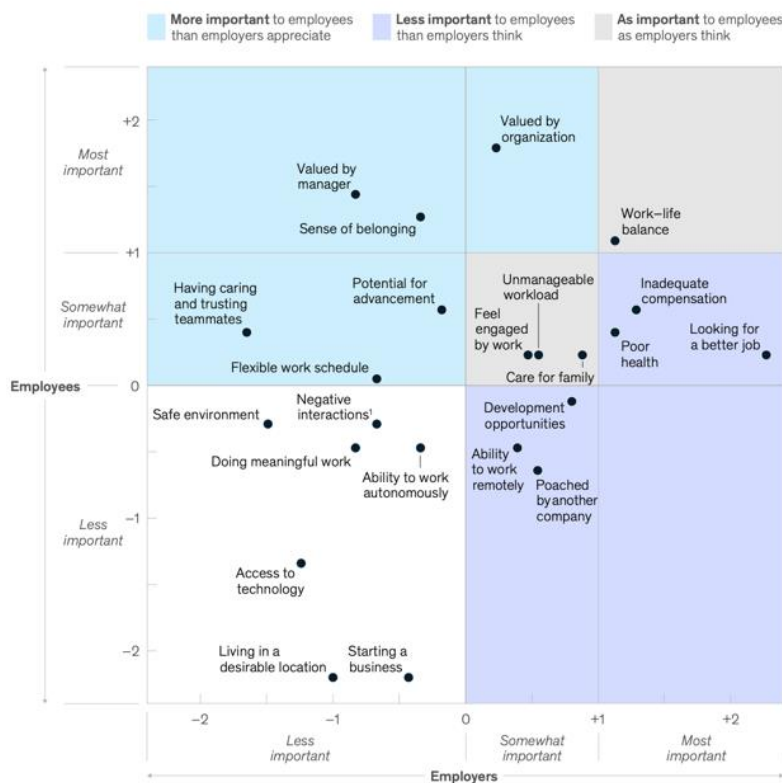
1.3 New demand of leadership

As the world changes, so do the demands and circumstances in which leaders operate. The change is significantly influenced by different drivers of change (e.g., remote work) and changes in attitudes, behaviors and values.

Many companies, in their efforts to mitigate the shifts in today's work environment, often rely on ineffective actions based on misconceptions. Instead of hastily implementing change processes based on these assumptions, it is advisable for organizations to take a moment to reconsider their strategies to avoid a mismatch of expectations between employees and employers. It is time to create a successful post-pandemic organization since this period has irrevocably changed what people expect from work. (De Smet et al. 2021).

Figure 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the mismatches between and employee expectations and employers perception.

Figure 1 Factors that are important to employees versus what employers think is important (De Smet et al. 2021).



The described development is resulting in a range of outcomes for leaders. Thus, leaders should force themselves to meet employees' expectations to keep them satisfied, motivated and in the company (Korn Ferry 2021). This involves cultivating a sense of openness and demonstrating an active engagement with change. Regarding the shift to hybrid and remote work, the key challenge for leaders is to ensure cohesion and social relationships within teams (Microsoft 2022). In many cases, work can be done even more effectively remotely, so companies need to manage their teams more closely, focusing on the capabilities that people and technology can provide.

The power shift from companies to employees is unstoppable and it is vital to see this as an opportunity, rather than a disadvantage, to unlock this new potential together as a community. Given the need for flexibility and rapid innovation, companies have started to use diverse teams with different backgrounds and ways of thinking. In fact, companies can no longer afford to be a collection of individuals. Their focus must be on harnessing the collective wisdom of teams to solve complex problems (Korn Ferry 2021). Positive business outcomes depend on positive human outcome. Hence, employees should not be treated as numbers or machines, but like humans.

In conclusion, leaders must adapt and enhance their leadership abilities in light of evolving circumstances, such as changing attitudes and the prevalence of remote work. A significant aspect of this evolution is building a workplace that fosters meaningful work and offers a viable work-life balance for employees, enhancing work engagement and satisfaction. Moreover, incorporating strategies such as mindfulness and self-leadership into their approach can profoundly transform their leadership style, aligning it with these demands.

4. Sub-Project 3: Exploring the Impact of Mindfulness

4.1 Introduction

In the first study, we qualitatively investigated required leadership characteristics in the face of evolving external and internal influences in modern work environments. Among the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalization, and generational differences, a shift in the evaluation of work-life balance and an intertwined shift in self-awareness were key drivers of change, leading to new leadership demands. These key drivers completely reshaped communication and social interaction at work, particularly encouraging prioritization of personal life over work and fostering a greater awareness of mental health in the workplace. In this new leader-follower relation, leadership styles that exhibit empathetic communication and mindful engagement play an important role.

These findings go in line with the quantitative findings of our study (2), in which the relationship between self-leadership and work engagement was found to be fully mediated by meaning of work and empowerment: new employee resources, strengthened by the post-pandemic “new normal” and generational changes in workforce set-ups.

Complementing the above findings, in the following we want to go further into detail in connecting the concepts of mindfulness (since strongly connected with mental health and work-life balance, hence with the findings of our first study) and work engagement (since highlighted as an important employee indicator for personal, leader and overall organizational success in our second study). The objective of this study is to elucidate the role of mindfulness in cultivating a state of presence and overall well-being, and to explore its implications in the context of boundary control and work-life integration. Finally, in this last part, we decided to add mindfulness’ effects on burnout via the just mentioned mediators, since this study is

anchored in the job demands-resources (JD-R) model proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), a well-established framework for predicting and understanding employee well-being and job performance. It stresses that job demands are critical antecedents of burnout, leading to poor health and negative organizational outcomes. Job resources, conversely, drive work engagement, resulting in increased well-being and positive organizational outcomes.

Based on a dataset that spans three points in time, this research embraces a time-sequenced study to decode the progressive character of mindfulness and its effect on work engagement and burnout. Our multi-point measurement strategy is designed to uncover the mediators that drive shifts in work dynamics. Our research methodology enriches the current scholarly dialogue by injecting a timely, longitudinal analysis into the discourse on the connection between mindfulness and its potential mediators affecting workplace dynamics.

Through our study we offer theoretical and practical implications both for leaders but also for employees and general organizational set-ups such as the design of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) and leadership training.

4.2 Literature Review

4.2.1. Mindfulness: Conceptualization and Evolution

The concept of mindfulness has undergone significant evolution over the past few decades. Originally defined by Kabat-Zinn (1994) as a state of being purposefully and non-judgmentally attentive in the present moment, mindfulness was primarily viewed as a singular, trait-like quality centered around present-focused attention. This view, however, has been reshaped by subsequent research. Particularly works by Chiesa (2012), Roemer and Orsillo (2003), and Baer et al. (2006) advocate for a more dynamic understanding of the concept. Such contemporary perspectives suggest recognizing mindfulness not just as a static trait but as a transient state, achievable and augmentable through intentional attention. This evolution in understanding has

led to the development of more sophisticated tools for assessing mindfulness, like the Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (Cardaciotto et al. 2008), which differentiates between the constructs of awareness and attention, offering a more nuanced approach to measuring this complex construct.

4.2.2 Mindfulness in Leadership

In the realm of organizational leadership, the debate over what constitutes effectiveness is ongoing and multifaceted. Traditional theories have long centered on the trait approach, which suggests that certain innate qualities inherently set leaders apart from non-leaders (Judge et al. 2006). This approach identifies key traits such as motivation, integrity, confidence, and intelligence as quintessential for effective leadership (Kirkpatrick and Locke 1991). In recent decades, however, there has been a paradigm shift towards acknowledging the role of learned skills and adaptable traits, particularly mindfulness, in defining leadership effectiveness (Chiesa and Seretti 2010; Sedlmeier et al. 2012).

Integrating mindfulness into leadership theory has been a notable development in organizational psychology. Research has increasingly highlighted mindfulness as a predictor of enhanced self-mastery and transformational potential within organizational contexts (King and Haar 2017; Sauer and Kohls 2010). Thus, mindful leadership is characterized by enhanced leader-member exchange (LMX) quality, lower stress levels among employees and a heightened sense of interpersonal justice within teams (Reb et al. 2018). Studies by Reb, Narayanan, and Chaturvedi (2012) among others have also identified a correlation between mindful leadership styles and improved employee well-being, emotional satisfaction, and job performance. Notably, mindful leaders exhibit communication styles marked by open-mindedness, attentiveness, and non-impulsiveness, which are key drivers of employee satisfaction (Arendt Verdorfer and Kugler 2019). The cumulative evidence suggests that mindfulness in leadership enhances individual leader effectiveness and positively impacts

overall organizational performance and success. Additionally, mindful leadership styles have been found to reduce the likelihood of negative behaviors such as abusive supervision, further reinforcing the value of mindfulness in effective leadership (Liang et al. 2016).

This research recognizes mindfulness as a vital, learnable attribute that significantly influences leadership styles and outcomes. We will investigate how mindfulness interplays with key important topics evolving around the modern workplace, such as work engagement and burnout. This investigation is especially interesting in the context of changing work environments enabling new ways of working, including remote work.

4.2.3 Mindfulness: Enhancing Work Engagement and Mitigating Burnout

As conceptualized by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), work engagement refers to an employee's psychological commitment to their job, encompassing elements of involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, and energy. By instilling a sense of attentiveness and presence, employee's mindfulness enables them to approach their tasks with greater energy and enthusiasm, thereby fostering a more immersive and fulfilling work experience (Coo and Salanova 2017; Pattnaik and Jena 2020).

Numerous studies reinforce the positive influence of mindfulness on work engagement. Malinowski and Lim (2015) and Coo and Salanova (2017) explored that mindfulness leads to increased general well-being and happiness, which translates into enhanced work performance. Pattnaik and Jena (2020) extended this research to remote work environments, finding that mindfulness supports productivity and job satisfaction, even in virtual settings.

Conversely, burnout represents a critical challenge in the workplace, often characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and a disconnection from work and thus severely impacts health and job performance (Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel 2014). Mindfulness has emerged as a potent tool against the primary components of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Abenavoli et al. 2013; Del Carmen Pérez Fuentes et al. 2020; Taylor and

Millea 2016b). Studies by Abenavoli et al. (2013) and Del Carmen Pérez Fuentes et al. (2020) demonstrate mindfulness's effectiveness in enhancing resilience and reducing burnout symptoms. These findings suggest that mindfulness, as a personal resource, can augment existing workplace strategies to manage job demands and prevent burnout.

The interplay between mindfulness, work engagement, and burnout highlights its dual role in fostering positive work attitudes and mitigating negative ones. Hence, the evidence suggests that mindfulness can serve as a comprehensive tool, enhancing personal and professional well-being. It not only increases employees' capacity to engage deeply with their work but also equips them with the resilience to handle workplace stressors effectively. Consequently, the following hypotheses are formulated:

***H1:** Mindfulness is positively associated with work engagement (**H1a**) and negatively associated with burnout (**H1b**).*

While further investigating the details of this relationship, this study argues that comparably little research about potential mediators in this context exist. Malinowski and Lim (2015) investigated positive job-related affect and psychological capital (encompassing hope, optimism, resiliency, and self-efficacy) to mediate the relationship between mindfulness, work engagement, and well-being. Nevertheless, many open questions seem to remain, such as by Tuckey et al. (2018), who stress the need for further investigation concerning a causal direction of the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement. Further, Abenavoli et al. (2013) addressed a gap in the literature by examining how mindfulness affects burnout in the workplace.

This research aims to fill gaps in the literature by exploring further the role of two other specific mediators: the positive transfer of experiences from work to family life and the ability to control

boundaries between work and personal life. These factors are included due to their pivotal role in how mindfulness influences work engagement and burnout in professional contexts.

4.2.4 Positive Spillover Work-To-Family and Boundary Control

While “Home Office” was already gaining popularity before the COVID-19 pandemic, it has evidently received irreversible importance throughout it (Llave et al. 2022). Consequently, with more individuals working from home and transferring their professional into their private life terrains, it is now more important than ever, to pay close attention to employees’ abilities to set clear boundaries between these two spheres. Especially since studies indicate that the more such get blurred, the harder it gets for employees to switch off and take time to rest, which ultimately results in severe stress levels (Tavares 2017).

Positive spillover and boundary control emerge as key concepts in the modern workplace, especially in the context of increased teleworking. Positive spillover involves the beneficial transfer of skills, behaviors, and values from the professional sphere to the family life or vice versa, enhancing personal and familial well-being (Masuda et al. 2012). Boundary control, on the other hand, refers to an individual’s capacity to delineate and manage the boundaries between their professional and personal lives, crucial for maintaining work-life balance (Mellner, Aronsson, and Kecklund 2015).

We propose that mindfulness significantly influences both aspects. It aids in transferring positive work experiences to the home, reducing work-family conflict, and enhancing overall life satisfaction (Masuda et al. 2012). Mindfulness also fosters better boundary control, enabling individuals to be more deliberate in separating and managing their work and personal responsibilities (Mellner, Osika, and Niemi 2022), especially when being promoted by leaders through family supportive superior behavior (FSSB) (Straub, Beham, and Islam 2017). Furthermore, showing increased boundary control capabilities, correlates to less burnout (Demerouti 2015) and more work engagement (Straub, Beham, and Islam 2017). Similarly,

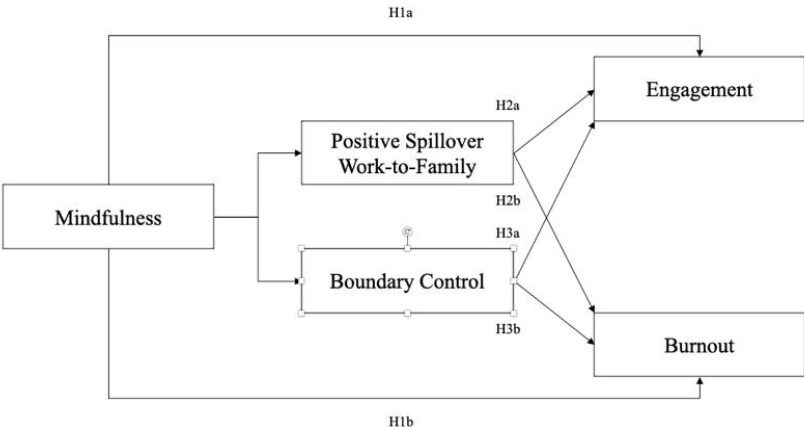
increased positive spillover from work-to-family, is related to increased well-being (Kinnunen et al. 2006) and more work engagement (Straub, Beham, and Islam 2017).

With this study, we want to provide insights into fostering resilient and thriving work environments, by further exploring the above correlations. In essence, we endeavor to unravel the intricate connections between mindfulness, leadership, work engagement, and burnout, by proposing the following hypotheses:

H2: Positive spillover from work-to-family mediates the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement (**H2a**), and between mindfulness and burnout (**H2b**) such that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with more positive spillover from work-to-family, which in turn is associated with more work engagement and less burnout.

H3: Boundary control mediates the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement (**H3a**), and between mindfulness and burnout (**H3b**) such that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with more boundary control, which in turn is associated with more work engagement and less burnout.

Figure 2 Mediation Model Study 3



4.3 Methodology

4.3.1 Sample and Procedure

The sample of respondents is a convenience sample, as participants from the researchers' personal network received an invitation to answer the survey online (via *Qualtrics*). Data was collected throughout October 2023, by sending three different surveys in a two day interval. Participants were asked to create a personal code that was used to anonymize the analytics process. Survey two and three were sent out individually, for the sole purpose of which also email addresses were temporarily tracked. The questionnaire included a brief introduction, explaining the survey process and a mandatory informed consent form to ensure confidentiality. No purpose nor background of the study was communicated.

In the first and second survey that were sent out (Time 1 & 2), 110 answers were collected, out of which 101 resulted in final answers (Time 3). Low drop-out rates were ensured due to repetitive reminders by the researcher, allowing for the time range between the three moments of time to deviate slightly.

The final sample included 95 participants. Out of these 95, around one fifth (17.9%) had been employed in their job for less than 1 year, two fifths from 1 to 2 years, approximately one third (29.5%) from 3 to 5 years, 10,5% from 5 to 15 years and the minority with 2,1% for more than 15 years. Other than that, around one fifth (21,1%) of the respondents indicated to be fully present in their jobs whilst the majority with three fifths (60%) indicated to work in a hybrid work set-up and lastly another fifth (18,9%) turned out to work fully remote. 2,1% of the respondents had a High School Degree, 36,8% a Bachelors, half of them (50,5%) a Masters, 4,2% a PhD and 6,3% indicated "other".

In terms of demographics, most respondents were female (61,1%) and the overall average age was 30.7 years (S.D.=4.4).

4.3.2 Measures

Mindfulness was measured via the Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS), developed by L. Cardaciotto (2005). The PHLMS is a 20-item questionnaire that assesses mindfulness as a two-dimensional product out of present moment awareness (10 items) and acceptance (10 items). Sample items for awareness assessment are: “I am aware of what thoughts are passing through my mind” and “When someone asks how I am feeling, I can identify my emotions easily”. Acceptance was evaluated through items such as: “I try to distract myself when I feel unpleasant emotions” or “I tell myself that I shouldn’t have certain thoughts”. Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). A final indicator of mindfulness, combining both acceptance and awareness was calculated by the cross product of the two subscales, with responses on a scale from 1 (never) to 25 (very often). Responses yielded good internal consistency at T1 (Cronbach’s alpha = .84 and .85, for Awareness and Acceptance respectively).

Positive spillover work-to-family included four items developed by Grzywacz and Marks (2000). Sample items are: “Having a great day at work is helping me to be a better company for my close ones when getting home” and “What I do at work is helping me to become a more interesting person at home / in my private life”. Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (almost always). Responses yielded acceptable internal consistency at T2 (Cronbach’s alpha = .71).

Boundary control was evaluated with four items from Kossek et al. (2012). Sample items are “I control and I am able to separate my work and family life” and “I am in control of setting clear boundaries between my work and personal life”. Participants responded on a five-point

Likert scale, ranging from 1 (don't agree at all) to 5 (fully agree). Responses yielded good internal consistency at T2 (Cronbach's alpha = .77).

Work engagement was measured with nine items from Schaufeli et al. (2006). Sample items are: "At work, I feel full of energy" and "I am proud of the work I do". Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (almost always). Responses yielded good internal consistency at T3 (Cronbach's alpha = .88).

Burnout was measured with ten items from Maslach et al. (1996). Sample items are: "I feel emotionally exhausted because of my job" and "I have doubts about the worth and utility of my job". Participants responded on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently). Responses yielded good internal consistency at T3 (Cronbach's alpha = .85).

4.3.3 Control Variables

In this study, we used gender, tenure in the current profession and intensity of remote work to control for potential confounding effects. Accordingly, gender was coded with 0 coded for male and 1 for female, and tenure was coded as an ordinal variable where 1 means "less than 1 year", 2 "between 1 and 2 years", 3 "between 3 and 5 years", 4 "between 5 and 15 years", and 5 "more than 15 years". The intensity of remote work was coded with 1 for "fully present", 2 for "hybrid" and 3 for "fully remote". The intensity of remote work has been found to be negatively correlated with mindfulness levels.

4.3.4 Statistical Analysis

To test the hypotheses, we used regression-based path analysis with PROCESS software, which is a computational tool for estimating and probing interactions and the indirect effects of mediation models (Hayes, 2012; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes 2007). We computed Model 4 in PROCESS using 5000 bootstrap samples, 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for all direct and indirect effects. Control variables were included in all analyses.

4.4 Results

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations Study 3

	Mean	S.D.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Gender (a)									
2. Tenure (b)			-0.36***						
3. Intensity of Remote Work (c)			0.27**	-0.30**					
4. Mindfulness	11.88	3.01	-0.01	0.11	-0.27***				
5. Positive Spillover	2.87	0.82	0.01*	0.05	-0.01	0.26*			
6. Boundary Control	3.33	0.85	-0.18	0.11	-0.09	0.39***	0.08		
7. Engagement	3.43	0.61	0.06	0.07	-0.02	0.32***	0.48***	0.24**	
8. Burnout	3.31	0.80	0.02	0.03	0.02	-0.27**	-0.33**	-0.28***	-0.60***

Note: Mindfulness is the cross product of Awareness and Acceptance

(a) Gender was coded with (0) for male and 1 for female; (b) tenure was coded as an ordinal variable where 1 means "less than 1 year", 2 "between 1 to 2 years", 3 "between 3 to 5 years", 5 "between 5 to 15 years", and 5 "more than 15 years"; and (c) intensity of remote work was coded as an ordinal variable where 1 means "fully present", 2 "hybrid model", and 3 "fully remote".

*** $p < .001$;

** $p < .01$;

* $p < .05$

4.4.1 Test of Mediation

Hypothesis 1 proposed that mindfulness was associated with more work engagement and less burnout, and Hypothesis 2 and 3 that these relationships were mediated by positive spillover work-to-family (H2a and H2b), and boundary control (H3a and H3b). Table 3 shows that mindfulness was positively associated with work engagement ($r=.32$, $p<.001$), and negatively associated with burnout ($r=-.27$, $p<.01$), thereby supporting H1a and H1b.

In addition, in the mediation analysis we found that mindfulness (Table 4) was no longer positively associated with work engagement ($B=.03$, $t=1.48$, $p=0.14$) nor negatively with burnout ($B=-.04$, $t=-1.33$, $p=.19$), but mindfulness was significantly and positively associated with positive spillover work-to-family ($B=.08$, $t=2.62$, $p<.01$) and with boundary control ($B=.11$, $t=3.84$, $p<.001$). Furthermore, positive spillover from work-to-family showed significant direct paths to work engagement and burnout (Table 4: $B=.32$, $t=4.57$, $p<.001$; and $B=-.26$, $t=-2.79$, $p<.01$) and boundary control showed significant direct paths to burnout but not

to work engagement (Table 4: $B=-.24$, $t=-2.48$, $p<.05$ and $B=.12$, $t=1.70$, $p=.09$, respectively). Indeed, we observed significant indirect effects of mindfulness across time through positive spillover on work engagement and on burnout (Table 4: indirect effect $=.02$; 95% CI from $.00$ to $.05$; and indirect effect $=-.02$; 95% CI from $-.05$ to $.00$, respectively), supporting Hypotheses H2a and H2b. Finally, we also observed an indirect effect of mindfulness across time through boundary control on burnout, but not on work engagement (Table 4: indirect effect $=-.03$; 95% CI from $-.05$ to $.00$; and indirect effect $=.01$; 95% CI from $-.01$ to $.03$, respectively), thereby supporting H3b but not H3a.

Table 2 Regression results for Mediation Model Study 3

Step 1 : DV	Positive Spillover Work-to-Family R2= .07				Boundary Control R2= .18 p<.001			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Constant	1.64	0.58	2.82	<.01	2.04	0.57	3.61	<.001
Mindfulness	0.08	0.03	2.62	<.01	0.11	0.03	3.84	<.001
Gender	0.00	0.19	0.00	1.00	-0.31	0.18	-1.71	0.09
Tenure at Work	0.04	0.09	0.44	0.66	0.02	0.09	0.27	0.79
Intensity of Remote Work	0.12	0.15	0.82	0.41	0.06	0.14	0.43	0.67
Step 2 : DV	Work Engagement: R2 = 0.30 p<.001				Burnout: R2 = .18 p<.001			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Constant	1.52	0.43	3.55	<.001	5.29	0.58	9.12	<.001
Mindfulness	0.03	0.02	1.48	0.14	-0.04	0.03	-1.33	0.19
Positive Spillover Work-to-Family	0.32	0.07	4.57	<.001	-0.26	0.09	-2.79	<.01
Boundary Control	0.12	0.07	1.7	0.09	-0.24	0.1	-2.48	<.05
Gender	0.12	0.13	0.98	0.33	0.04	0.17	0.23	0.82
Tenure at work	0.03	0.06	0.50	0.62	0.07	0.08	0.83	0.41
Intensity of Remote Work	0.03	0.10	0.35	0.73	-0.09	0.13	-0.66	0.51
Direct Effect of Mindfulness on DV	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI
	0.03	0.02	-0.01	0.07	-0.04	0.03	-0.10	0.02
Indirect Effect of Mindfulness through	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Effects (1)	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Positive Spillover Work-to-Family	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.05	-0.02	0.01	-0.05	0.00
Boundary Control	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.03	-0.03	0.01	-0.05	0.00

Note: N=94 (1)- Unstandardized Effect. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000 LL = Lower Limit; CI = Confidence Interval; UL = Upper Limit

4.5 Discussion

In the landscape of modern organizational behavior, mindfulness has emerged as a key element not only in the realm of leadership but also in shaping the broader spectrum of workplace dynamics. It significantly affects work engagement and burnout, drawing from insights gathered in research by Pattnaik and Jena (2020), Malinowski and Lim (2015), Taylor and Millier (2016) among many others. This synthesis of research provides a nuanced perspective

on the role of mindfulness in the evolution of leadership and its widespread implications for organizational culture.

The discourse around mindfulness extends to its intricate connection with concepts such as positive spillover and boundary control. Evidence suggests a robust link between mindfulness practices and these two constructs, which have far-reaching effects on employees' professional and personal lives. Positive spillover reflects the beneficial effects of work experiences on personal life, while boundary control pertains to managing the distinction between work and private spheres. These factors collectively influence work engagement and susceptibility to burnout.

The examination of existing literature reveals that while the positive influence of mindfulness on work engagement and burnout is acknowledged, there is a lack of research on the mediating mechanisms behind these effects. This gap in the literature has led to the hypothesis that the affirmative outcomes of mindfulness on work engagement and burnout may indeed be mediated by the individual's ability to experience positive spillover from work to home and to control their work-life boundaries.

In this study, we found that higher levels of mindfulness contribute to an increased capacity for employees to engage deeply with their work: According to research, it's the essence of mindfulness in enhancing attention, presence, and a non-judgmental attitude that is likely to contribute to this heightened work engagement (Taylor and Millear 2016b). These findings align with the JD-R model of Bakker and Demerouti (2007), suggesting that mindfulness acts as a valuable personal resource, bolstering employee work engagement amidst various job demands.

Additionally, through its capacity to reduce negative emotions and enhance resilience, mindfulness lessens symptoms of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion, and therefore emerges as a potent countermeasure to this phenomenon. Several studies underline the effect of

mindfulness interventions to effectively mitigate its' components by enhancing resilience (Del Carmen Pérez Fuentes et al. 2020; Taylor and Milliar 2016b; Sanyal 2019). Also, these studies highlight the role of mindfulness in managing job demands, aligning with the JD-R model.

Furthermore, we found that positive spillover from work-to-family mediates the aforementioned relationships. We argue that mindfulness enhances the beneficial transfer of skills, behaviors, and attitudes by allowing individuals to carry over the calmness, focus, and that it balances perspective cultivated at work into their personal lives. This spillover can reinforce the benefits of mindfulness, leading to reduced burnout by fostering a healthier work-life balance and increased work engagement by translating into higher satisfaction and well-being in both spheres.

Finally, we also found boundary control to mediate the relationship between mindfulness and burnout, which we see explained by its power to prevent work stress from encroaching on personal time and vice versa. Setting clear boundaries between one's work and private life therefore has shown to be a crucial tool in today's work environments, especially in context with the changing telework set-ups, which are blurring such boundaries. Contrary to our expectations, boundary control did not mediate higher work engagement levels. This finding suggests that while boundary control is vital for reducing burnout, it does not have a similar mediating effect on enhancing work engagement. This indicates engagement at work to be more directly influenced by factors within the work environment itself, such as the nature of the job, workplace culture, and intrinsic motivation, rather than how well one separates work from personal life. Considering the findings of Straub et al. (2019) and Chen, Powell, and Greenhaus (2009b), who highlight the importance of boundary control preferences concerning its impact on work engagement, sheds light on another potential explanation of this finding of our study. According to the authors, it is critical to consider individual segmentation needs in defining the

right level of boundary setting distinctively – a nuance that was not covered by the scaling model we used for our survey.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Implications

Our joint research project followed a mixed-method approach consisting of one qualitative (Study 1) and two quantitative studies (Studies 2 and 3). Our research aimed to unravel the challenges of the modern work environment and its implications for traditional leader-follower relationships as well as for personal leadership. In detail, our studies analyzed self-leadership (Study 2) and mindfulness (Study 3) as two specific resources to mitigate the rising challenges. The challenges have been defined in our qualitative research (Study 1), which provided the basis for our quantitative analyses.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a huge catalyst for changes which immensely affected work through digitalization and leadership transformations. Through the acceleration in digitalization, remote work has become the new normal and employees are asking for more flexibility and a more favorable work-life balance. This trend has been acknowledged in our quantitative research as we controlled for remote work. Consequently, all our results remain valid in today's dynamic work environment and in all kinds of remote, hybrid or fully present settings. Furthermore, with changing demographics, values, and new work settings, leader experienced an increased demand for purpose-driven work and reported that employees are actively trying to find fulfillment in their professional life. This trend deeply impacts leadership, as professional growth, meaning of work, and psychological empowerment gain more importance.

Our findings highlighted the importance of resources as key predictors and mediators in work engagement processes and as prevention for burnout. Our research offers expansions to the

COR theory (Hobfoll 1989) as well as the JD-R model (Bakker and Demerouti 2007) as it explores new resources and uncovers the working mechanisms between resources, as well as resource-well-being relations.

In line with previous research (Malinowski and Lim 2015; Breevaart, Bakker, and Demerouti 2014), our research found that mindfulness and self-leadership are relevant resources to foster work engagement among employees. Based on the COR theory and the JD-R model, self-leadership and mindfulness display two proactive approaches to increased work engagement, as they build on resource gain spirals and actively prepare employees for the changing work environment. Work engagement is a key factor of well-being (Demerouti et al. 2001), which is not only beneficial for employees, but also helps employers to attract and retain talents (Attridge 2009) and overcome challenges.

In addition to existing literature, the working mechanisms have been further explored by us, proving that positive spillover from work-to-family mediates the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement, and that meaning of work and psychological empowerment mediate the relationship between self-leadership and work engagement. Furthermore, mindfulness is also linked to lower levels of burnout through positive spillover from work-to-family. These mediating models have been tested in a three-time-lagged survey which indicates that the direct, and mediating effects persist over time.

Contrary to our assumptions and previous research, boundary control did not have a significant mediating effect on the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement. The reason for this insignificant effect might be, that work engagement is more strongly influenced by other factors that are connected to mindfulness or factors within the perceived work environment (e.g., meaning of work and psychological empowerment). Additionally, boundary control is highly influenced by an individual's perception of segmentation needs (Straub et. al 2019, Chen, Powell, and Greenhaus 2009b). Boundary control significantly mediated the relationship

between mindfulness and burnout, indicating that the prominence of boundary control contributes to overall well-being. The analysis of our mediators provides meaningful theoretical implications, as it gives insights into the processes resulting in work engagement. Additionally, mediators such as meaning of work and psychological empowerment are extremely relevant to the background of our qualitative study, since they are important tools to leverage a feeling of purpose and fulfilment among employees (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, and McKee 2007). The importance of these mediators becomes evident, as they fully mediate the relationship between self-leadership and work engagement, presenting that work engagement is highly dependent on these factors.

The mediating effect of boundary control closely relates to our qualitative findings, as well as theoretical sources stating that remote work blurs the lines between work and life and boundary control can be a helpful contribution to managing work-life balance. Mindfulness as a concept is relevant, as it is a suitable practice for leaders to explore their role and impact, while maintaining high levels of work engagement themselves.

Exploring these changes and adaptations in post-pandemic times through a holistic approach, including qualitative as well as quantitative research, offers great theoretical implications and starting points.

5.2 Practical Implications for Leaders

The findings of our studies highlight the compelling demand for leaders and workplaces to acknowledge and adapt to changing work environments and therefore employee needs. Mindfulness and self-leadership are crucial tools – both for leaders, but also for employees to be better equipped for modern work requirements.

It is critical for leaders to be adaptable to rapid changes, particularly concerning the shift towards remote and hybrid working models, as without continuous learning and development,

leaders are not likely to succeed effectively in the long term. This implies that leaders have to stay on top of technological advancements to fully understand the nuances of managing remote teams. In this context, self-leadership arises as a relevant concept to address challenges. But also, other evolving leadership skills, such as mindfulness, show to develop more resilient and reflective leaders. Researchers pivot on the importance of such incorporation to take place as a repeated practice and integration across curriculum content for effectiveness, which is why we argue for it to not only become a relevant part of every management education, but also of daily work routine in general.

In leadership trainings, leaders should likewise get taught to act as coaches, supporting their team through challenges and opportunities, and focusing on guiding rather than on commanding (i.e., coaching mindset). This empowering and supportive leadership style is an essential prerequisite for inclusive leader-employee relationships that promotes individual decision-making.

Leadership trainings should crunch upon the importance of an individualized approach: Leaders need to recognize the diverse needs of their employees and adapt their style to provide the right balance of guidance, support, and autonomy to each individual. To ensure that both are addressed effectively, a balance between addressing individual employee needs and the collective goals of the team and the company is essential.

Since we found employee satisfaction to be linked to the communication style (attention, open attitude, and calmness) of leaders, we strongly suggest empathetic communication to be a mandatory part of any leadership development program. That includes acknowledging and addressing mental workloads of employees and therefore creating a work environment that supports mental health and self-care (i.e., well-being).

Another relevant concept that warrants attention in workplaces and should be part of leadership trainings is self-leadership. Self-leadership does not only enhance well-being and work

engagement, but also creates a feeling of meaning of work and psychological empowerment among employees, which fosters employee loyalty to a company. Individuals are seeking purpose, and self-leadership serves as a tool to empower them to find meaning in their tasks. By creating environments that nurture self-leadership skills, trusting your employees, granting them autonomy, and fostering a culture of experimentation, leaders can enhance work engagement, leading to improved well-being, which in turn boosts productivity, sparks innovation, and strengthens commitment to the organization. Furthermore, self-leadership is a relevant tool for all employees (i.e., leaders and followers) to tackle challenges (e.g., remote work) and goes beyond leader-follower relationships. Consequently, self-leadership practices should be an essential part of trainings for all employees.

We suggest making it a fundamental onboarding step for employees, to create a common ground for a boundary set-up with their employer that reflects the employee's needs, since this will support positive spillover from work-to-family, decrease work-to-family conflict, and increase work engagement. Striving for congruence between employee's preferences and possibilities of their workplace, is a crucial part of FSSB (family supportive superior behavior): a powerful tool to manage work-life balance in organizational settings.

Taking the employees' work-life balance under consideration goes hand in hand with the above. A tool shown to be beneficial in this context, are MBIs. Such show significant positive impacts: on employees' psychological health and well-being, productivity, performance, overall organizational success but also on work engagement and burnout. Research indicates that MBIs act as mediators in this context, as they improve self-awareness, stress management, and reflective practices among participants: vital tools for leaders to succeed in their roles. Leaders should partake in such interventions and impose them on their employees.

Adding to that, leaders should focus on the personal and professional growth of their employees. This is due to the fact that employees are less motivated by solely monetary compensation and

regard opportunities to learn, develop and engage in meaningful activities as increasingly important. Leaders must create environments that foster self-leadership skills, trust their employees, and give them autonomy to create environments for experimentation and personal development.

Finally, looking at the big picture that our studies create, fostering team spirit, and ensuring that employees feel like valued team members, part of a common mission, is crucial to increase work engagement. One result of our study (3) has implied factors within the work environment such as workplace culture and intrinsic motivation to be key in increasing work engagement. Findings of another one of our studies (2) shows that self-leadership is a big lever as it cultivates a sense of belonging and increases the meaning of work, which in turn increases work engagement. Self-leadership and mindfulness are useful strategies to support employees and could be a tool to increase trust in leader-follower relationships, as leaders can trust in the positive outcomes related to both strategies. Consequently, leaders should foster self-leadership and mindfulness among employees to drive not only their work engagement but ultimately the business success of their organizations.

5.3 Limitations & Future Research

In examining the collective findings of our three studies, several limitations can be identified. These limitations belong to aspects such as sample size and diversity, geographical constraints, industry representation, methodological constraints, and study design, each contributing to the overall understanding of the generalizability and applicability of the research outcomes.

The sample size and lack of diversity describes the first limitation, as the qualitative study includes twelve in-depth interviews and the quantitative studies 92 and 95 participants each. The limited sample size and specific demographics potentially restrict the broader applicability of the findings and raise concerns about the representativeness of our findings for the wider

workforce. Particularly in the first study, most of the participants were female, which may have impacted the results.

A notable limitation across the studies is the geographical concentration of participants. The majority of the study participants were German and worked for German companies, presenting a potential limitation in the applicability of the findings to other cultural and geographic contexts. Additionally, the industry representation can be classified as another potential limitation. While participants within the first study came from diverse industries, it is unclear whether all relevant sectors, particularly those in which leadership dynamics could significantly vary, were included. This concern is also reflected in the second and third study, where we were confronted with a lack of clarity regarding the representation of different industries which might affect the relevance of the findings to different work environments.

Across the studies, methodological issues present challenges. The first study relies on semi-structured interviews which may introduce biases such as self-reporting bias and the interpretation of the researcher. The second and third study, utilizing self-reported data, acknowledge the potential for biases like social desirability or inaccuracies in self-assessment. Subsequently, there is a common method bias in the second and third study, as the same response method (survey) was used for all variables. Moreover, in these two studies, the time difference between the surveys was not consistent, as some participants needed to be reminded several times to fill out the follow-up surveys.

In summary, while these studies provide valuable insights, they also have limitations that underscore the need for more comprehensive, diverse, and longitudinal research to improve the generalizability and applicability of findings in the dynamic areas of leadership, self-leadership and mindfulness.

The investigation of leadership, self-leadership, and mindfulness in the workplace holds promising possibilities for future studies in current academic discourse.

A crucial area for future research lies in understanding how leadership styles and challenges, including self-leadership and mindfulness, vary across different cultural contexts and industries, especially those undergoing significant transformations. Hence, to establish the universality of the results, it is suggested to conduct similar studies in different cultural and geographical contexts.

Moreover, exploring the long-term effects of remote and hybrid work models is also paramount. This includes examining how these work arrangements influence leadership practices, work engagement, and the adoption and effectiveness of mindfulness in the workplace. The interplay between these factors in different work settings, such as remote versus on-site environments, offers a rich area for investigation. In this context, it might be plausible to study how advancements in technology and digitalization affect self-leadership, work engagement and mindfulness in various work settings. Since the advent of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and automation, as well as the increasing use of digital technology, presents new challenges and opportunities, research should focus on how these technologies impact leadership roles, self-leadership practices, and the overall well-being of employees in diverse work environments in a more detailed manner.

As the variables were tested separately, there is great potential to combine them to investigate their relationship. By studying these variables conjointly, researchers could gain a more profound understanding of how self-leadership and mindfulness interact and impact each other. This approach could uncover nuanced aspects of how individuals can simultaneously use self-leadership skills and mindfulness techniques to enhance their personal and professional development. Furthermore, the integration of these findings with wider leadership concepts offers a chance to examine the overall significance of these specific practices within leadership frameworks. In this way, we can better understand their impact on critical leadership outcomes such as decision making, work engagement, and organizational culture. It could provide

valuable insights into the ability of leaders to navigate the complexities of modern work environments, manage stress, and maintain high levels of performance through these practices. This may result in the enhancement of leadership models that are more sophisticated, combining personal well-being and self-management principles into effective organizational leadership practices.

6. Conclusion

Combining the themes of leadership adaptations, self-leadership, and mindfulness, we observe a nuanced framework for navigating the complexities of modern work environments. The rise of remote working has revolutionized traditional work structures, bringing both opportunities and challenges. This paradigm shift requires a re-evaluation of leadership strategies, where understanding and addressing the diverse needs of a multi-generational workforce is crucial. A key element is the development of an empathetic, agile leadership style that fosters a culture of inclusivity and adaptability. Essentially, integrating self-leadership and mindfulness practices enhances resources, sense of empowerment and work engagement as well as emotional regulation and resilience, which are crucial for productivity and personal growth in decentralized work environments. In addition, effective leaders must navigate the nuances of remote work environments and promote a balance between autonomy and connectivity to ensure both individual well-being and organizational effectiveness. This work project thus presents a future leadership journey for an increasingly digital and diverse work landscape.

7. References

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