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Donaldson-Feilder, E. and Lewis, Rachel and Yarker, Jo and Whiley, Lilith (2022) Interpersonal mindfulness in leadership development: a Delphi study. *Journal of Management Education* 46 (5), pp. 816-852. ISSN 1052-5629.

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**Interpersonal Mindfulness in Leadership Development: A Delphi Study****Abstract**

Mindfulness is increasingly being used within leadership development to enhance managers' wellbeing and leadership capability. Given the relational nature of leadership, we posit that an interpersonal form of mindfulness has the potential to offer benefits over and above those provided by personal or internal mindfulness. We therefore chose a Delphi research methodology to consult and achieve consensus among expert practitioners, exploring if and how interpersonal mindfulness, in the specific form of the Interpersonal Mindfulness Program (IMP), can contribute to leadership development. Our aims were, firstly, to identify the necessary components of an IMP-based leadership development program and, secondly, to create guidelines for practitioners. Through four phases of data-gathering and feedback, we achieved consensus between 39 experts on guidelines for how to develop a leadership development program based on the IMP, contextual factors that will act as facilitators or barriers, and selection and screening of participants. The intention is that the resulting guidelines will support the implementation of coherent, consistent IMP-based leadership development, sensitive both to its origins and to the context.

## INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness forms part of a growing number of psycho-educational programs (Conversano et al., 2020) and is commonly defined as “the awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose in the present moment and non-judgementally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 34). Systematic reviews of the existing literature (e.g., Jamieson & Tuckey, 2017; Lomas et al., 2017) indicate that mindfulness is increasingly used in workplace contexts, with benefits for employee health and wellbeing. Furthermore, mindfulness is showing promising signs in leadership development, not only for improving participants’ health and wellbeing, but also for enhancing their leadership capability (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2018); and leader mindfulness has been linked to improved employee wellbeing (Pinck & Sonnetag, 2018; Reb et al., 2014).

Mindfulness has been traditionally perceived as an individual characteristic, but recent research and theory has begun to explore the concept of interpersonal mindfulness, meaning bringing mindful awareness directly into interactions and relationships with other people (e.g., Frank et al., 2016; Molloy Elreda et al., 2019). While much of the research into interpersonal mindfulness thus far has focused on the construct itself (e.g., Pratscher et al., 2018; Pratscher et al., 2019) and/or the benefits of personal or internal mindfulness practices for relational outcomes (e.g., Bihari & Mullan, 2014), there is an emerging interest in developmental approaches that teach mindfulness practices *within* interpersonal interactions (e.g., Gannon et al., 2017; Kok & Singer, 2017). Given the interpersonal nature of leadership, developing managers’ interpersonal mindfulness has even greater potential to enhance their leadership capability than mindfulness-based interventions that focus purely on individual, personal mindfulness.

Outside of the workplace, a coherent and consistent protocol has been established for developing interpersonal mindfulness, which is referred to as the Interpersonal Mindfulness

Program (IMP, Bartels-Velhuis et al., 2020). However, research had not previously provided evidence on which to base the adaptation of the IMP to leadership development. The mindfulness interventions applied in leadership development have been extremely varied, with little overlap or consensus on what to use when, and limited, if any, evidence for how and why existing interventions should be adapted to the leadership development context (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2018).

The purpose of our research is to develop evidence-based guidelines for effectively applying IMP interventions in leadership development. Our study contributes in at least three ways. Firstly, we identify the necessary components a for leadership development based on the IMP. We take a systematic research approach to determine which components of the IMP should be retained, and propose adaptations to design an IMP suitable for leadership development. Secondly, we develop evidence-based guidelines to help practitioners and researchers create and design leadership development programs based on the IMP. Our evidence and results are established by consulting and achieving consensus between experts in interpersonal mindfulness and leadership development. Thirdly, we suggest recommendations for the implementation of IMP-based leadership development interventions to help practitioners and researchers in considering participants' organisational context and how best to select participants.

In this paper, we provide an overview of the existing literature that underpins the use of mindfulness interventions in leadership development, the expansion of mindfulness into interpersonal dimensions, and the potential offered by using interpersonal mindfulness within leadership development. We then set out the rationale for our research, including the need for a coherent, consistent approach to applying interpersonal mindfulness in leadership development, what the IMP is, and the potential benefits of creating IMP-based leadership development programs. Next, we set out the methodology used for our study and the results it

yielded. Finally, we provide our concluding thoughts on the implications of our research for practice and future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Mindfulness in Leadership Development**

A core component of leadership is influence over, and responsibility for, people within and outside the organisation (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Leadership development aims to advance leadership capacity by training managers, or those aspiring to leadership positions, to build their capability to influence and take responsibility for other people. The purpose of mindfulness-based leadership development is to use mindfulness to develop leadership capabilities, making it distinct from more generic workplace mindfulness training that focuses on general health and wellbeing outcomes (e.g., Reitz et al., 2016).

Measures of mindfulness, such as the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006), distinguish different characteristics of mindfulness; for example, non-reactivity to inner experience; observing/noticing/attending to sensations, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; acting with awareness; describing or labelling experience; and non-judging of experience. These characteristics of mindfulness could be of benefit for leadership capacity in a number of ways. For instance, becoming more “non-reactive” might be expected to allow better emotion regulation (Hulsheger et al., 2013), thereby enhancing the ability to manage difficult leadership situations in the face of the emotions they arouse. Similarly, acting with awareness might help managers avoid getting caught in unhelpful habitual patterns and allow them to respond to leadership challenges in a more resourceful and conscious way (Hunter & Chaskalson, 2013). Reb et al. (2015) argue that aspects of mindfulness such as present-moment attention, intentionality, and awareness could enhance managers’ capacity to adopt the leadership styles defined in models of Authentic Leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003),

Charismatic Leadership (Conger, 1989), and Servant Leadership (Liden et al., 2008).

Applying mindfulness training to leadership development is therefore based on the premise that teaching managers to practise mindfulness will support them to be less reactive and better able to avoid unhelpful cognitive patterns, leading to positive changes in behaviour when taking responsibility for and interacting with people.

While the link between leadership and mindfulness has been proposed by a number of authors (e.g., Hunter & Chaskalson, 2013; Reb et al., 2015), the application of mindfulness interventions in leadership development is still a relatively new and emerging area. A small body of research has begun to explore the potential that bringing mindfulness into leadership development might offer. A recent systematic review by Donaldson-Feilder et al. (2018) concluded that mindfulness interventions can not only improve managers' wellbeing and resilience (e.g., Brendel et al., 2016; Reitz et al., 2016), but also support the development of leadership capabilities. For example, improvements were noted in Authentic Leadership (Baron, 2016; Wasylkiw et al., 2015) and leadership-related capacities, such as regulatory focus (Brendel et al., 2016), transformational learning (Keuchler & Stedham, in press), agility in complexity (Reitz et al., 2016), and social consciousness (Schneider et al., 2010). While the research thus far is limited, the evidence is promising that such interventions may provide beneficial outcomes for manager participants and improve their leadership capabilities (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2018).

### **Interpersonal Mindfulness in Leadership Development**

Mindfulness mostly takes the form of solitary practices, and much of the research to date has focused on the personal or internal impact of engaging in them; in other words, the impact on the individual, their attention, intention, emotion regulation, health, and wellbeing. However, as mentioned in the introduction, there is increasing interest in how mindfulness

may affect interpersonal variables (Pratscher et al., 2018). Khoury's (2018) call for greater consideration of interpersonal dimensions in conceptualising and measuring mindfulness includes suggestions to consider the awareness of external stimuli (including social interactions) as part of mindful awareness, and to explore the influence of that awareness on interpersonal interactions. Meanwhile, Yu and Zellmer-Bruhn (2018) introduced the concept of "team mindfulness," which they define as a shared belief among team members that their interactions are characterised by awareness and attention to present events, together with non-judgemental processing of within-team experiences.

In line with this move towards considering the interpersonal impact and dimensions of mindfulness, over the last decade the term "interpersonal mindfulness" has started to appear in the literature, referring to the capacity to be mindful during interpersonal interactions. For example, Molloy Elreda et al. (2019) and Duncan et al. (2009) have identified the value of mindfulness for the relational aspects of teaching and parenting. Meanwhile, Pratscher and colleagues have recently developed an Interpersonal Mindfulness Scale, which they explored initially in the context of friendship (Pratscher et al. 2018) and subsequently in a more extensive process of scale development and construct validation (Pratscher et al., 2019). To frame their scale development, Pratscher et al. (2019) conceptualise interpersonal mindfulness as being mindful during interpersonal interactions and paying attention in the present moment while with another person, including being aware of internal and external experiences. Their Interpersonal Mindfulness Scale includes four sub-scales: presence, awareness of self and others, non-judgemental acceptance, and non-reactivity.

Given the interpersonal nature of leadership, interpersonal mindfulness may offer managers benefits over and above those offered by personal or internal mindfulness. Relationships in the workplace are vital for health, wellbeing, and performance at both an individual and an organisational level (Dutton & Ragins, 2017). For managers, relationships

are central to healthy, effective leadership and, increasingly, leadership models focus on the relational aspects of their role and capability (Lewis & Donaldson-Feilder, 2012). The significance of relationships for leadership suggests that, while developing managers' personal or internal mindfulness may provide benefits for leadership capability (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2018), developing interpersonal mindfulness is likely to have even greater relevance and value.

The emerging interest in developmental approaches that teach mindfulness practices *within* interpersonal interactions (e.g., Gannon et al., 2017; Kok & Singer, 2017) points to an opportunity to develop interpersonal mindfulness interventions for leadership development. This could offer managers a mindfulness intervention that focuses directly on the relational context central to their leadership role, for example, taking responsibility for millennial employees and multi-generational workforces, ensuring greater inclusivity of minority groups, engaging with stakeholders inside and outside their organisation, and so forth. Mindfulness learnt within a relational frame has the potential to enhance managers' awareness during interpersonal interactions (e.g., recognition of assumptions during performance appraisals), and thereby improve their relational behavioural capacity in managing those who work for them (e.g., the capability to manage different people in ways that are sensitive and appropriate).

## **RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY: ADAPTING THE IMP FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Currently, a wide range of mindfulness interventions are being applied in leadership development research, with little consensus of what to use when, making the comparative value of different interventions and their appropriateness for the leadership development context difficult to assess (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2018). For example, in some



mindfulness-based leadership development research interventions, mindfulness is taught one-to-one, while in others group formats are used. Some studies examine the effect of intensive retreats, others that of weekly sessions. Some of the interventions studied focus on leadership as the dominant theme, with mindfulness as a minor aspect, others are mainly mindfulness interventions, with brief leadership-focused elements (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2018). The approach to adapting mindfulness practices to the leadership development context has also varied and is rarely fully described. This makes it hard to establish the fidelity to the original practices on which they are based, and the appropriateness of using these practices in the work-related contexts they aim to address. Hence, it is difficult for practitioners to use research findings to guide them in what to do in practice. Our evidence-based framework was established to resolve this situation by providing a guide for practitioners and researchers to adapt the IMP to incorporate interpersonal mindfulness in leadership development.

### **The Interpersonal Mindfulness Program (IMP): Based on Insight Dialogue**

The IMP is a program based on the Buddhist practice called Insight Dialogue (ID), developed by Gregory Kramer (2007), which teaches participants a relational form of meditation (Kramer et al., 2008). Meditation can be defined as “a family of complex emotional and attentional regulatory training regimes” (Lutz et al., 2008, p. 163). It is used to refer to a broad variety of techniques, including some that focus attention on a chosen object (such as the sensations of breathing or a mantra) and others that involve non-reactive, open monitoring of the content of experience from moment to moment.

In the case of ID, the meditation includes speaking and listening as meditative activities, aiming to develop mindfulness and other meditative qualities (such investigation, tranquillity, and concentration) in the midst of interpersonal interaction, and to generate insight through mediative dialogue. ID practice applies six meditational guidelines: Pause,

Relax, Open, Attune to emergence, Listen deeply, and Speak the truth (Kramer, 2007; Kramer, unpublished, 2018). Those practising ID meditate in dyads (or groups), using these guidelines to support meditation in dialogue, and the meditators are provided with a contemplation topic or question that is designed not only to provide a focus for their speaking and listening, but also to help them explore fundamental aspects of being human and being in relationship with other human beings. For example, meditators might be invited to contemplate the roles they play in their lives and what lies beneath them, or to share experiences of the challenge of constant change and impermanence, or the delight of feeling generosity from or to another. By combining meditating in relationship with contemplation of existential issues, ID offers the opportunity for wisdom, insight and discernment/understanding to arise experientially, observed and shared in a mindful, interpersonal setting. The combination of meditative speaking and listening with the exploration of potentially insight-providing topics means that ID rests on and aims to develop three types of factors: (a) mindfulness/awareness factors; (b) relationship/interpersonal factors; and (c) wisdom/insight factors (Kramer, unpublished, 2018).

The IMP uses all the elements of ID practice (the six guidelines, meditating in dyads or small groups, having a contemplation topic to focus the meditative speaking and listening, and the three types of factors described above) but is designed for use in secular (non-Buddhist) settings. It mirrors other mainstream mindfulness-based interventions by having an eight-week structure, with weekly sessions and specified “home practice” for participants to engage in between the weekly meetings. The program is clearly defined through a teachers’ handbook and curriculum (Hicks, Meleo-Meyer, & Kramer, 2015-2019) and great care has been taken to ensure its fidelity to the ID practice on which it is based, both through the design of the program and through the training and accreditation of those who teach it (“IMP teachers”). In its current form, the IMP is designed to support individual, personal

development in order to improve the relational awareness and capability of the individual participants. However, because it provides a coherent, consistent program that teaches an interpersonal mindfulness practice and has already been adapted to mainstream use, it is the ideal candidate to form the basis for developing interpersonal mindfulness as part of leadership development.

As is the nature of workplace mindfulness interventions, the IMP's development from the Buddhist practice of ID means that it draws on a spiritually-based approach. In these situations, it is vital to apply sound ethics and great sensitivity to assure that any interventions developed have integrity with their origins and are relevant to settings in which they are applied, as was done for the IMP (Kramer et al., 2008). Thus, building on the IMP, our evidence-based framework provides a guide for interpersonal mindfulness-based leadership development that is not only coherent and well-defined, but is also sensitive both to the origins from which it is drawn and the context in which it is applied.

## **METHOD**

To understand how the IMP could best be adapted to leadership development, and build a sound evidence-base, we needed to gather the views of a range of people with expertise in both IMP/ID and leadership development. We decided that a Delphi research method (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963) was the appropriate research process to achieve our aims. Delphi studies aim to collect and distil informed judgements from a group of experts on issues that are largely unexplored, difficult to define, context and expertise specific, and/or future oriented (Ziglio, 1996). Although it is most commonly used in health research, the Delphi method has been modified in a range of ways and used in diverse fields, for example exploring the components of leadership needed for health system redesign (Fletcher & Marchildon, 2014), determining the core curriculum for a Master's program in genetic

counselling (Skirton et al., 2013), and exploring urban and regional planning options (Linstone & Turoff, 2002).

Evidence suggests that the success of interventions such as leadership development will depend not only on the intervention methodology, but also on the context in which it takes place and on the individuals who participate (Lewis et al., 2014). To address this, we drew on Nielsen and Randall's (2013) model to shape our data gathering around three areas: development of an IMP-based leadership development program, contextual factors that will act as facilitators or barriers, and selection and screening of participants.

## **Participants**

We sought participants through a range of methods, including delegate lists from IMP teacher training; a call for interest at an IMP teacher training event and at an ID retreat; a posting on the online forum for IMP teachers; asking ID and IMP teachers for recommendations; and delegate lists for mindfulness in the workplace and mindful leadership teacher training events. To qualify as “experts” and be included in this study all participants had to self-identify as being IMP/ID teachers with an understanding of workplace settings and/or teachers of mindfulness or leadership development in the workplace setting with an understanding of the IMP/ID.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, 46 people from 11 countries worldwide were identified as experts with an understanding both of the IMP/ID and of workplace/leadership development. Following the approach adopted in Delphi studies where there is no prior research in the field but there is practitioner expertise to be drawn upon (e.g., Skirton et al., 2013; Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009), we started our study with a sub-group of participants for in-depth exploration,

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<sup>1</sup> The term “teacher” is used here to indicate those who have a mindfulness/IMP/ID teaching qualification.

broadened the enquiry out to the whole expert population for additional information and consensus, and then returned to the initial sub-group for decisions on remaining areas of non-agreement. In total, the sample included 39 experts, drawn from 10 countries worldwide, who participated in various phases of the study. Table 1 provides notes on the sample for each phase of the Delphi study, Table 2 shows participants' demographics and expertise.

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INSERT TABLES 1 AND 2 HERE  
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### **Phases of the Research**

A Delphi study usually consists of a number of phases, using an iterative process of questioning and feedback on responses to create a shared understanding among participants, though there are no strict criteria for the way this is organised (Skirton et al., 2013). It allows the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches (Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009). We chose a four-phase mixed-methods approach, including two qualitative and two quantitative phases, similar to the one used by Skirton et al. (2013), whose study defined a curriculum for training specialist health professionals. As detailed below, phase 1 was designed to generate an initial understanding of the components of the IMP that need to be retained in IMP-based leadership development and the ways in which the program needs to be adapted to create a draft of guidelines for practitioners and researchers who want to offer IMP-based leadership development. The focus of the subsequent three phases was then to revise, refine, and reach consensus on the guidelines.

Figure 1 provides details of the four phases of the research, including the aim, content, and data involved in each phase. The following is a brief outline of the purpose and process for each phase.

The purpose of Phase 1 was to generate an initial draft of guidelines for adapting the IMP to leadership development, by conducting semi-structured interviews with 8 participants. The interviews were structured around the three areas proposed by the Nielsen and Randell (2013) model mentioned above; the discussion guide used is provided in Appendix 1. The interviews were conducted by video-conference, and data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of transcripts, followed by content analysis (Miles et al., 2014) to quantify the emergent themes and establish the salient points from which to create a manageable set of survey questions for Phase 2.

The purpose of Phases 2 and 3 was to draw in the expertise of a broader group of experts, using online survey questionnaires to gather their views on the draft guidelines created in Phase 1. The phase 2 survey questionnaire provided a combination of quantitative and qualitative response options designed to get feedback on the importance of and participants' agreement with different elements of the draft guidelines; it also sought comments on and additions to the text. Results from phase 2 were used to amend the guidelines, then phase 3 tested participants' agreement with these amendments, using a survey questionnaire that asked mainly for quantitative responses, but also provided the option for qualitative comments. The results of phase 3 were used to further amend the draft guidelines and identify where agreement had not yet been reached, which formed the basis for the workshop discussion in phase 4. For both phase 2 and phase 3 surveys, quantitative data was subjected to frequency and descriptive analysis; and qualitative data to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The purpose of Phase 4 was to resolve the remaining areas of non-agreement on the revised guidelines through a semi-structured workshop conducted by video-conference. The phase 1 participants were invited to participate in this final phase (6 out of the 8 participated) and the workshop data was used to make final changes to the text of the guidelines.

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INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE  
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## Results

The result of the study is an evidenced-based set of guidelines on adapting the IMP for leadership development, including contextual and participant factors that will affect its effectiveness. The final version of the guidelines generated by the research is provided in Tables 3, 4 and 5. The broad content of each of these tables is outlined below, setting out the key messages from each, followed by an explanation of how they developed over the phases of the research.

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INSERT TABLES 3, 4 AND 5 HERE  
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Table 3 sets out guidelines on developing an IMP-based leadership development intervention. The data suggested that researchers and practitioners need to consider eleven areas as they adapt the IMP to a leadership development context. The guidelines detail the agreed upon “essential” and “helpful” characteristics within each area. Decisions within each area need to align with the decisions in the other areas to ensure continuity. The eleven areas can be grouped into key messages as follows:

- ***Ensure that the program is true to its origins:*** the initial three areas – “aims and purpose”, “ingredients of the IMP/ID that must be included”, and “atmosphere of the program” – point to the elements that are core to the integrity of the IMP/ID. For example, bringing the values of ID/the IMP, not just the practice, including the ID

guidelines and contemplation topics, and establishing safety for participants to build trust and engage in the practice were identified as essential components of an IMP-based leadership development program.

- ***Recognize the importance of the facilitator to the integrity and accessibility of the intervention***: the fourth area – the “program facilitator” – emphasises the vital importance of the facilitator being someone who can embody the values and principles of the IMP/ID, whilst also making it accessible in the organisational and leadership context in which it is being applied.
- ***Intentionally communicate and gather information to determine the appropriateness of interventions for the “audience” and generate engagement***: areas five to seven focus on interactions with participant organisations and individuals prior to the start of the program: “gaining buy-in”; “pre-program fact-finding about the organisation”; and “pre-program individual fact-finding, orientation and preparation”. These interactions are needed in order to create engagement at both organisational and individual level and adapt the IMP-based program to be accessible and appropriate. For example, they include setting out potential benefits, clarifying objectives, and seeking an understanding of what the organisation and individual participants have done before that is relevant and their level of readiness for the program.
- ***Strategically determine the program design, delivery and messaging***: areas eight to eleven support the practical steps of putting together the intervention by setting out pragmatic and chronological considerations for program development: “introduction”, “program delivery format”, “program design”, and “embedding the practice”. For example, the introduction needs to establish safety and explain what participants can expect, the design needs to include appropriate language, contemplation topics and a suitable format to be accessible to participants, and ongoing avenues for practice are



needed to ensure that participants embed the practice in their day-to-day relational activities/leadership role.

Table 4 sets out a checklist of organisational contextual factors that will act as facilitators of and barriers to IMP-based leadership development. The data suggested three areas of organisational factors for practitioners and researchers to consider when planning an IMP-based leadership development intervention: the organisational situation, its culture and environment, and whether there are supportive individuals within the organisation. They suggest that such a program will work best when there is senior-level buy-in and a champion/sponsor, and that there are cultural, attitudinal, and past-experience factors that may be helpful in creating a conducive environment for the program. Exploring these factors can help practitioners and researchers make decisions about whether that organisation is ready for IMP-based leadership development, what facilitators can be leveraged and what barriers will need to be overcome.

Table 5 provides guidelines on selection and screening of participants for an IMP-based leadership development programme, made up of four areas: the knotty issue of whether and when such a program can be offered to those who have not volunteered to attend; the sensitive handling needed when participants have pre-existing relationships (particularly hierarchical ones such as manager and direct reports); and consideration of individual characteristics that may be supportive for getting the most out of the program, and those that may be contra-indications for participation. These guidelines can help practitioners and researchers make decisions about who to encourage and who to counsel against participation in the program. For example, the data suggests that being open to change, having experience of meditation, mindfulness and reflection in group settings, and being resilient may be valuable participant characteristics; whereas the program may not be suitable for a participant

in a poor cognitive and emotional state, with unhelpful approach to life and/or unhelpful attitude to the program and self-development.

### **The Influence of the Results at Each Phase on the Overall Results**

The overall structure of these three tables was generated by analysing the phase 1 interview data, which revealed a range of themes that defined the three main sections and the various sub-sections of the draft guidelines. The data from phases 2, 3, and 4 did not suggest a need to change the overall structure or areas included in the guidelines created in phase 1. However, the phase 2 data indicated the need for a range of revisions to the content: for example, more nuanced phrasing of some of the text, shifts in focus and emphasis, and additional information on issues such as fact finding about organisations and participants. Phase 2 also clarified the relative importance of different elements of the content, including where some were regarded as “essential” and others as only “helpful”. The phase 3 data contributed some minor rewording of the text and indicated that a consensus (at least 70% agreement) had been achieved on most of the changes made following phase 2; however, it left a few points of non-agreement. The phase 4 workshop data resolved each of the points of non-agreement remaining after phase 3 and reached consensus on the final wording used in tables 3, 4 and 5. Further details of how the guidelines developed across the phases are provided in Appendix 2.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this research was to establish an evidence-based protocol for adapting the IMP for use in leadership development. Responding to calls for research considering the social and relational dimensions of mindfulness (Khoury, 2018), we used a systematic research design to gather expert views on bringing together the fields of interpersonal

mindfulness (specifically the IMP) and leadership development. Through a four-phase Delphi study we achieved consensus among a group of 39 experts on guidance text covering three areas: development of an IMP-based leadership development program, contextual factors that will act as facilitators of or barriers to such a program, and the selection and screening of participants.

The results of our study provide support for taking the principles and practices of the IMP and offering them in leadership development settings. However, two important themes emerged from our results about the importance of the context for which the interventions are applied. First, although the hope at the outset of the research was to develop a protocol for an IMP-based leadership development program, the data gathered clearly indicated that such interventions would need to be designed to fit the context in which they are offered, and that a “one size fits all” program protocol would not be appropriate. As such, the guidelines produced from the data focus on *how* the existing IMP could be developed into an IMP-based intervention for a leadership development context, including what “ingredients” must be included and what adaptations would need to be considered. Second, the data from all four phases showed that participants recognised that the application of the IMP in leadership development needs to be handled with sensitivity and expressed various concerns. For instance, the need to create a safe space in which participants can self-disclose without fear of repercussions, and the risks associated with the intimacy of mindful dialogue in pairs in the workplace. These results highlight the need to consider individual and organizational factors when studying and developing IMP-based leadership development.

Overall, the research findings are thus an encouraging indication of the potential for practitioners and researchers to use the IMP in leadership development. As such, a primary contribution of this research is that it provides an evidence-based framework to serve as a foundation for future research and IMP-based interventions in leadership development. By

looking at a new intervention for leadership development and an innovative application of interpersonal mindfulness, it explores one of the newer frontiers in the leadership development territory (Day et al., 2014). The study design, (i.e., Delphi study) provided an opportunity to gain a holistic, comprehensive picture to establish an initial evidence base and create a useful platform for future practice and research (Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009). Thus, our systematic research approach to establishing our guidelines ensures that interventions can be delivered, researched, and evaluated in consistent ways.

### **Implications for Practice**

The IMP-based leadership development guidelines produced are designed to be a practical tool, freely available to those interested in integrating interpersonal mindfulness into leadership development. These guidelines emphasise the importance of ensuring that an IMP-based program is true to its origins and retains its essential nature; and they provide indications for the practitioner of the key factors that will support this (e.g., aims and purpose, key ingredients to include, atmosphere of safety). At the same time, the guidelines also indicate how to communicate and gather information in order to facilitate engagement and ensure that the intervention is appropriate to the context and individuals to whom it is offered. Thus, overall, the results can be used to help practitioners strike the balance between maintaining integrity with the origins of the IMP, while also adapting it to the constraints and demands of leadership development contexts (a live debate in the broader mindfulness field, see Crane, 2017; Marx, 2015).

The results suggest that the facilitator is of central importance to both the integrity and the accessibility of the intervention. Facilitating the IMP requires particular qualities, competencies, knowledge, and experience: these include being a qualified mindfulness teacher, having substantial experience of the IMP and ID practice, and attending an IMP

teacher training program.<sup>2</sup> The guidelines produced in this research clarify the essential capabilities of the program facilitator; they presuppose that the facilitator meets the IMP facilitator prerequisites, and has a deep understanding of the IMP/ID, considerable experience of practising interpersonal mindfulness/ID, and experience of implementing the insights, learning, and transformation it offers in their own lives. For the specialised practitioners who fall into this category, it is hoped that the guidelines will provide a source of support in reflecting on how to take on the role of facilitating the IMP in leadership development contexts as well as the process of designing and implementing an IMP-based leadership development program.

While the research findings do not provide a full blueprint for an IMP-based leadership development program, they do offer an evidence base from which to approach the creation of a coherent program. In particular, the guidelines developed set out pragmatic ways for practitioners to consider the program introduction, delivery format, and design, together with a range of suggestions on how to provide follow-up support. In addition, the checklist of organisational contextual factors provides an evidence base from which to make decisions about whether an organisation is ready for such an intervention, what facilitators can be leveraged and what barriers will need to be overcome. Meanwhile, the guidelines on selection and screening of participants provide recommendations to help practitioners make decisions about who to encourage and who to counsel against participation in the program. This approach is similar to the instructional system design in training, where there is a general roadmap for what decisions need to be made and how to make them, but the final destination will be unique for each actor.

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<sup>2</sup> As mentioned previously, the term “teacher” is used to indicate those who have a mindfulness/IMP teaching qualification.

### **Study Limitations and Emerging Areas of Future Research**

As with all research, our study has a number of limitations. For example, only a small number of participants took part in phase 1 and even fewer in phase 4 (8 and 6 participants respectively) and the majority identified as female (6 and 5 participants respectively).

Although the number of participants in phases 2 and 3 was higher, around two thirds still identified as female. Whilst this gender skew is representative of the field of psychology more broadly (Morison et al., 2014), it does mean that the views gathered are not representative of gender balance. The age range of participants was also towards older age-groups. Future research could usefully gather views from a wider, and more gender-balanced population from a broader age-range.

Another limitation is that, in line with Delphi principles, all participants were specialist experts in their fields: either as IMP/ID teachers with an understanding of workplace settings and/or leadership development, or teachers of mindfulness in workplace/leadership development settings with an understanding of IMP/ID. While this is understandable in the context of a Delphi study, it limits the transferability and applicability of the findings into the broader leadership development context. Future research could draw on the more generalised expertise of other key stakeholders to broaden discussions (e.g., Human Resource Management professionals, Learning and Development and Leadership Development experts, Trade Union representatives).

A further limitation of the research design was that the qualitative data gathered had to be summarised into key themes in order to create user-friendly survey questionnaires and guidelines of a reasonable length. This meant that there was a lot of data that did not get used in the final research outputs, which may have limited the completeness of the findings. Future research could, therefore, explore some of the richness conveyed by qualitative data by exclusively adopting an in-depth qualitative research design.

Other potentially fruitful avenues for future research would be to explore specific aspects of the guidelines to create a richer picture of their implications. For example, it would be interesting to investigate the qualities needed in the program facilitator in greater depth, and how to translate this into facilitator development in the leadership development context. We also see interesting lines of future enquiry vis-à-vis organisational culture, for example, in establishing environmental antecedents and developing a measure of organisational readiness for IMP-based leadership development.

There are also several pressing avenues to investigate in understanding the value of IMP-based leadership development and its potential benefits to participants, their employers/organisations, and society. It would be ideal to adopt an experimental research design to compare an IMP-based intervention with a control and with an alternative leadership development program. It would also be valuable to conduct both outcome and process evaluations to understand the mechanisms of action; specifically, future research could explore mediators and moderators of any change achieved, for example whether a change in participants' interpersonal mindfulness mediates improvements in leadership qualities and/or wellbeing, and whether the organisational context in which participants work impacts the degree to which they implement their learning.

We urge caution when using our guidelines to develop IMP-based leadership development. Our results show that any IMP-based leadership program will need to be designed and tailored for the specific context in which it is delivered. Building on the guidelines for IMP-based leadership development created in this research, individual practitioners and researchers can take the next step and create and deliver a program that is appropriate for the particular organisation and participants to which they are offering it. We strongly advise that practitioners and researchers pilot and test their IMP-based intervention, and review outcomes against promised deliverable benefits.

Finally, although there are currently a few examples of research into mindfulness training with a relational/interpersonal focus (e.g., Gannon et al., 2017; Kok & Singer, 2017), there would appear to be considerable scope for examining such offerings further, and the IMP is a prime candidate for this. With its emphasis on awareness of both self and other, the IMP could be considered to have similarities to and overlaps with a range of other theoretical areas, such as emotional intelligence and conflict management. Future research could therefore explore the distinguishing features of these different concepts and practices; it could also examine whether IMP-based interventions might be a route to developing capacity in these other areas.

## CONCLUSION

By investigating the application of the IMP to leadership development, this research provides a unique contribution to both the mindfulness and the leadership development literature. For mindfulness researchers and practitioners, it offers the opportunity to consider a potentially valuable application of the newly emerging interest in the interpersonal/relational aspects of mindfulness. By focusing on a particular interpersonal mindfulness intervention, called the IMP and based on ID, the research contributes a practical perspective on how interpersonal/relational mindfulness might be developed, with a specific focus on leadership. For leadership development researchers and practitioners, it contributes to the emerging interest in the potential for mindfulness interventions to be a mechanism through which managers can be supported to improve their leadership qualities. By focusing on the specific area of interpersonal mindfulness, the research offers insights into an intervention that has the potential to offer benefits over and above those offered by personal or internal mindfulness approaches. For those with the qualities, competencies, knowledge, and experience to offer an IMP-based leadership development program, the guidelines developed through the research



provide evidence-based guidance and good practice recommendations to support them to do so.

### **Declaration of Interest, Funding, and Informed Consent**

*Conflict of interest:* The first author is an IMP teacher but the other authors are not.

Otherwise the authors report no conflict of interest.

*Funding:* No funding was received for this study.

*Informed consent:* Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

*Acknowledgements:* We are very grateful to the editor and anonymous reviewers who provided in-depth feedback and contributed considerably to the development our manuscript.

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**Tables****Table 1***Participants in Each Phase of the Delphi Study*

Phase number and description	Number of participants	Notes
Phase 1. Qualitative interviews	8	Nine people were invited; one participant completed Phases 2 and 3, but declined to participate in phase 1 (i.e., interview)
Phase 2. First online survey	33	46 people were invited, including the eight people who participated in Phase 1. Three people withdrew from the study at this point: two did not feel it was appropriate to participate because they did not have enough experience of the IMP/ID or organisational interventions, and one further person who had taken part in the first phase withdrew from the process at this stage for personal reasons.
Phase 3. Second online survey	30	43 people were invited (the same people as were invited in Phase 2, minus the three who withdrew at that point). Some of those who failed to respond in Phase 2 responded in Phase 3, and some who had responded in Phase 2 failed to respond in Phase 3.
Phase 4. Online video workshop	6	Phase 4 participants were the same as those who participated in Phase 1, minus the one who had withdrawn and one further person who was not available during the period in which the workshop took place.

**Table 2***Demographics and Expertise of Participants*

	Phase 1 (n=8)	Phase 2 % (n=33)	Phase 3 % (n=30)	Phase 4 (n=6)
<b><i>Demographics</i></b>				
<i>Gender % (number female)</i>	6	67% (22)	63% (19)	5
<i>Age (NB one survey respondent did not specify age, so n=32 in Phase 2 and n= 29 in Phase 3 for age)</i>				
=<50	1	22% (7)	21% (6)	1
50–59	2	41% (13)	38% (11)	1
60–69	4	31% (10)	31% (9)	3
=>70	1	6% (2)	10% (3)	1
<i>Country</i>				
	4 USA	10 USA	8 USA	3 USA
	3 UK	13 UK	12 UK	2 UK
	1 other	10 other	10 other	1 other
		(7 countries)	(7 countries)	
<b><i>Expertise</i></b>				
<i>IMP/ID (NB some offer both the IMP and ID)</i>				
Offering ID	6	49% (16)	50% (15)	5
Offering or trained to offer the IMP	7	52% (17)	43% (13)	6
Practising but not offering ID/IMP		27% (9)	37% (11)	
<i>Workplace/leadership (NB some offer both mindfulness and other relevant workplace programs)</i>				
Offering mindfulness or mindful leader programs or both	5	79% (26)	80% (24)	4
Offering other relevant workplace and/or leadership programs/activities	6	82% (27)	87% (26)	4

**Tables 3, 4 and 5***Final Version of the Guidelines***Table 3***Guidelines on Developing an IMP-Based Leadership Development Program****1. Aims and purpose of the program***

- Support people to make changes in how they relate to others at work and elsewhere (for example, apply mindfulness directly in relationships; cultivate capacity to regulate emotions and attention while in relationships; cultivate qualities such as compassion, empathy, social awareness, ethics, social responsibility)
- Support people to make changes in perspective and wisdom (for example, gain insight, collective wisdom, creativity, and see things differently)
- Bring the values of ID/the IMP, not just the practice/techniques – aiming for the wholesome, not the unwholesome
- Focus on relationships (awareness in relationships, empathy, understanding people, clear communication)
- Be clearly relevant to participants' everyday lives at work and elsewhere, particularly everyday behaviour and challenges in relationships (for example, conflict, ethical dilemmas, complexity, change) and tailored to their context

***2. Ingredients of the IMP/ID that must be included***

While the program, language used, and contemplations will be tailored to the organisational context, participants, and time available, the following elements need to be included in order to be true to the IMP/ID:

- ID guidelines: pause, relax, open, attune to emergence, listen deeply, speak the truth
- Learning focus on developing self-understanding (awareness of personal narrative and patterns that are triggered through contact with other people) and gaining insights (shattering the illusions and seeing in a new way)
- Learning mechanisms (for example, practising ID/interpersonal mindfulness in dyads and small groups with a range of partners, practising silent meditation before and between ID/interpersonal mindfulness practice, stretching people out of their comfort zone in the meditative dialogue combined with the comfort of silent reflection and integration, experiential not theoretical)

- Contemplation topics that support insight (for example exploration of the shared human condition, real-world differences and relational challenges, practical, concrete)

In addition, ID/the IMP is developed from an underpinning framework of three bases: meditative qualities (e.g., mindfulness, awareness, calm, concentration, investigation), relational qualities (e.g., kindness, compassion, ethics in relationships), and wisdom (based on Buddhist wisdom teachings, even if the language is changed). Drawing on these three bases as a conceptual framework and adapting them to context ensures integrity in the design and adaptation of the program.

### ***3. Atmosphere of the program***

It is essential for the facilitator to create an atmosphere for the program that achieves the following:

- Establishes safety for participants to build trust and allows participants to engage with the practice (for example, confidentiality, encouragement not to share what is not appropriate or comfortable, agreement to “ground rules” based on respectful and decent human behaviour, clear boundaries and guidance, support for individuals if needed)
- Manages intimacy, discomfort, and challenges (for example, explaining and normalising the potential discomfort, during the introduction and in the guidance, helping people to ground themselves, and considering alternatives to sitting people face to face initially)

It would support participants to develop a beneficial attitude (for example, curiosity and openness, commitment, persistence, vulnerability, generosity, full immersion, self-responsibility and self-care, good will, courage, high levels of ethics)

### ***4. Program facilitator***

It is essential for the facilitator to do the following (while recognising that they are human and not expecting perfection):

- Embody the ID guidelines by pausing, relaxing, opening, attuning to emergence, listening deeply, and speaking the truth while facilitating
- Language the program in a way that is sensitive and accessible to the participants while also maintaining the integrity of ID/the IMP
- Espouse the values and principles of ID/the IMP in all the stages of the program design and implementation, including showing genuine care for the participants
- Enable a fit between the IMP and the individuals, organisational culture, and organisational environment in which it is delivered

- Connect with, and develop a trusting and open relationship with, the participants

It may also be helpful, where appropriate to the context and participants, for the facilitator to clarify that the IMP is about the cultivation of the heart and mind, not just a communication method or a way of improving relationships.

### ***5. Gaining buy-in***

The facilitator will need to gain buy-in for the program. In order to do this, they will need to explain the benefits that the program offers, tailoring the language, emphasis, and factors used to the particular organisational context, culture, and participants. It will be important not to oversell or raise false expectations. Potential benefits to mention include:

- Enhanced people skills and emotional intelligence (for example, self-management skills, empathy and awareness of others, respect for self and others, improved relationships, and collaboration)
- Improved mental skills (for example, mental flexibility/agility to manage change, wisdom in handling uncertainty and ambiguity, creativity, innovation, handling ethical dilemmas)
- Healthier relationships between colleagues, greater cooperation, increased ability to deal with differences and disagreement, and potentially a more successful, productive workplace, and beneficial organisational culture

It would be helpful for the facilitator to:

- Encourage the organisation to enable participants to take time away from work, including not being expected to receive calls or check emails while participating
- Talk about the benefits that they personally have seen from the practice

### ***6. Pre-program fact-finding about the organisation***

Where the program is being offered in-house, it would be helpful for the facilitator to conduct fact-finding about the organisation prior to starting the program, including:

- Clarifying the goals and objectives for the program (for example, what would make the participants better leaders in the eyes of the organisational stakeholders)
- Finding out what the organisation has done before (for example, meditation programs, leadership and management development, personal development, coaching and mentoring, values and culture programs)
- Using the organisational context checklist (developed in this research) to understand the cultural and environmental facilitators and barriers

- Establishing what support mechanisms the organisation makes available (for example, counselling/therapy services, helplines, coaching, etc.)
- Conducting an organisational and/or team diagnosis to understand current issues and challenges for the organisation (for example, conflict, hot-spots, change programs, where the power lies, voice and communication, language, demographics)

Facilitators can explore these issues using interviews and/or conversations with key people in the organisation, including their sponsor/champion; asking for diagnostic information such as employee survey results, organisational data, outputs from change or culture projects, etc.; observation; and/or conducting a specific diagnostic process/tool.

### ***7. Pre-program individual fact-finding, orientation, and preparation***

Prior to the program, it would be helpful for the facilitator to do the following:

- Conduct fact-finding about the individuals (using the guidelines on participants developed in this research) regarding individual characteristics and contra-indications, plus asking what else have they done in terms of mindfulness and meditation, leadership and personal development, concerns, and support. The fact-finding could be conducted using individual interviews and/or questionnaires and might be combined with the orientation.
- Provide an orientation (separate from or combined with the fact-finding). Depending on the particular context and participants involved, the orientation could be conducted through a taster or group orientation session; one-to-one orientation; and/or orientation documentation. It may be appropriate to use digital options for the orientation (video, podcast, webinar, Zoom, blended learning).

It may also be helpful to suggest/provide preparatory activities. Depending on the context and participants involved, and their prior experience, this might include:

- Introduction to mindfulness/meditation/awareness or reconnecting with previous mindfulness/meditation experience, practising pause and relax
- Preliminary reading, video and/or podcast
- Experience of a group that involves self and group reflection
- Reflection on relationships and exercises to raise interpersonal awareness
- Journaling
- Exploration of their intention and objectives for the program

### ***8. Introduction before the program and at the start of the program***

It is essential for the facilitator to provide information both before the program and at the start of the program to:

- establish safety, confidentiality, agreements, permissions, etc. for the program
- explain what to expect, who the program is for, and what the IMP is and is not

It is essential for the facilitator to provide information at the start of the program (and possibly also before the program) to:

- recognise and normalise potential risks/challenges, as well as naming the potential benefits of the program

It may also be helpful for the facilitator to provide information both before the program and at the start of the program to:

- encourage buy-in, motivation, and commitment, while also encouraging an attitude of curiosity and “see for yourself”

### ***9. Program delivery format***

- The program could be run in-house or as an open program. Open programs have the advantage of cross-pollination between different organisational leaders, anonymity of people not knowing each other/working together, and potentially greater safety. In-house programs offer the advantage of tailoring to that one organisation, benefits to the common culture, integration into group objectives, enhancing existing relationships, building connections and cohesion, and/or building community; however, they also present risks such as difficulties managing boundaries, potential pressure to participate, and/or difficulties with tailoring the program.
- One-to-one delivery of the program is generally not recommended because of the benefits of practising with a range of people and the risks associated with one-to-one (for example, intensity of relationship)

### ***10. Program design to adapt the program to leadership development settings***

While the program design must not compromise the core purpose of the IMP/ID, it will need adapting for leadership development settings, including the following:

- Language needs to be secular, accessible, and relevant to participants. While it might generally be appropriate to avoid mention of the Buddha and Buddhist language, this may not always be the case. Depending on the context and participants, it may even be desirable to acknowledge the Buddhist underpinning and origins of ID/the IMP.
- Contemplations/dialogues need to be suitable and relevant – most from the existing IMP can be included, but some may need changing and replacing according to context

(for example, consider making them less personal and lighter, some parts of Buddhist wisdom may need downplaying, and look for wisdom teachings that address the issues within the organisation)

- Length and frequency need to fit the availability of participants and what the organisation wants (for example, consider longer workshops that address more than one ID guideline each, intensive retreat with follow-up)

### ***11. Embedding the practice and offering ongoing avenues to practice***

The facilitator needs to offer support to participants to embed the practice into their day-to-day relational activities. For in-house programs, what can be offered may depend on what the organisation is willing to support, but might include some or all of the following:

- Buddying or pairing up with a partner to practice online and/or face to face
- Practice groups/action learning groups/online practice groups
- Informal practice of the guidelines in work and non-work settings
- Concrete practices to share with their team and/or practice at home
- Reminders and/or scheduling in time
- Contemplative themes that are carried through the day
- Invitation to reflect on and explore specific areas that have been challenging
- Written materials to study/read and/or audios for listening
- Journaling and/or home practice exercises/worksheets for noting specific experiences, documenting relationships and practice
- Coaching

It may also be helpful to offer ongoing avenues to practice. For in-house programs, what can be offered may depend on what the organisation is willing to support, but might include some or all of the following:

- Online cohorts, action learning sets, and/or web communities
- Buddying and peer-led groups – with written materials to guide practice (and perhaps resource lists) provided by the facilitator
- Virtual sessions offering practice and teaching
- Invitations to activities outside the workplace, open courses, and/or retreats
- Follow-up sessions, drop-ins, practices sessions in the workplace, refresher courses
- Follow-up consultations on embedding practice in the workplace and/or integration into team activities
- Mention of other opportunities to attend meditation and wisdom teaching



**Table 4**

*Checklist of Organisational Contextual Factors That Will Act as Facilitators of and Barriers to IMP-Based Leadership Development*

<p><b><i>1. The organisation's situation</i></b></p> <p>The following organisational factors may be supportive of creating a conducive environment for the program, though they are not considered as necessarily essential and no assumptions should be made.</p> <p>An organisation that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has the financial resources to spend on IMP-based leadership development</li> <li>• is in a situation that makes IMP-based leadership development valuable (for example, experiencing transition, engaging creativity, and promoting collaboration)</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>2. Supportive individuals within the organisation</i></b></p> <p>The program will work best in an organisation where there is (factors deemed essential):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• senior-level buy-in with willingness to provide financial and other resources, including participants being given time and space to participate</li> <li>• a champion(s)/sponsor(s) who will open doors, do the marketing, find resources</li> </ul> <p>It may also be helpful, though not essential, for there to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a champion(s)/sponsor(s) to have been on an IMP/ID program (or experience of a similar program, such as mindfulness) and model the benefits, normalise it, and translate it into organisational culture, language, and practices</li> <li>• senior-level people with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ real desire to see it implemented – endorsement and encouraging/inspiring people to get involved – ideally start with the top team and cascade down</li> <li>○ willingness to take risks, do something radically different, be honest, open and vulnerable</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>It may be helpful to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• run targeted taster sessions to get champions and senior leaders on board</li> </ul> <p>Facilitators should consider that an over-zealous champion may inhibit participation.</p>
<p><b><i>3. Organisational culture and environment</i></b></p> <p>The following organisational cultural and environmental characteristics may be supportive of creating a conducive environment for the program, though they should be regarded as helpful, rather than essential.</p> <p>An organisation that:</p>

- does *not* have cultural barriers to IMP-based leadership development (example barriers might be competitive, job-insecure, and wanting to see results; not respectful of confidentiality; long hours culture; just giving lip service to values such as openness and respect, sustainability or taking initiative)
- has cultural factors that facilitate IMP-based leadership development (for example, authenticity, transparency, openness, respect, and care; forward thinking, innovative, open to change; shared ethics and values around being willing to be vulnerable; willingness to support people to change and speak truth to power; looking for the greater good; belief in autonomy for individuals)
- has positive attitudes to the IMP/ID (for example, willingness to put the program first; belief in its benefits for individuals and the organisation; *not* cynicism about the program or the organisation's motives for initiating it; *not* wanting the IMP/ID purely as a way of communicating more effectively or because it is the latest fad)
- has previously run relevant programs (for example, mindfulness programs; programs that are a little out of the ordinary, such as for motivational speakers; leadership development programs, including introspection and self-exploration, not just technical skills)

Facilitators can explore these issues using interviews and conversations with key people in the organisation, including their sponsor/champion

### **Table 5**

#### *Guidelines on Selection and Screening of Participants for an IMP-Based Leadership Development Program*

##### ***1. Mandatory or voluntary?***

- Generally the program needs to be voluntary, not mandatory (not even a subtle mandate/sense of obligation).
- In some situations, it may be possible to run it for those who have not chosen to be there. For example, if an IMP-based session is a module in a wider leadership development program (or part of a company away-day, wellbeing program, team intervention, or expression of the organisation's values), it may not be practical to make it optional. To determine whether this can be done without compromising the values and ethics of the program and to ensure that the needs of participants are fully respected, conversations must be held with the stakeholders within the organisation

ahead of time. In addition, when the program involves people who have not volunteered, they need to be well informed about what to expect and options included for them to choose: what to say, level of engagement, and, in some situations, whether to engage in an alternative activity.

## ***2. Seniority of and relationships between participants***

- Having managers and employees in the same program is potentially challenging; there may be systemic issues of which the facilitator is not aware. If it is not possible to avoid having participants with hierarchical/power relationships (especially manager and direct reports) in the same group, for example where an IMP-based session is part of a wider program, the complexity of power differentials needs to be acknowledged and the situation handled with sensitivity. In these cases, explicit guidance about choice of partners will be important so that participants only practise with people with whom they feel safe to listen deeply and speak the truth (and it may be appropriate to provide options, as described in Section 1 above). It is also likely to be helpful for the senior person to set the tone by being transparent/vulnerable.
- Participants having pre-existing relationships is not necessarily a problem (and can be a benefit if there is an existing level of trust and open sharing of challenges).
- Facilitators can explore these issues through their pre-program fact-finding about the organisation and the individual participants.

## ***3. Individual characteristics that may be supportive for getting the most out of the program***

It may be valuable for participants on the program to have the following characteristics (listed in order of importance):

- Openness to change (for example, readiness to explore, experiment, and be challenged; on a path of self-development; open minded and open hearted; openness to insight and reflection)
- Experience of meditation, mindfulness, and reflection in group settings (for example, capacity to be with what is arising in the moment, exposure to meditation/mindfulness practices, capacity for self-reflection)
- Resilience and stability
- Psychological-mindedness (for example, interest in the shared human experience, human interaction, what makes them tick, ability to name personal patterns)

- Perceived need to change (for example, someone who has been promoted to a big job that needs a paradigm shift or who has been through personal change and transformation)
- Motivation and engagement

Facilitators can use questionnaires and/or interviews to explore whether individuals have these characteristics and explain the nature of the program

#### ***4. Potential contra-indications for individuals participating in the program***

The following characteristics may indicate that the program is not suitable for an individual; they should be explored before deciding whether to exclude that person or not:

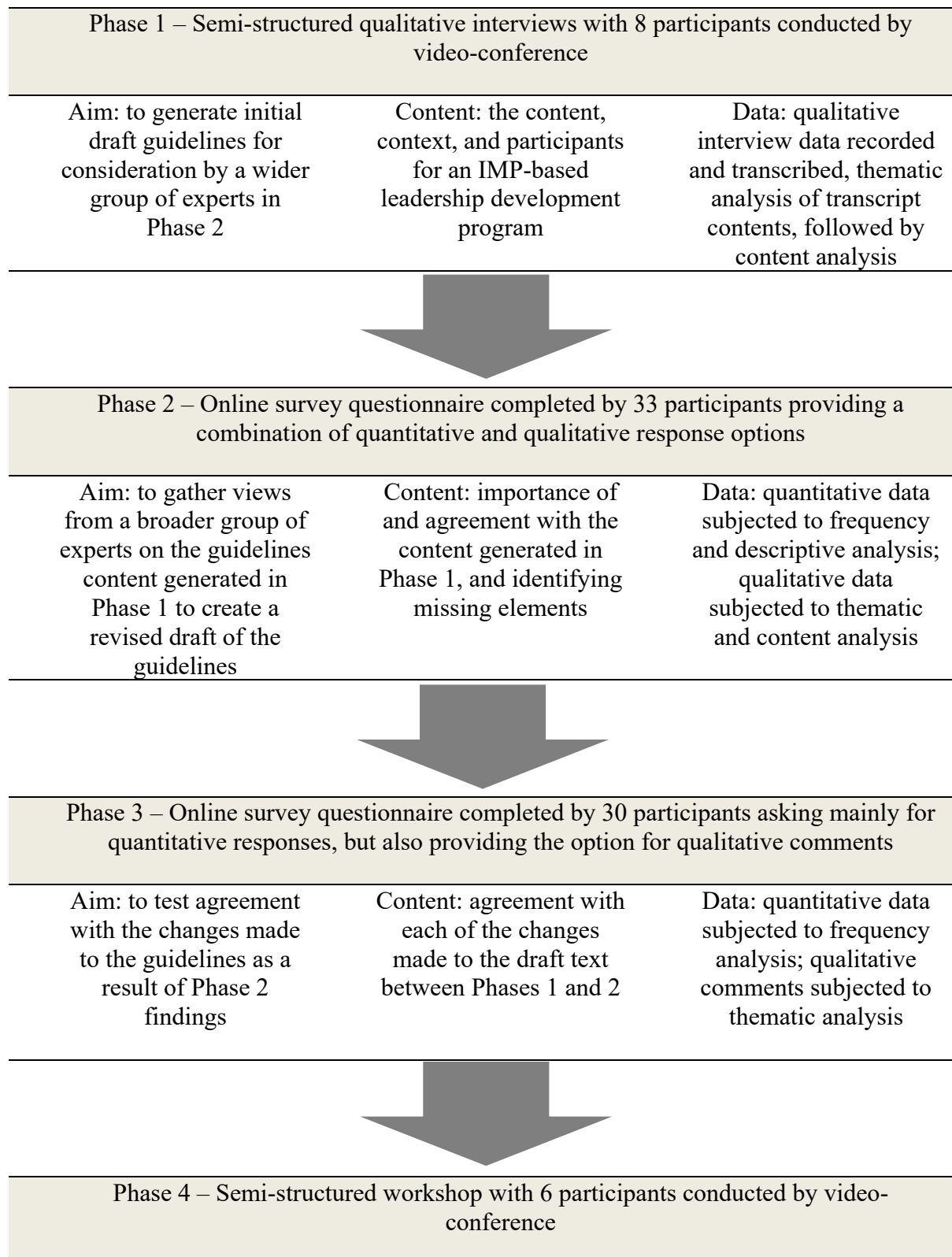
- Poor cognitive and emotional state (for example, current or recent mental health challenges, difficult life events or trauma, profound trauma, active addiction, certain medication, high stress or social anxiety, autism spectrum)
- Unhelpful approach to life (for example, serious anger issues, need to be the expert, will not stop speaking, high degrees of striving and agitation, fixed views, dissociation and experiential avoidance)
- Unhelpful attitude to the program and self-development (for example, expecting a one-time fix, doing the program as a “tick the box” exercise or out of obligation, looking for technical expertise not self-development, very cynical)

Facilitators can use interviews and/or questionnaires and/or discussions with others (such as HR and managers) to find out about these potential contra-indications. Care needs to be taken when talking to others about a potential participant, as there is a risk of misinformation, non-disclosure, and/or potential harm to the individual.

## Figures

**Figure 1**

*The Four Phases of the Delphi Study*



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Aim: to achieve final consensus on the content of the guidelines	Content: areas of the guidelines where consensus had not been reached in Phase 3	Data: qualitative workshop data recorded and used to make changes to the guidelines text
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## **Appendix 1 – Discussion Guide for Interviews Conducted in Phase 1 of the Research**

### **Preamble and Consent**

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this research project. Your input is really valuable and I am really delighted to be gathering your views. My aim is to explore how an IMP-based intervention could be used to support leaders and managers to be more aware/mindful, relational, and wise.

The plan is to develop three outputs that will support the implementation of an IMP-based leadership development intervention:

- Pilot IMP-based intervention protocol/curriculum for use in leadership development or guidance on the parameters for developing an IMP-based leadership development program
- Checklist for organisations intending to run an IMP-based intervention as part of their leadership/management development, setting out the contextual factors they need in place
- Guidance on selecting and preparing managers for an IMP-based leadership/management development intervention

All participants in this research will be either IMP/ID teachers with an understanding of organisations/workplaces and/or leadership and management development; or teachers of mindfulness in organisational/workplace settings with an understanding of the IMP/ID. A small sub-group of six to eight people will take part in interviews, then a wider group of participants (including the interviewees) will be invited to take part in two rounds of online survey questionnaires, and finally interviewees will be invited to a group workshop. The aim is to create a consensus on the outputs described above.

We're going to spend the next 30–60 mins exploring your views. Although I have some questions that I would like to cover, it'll be more like a conversation.

The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. However, you are assured complete anonymity for anything you say: we will not identify you on the interview notes or transcription. All data will be kept on secure servers to which only the research team will have access. The data will also be used to generate publications for submission as part of my doctorate and scientific journal articles, but these publications will not identify either yourself or your organisation. That said, given the small size of the IMP teacher community, you probably know all the other research participants and they are likely to know that you are also participating.

Either: thank you for filling in the consent form – that is great

Or: please can we just run through the questions on the consent form I sent through and get your confirmation on the points included...

Do you have any questions or concerns about the research and the anonymity of the data? If anything crops up during or after the interview that you'd like to discuss or that you have a question about, please do feel free to call me. You can withdraw from the study at any time.

I am going to switch on the recording now.

Just for the record, you have just confirmed your consent to all the questions in the consent form you received prior to this interview.



## **Interview Questions**

### **About the IMP Intervention Mechanisms**

- What are the “active ingredients” of an IMP that need to be included in any new intervention?
  - What must any new intervention contain to remain faithful to the IMP (methods, attitudes, approaches)?
- How does the existing IMP protocol/curriculum need adapting to fit in a leadership development context?
  - What might an IMP-based leadership development program/module look like?
    - Open courses and/or in-house programs
    - Possibility of offering it in a coaching approach
    - Possibility of offering other interventions beyond L&D – e.g., for team development, facilitating meetings, processes – going beyond the person of the leader to leadership in organisations more broadly (distributed leadership, followership...)
  - How can we make the IMP accessible in organisational and business settings?
  - How do we overcome issues relating to the unfamiliarity of mindful conversations? And the intimacy that potentially arises in the IMP?

### **About the Organisational Context**

- What contextual/organisational factors will help to ensure that an IMP-based leadership development program/module has the best possible chance of success?
  - What might get in the way?
- What would attract leaders to undertake an IMP-based leadership development program/module? And attract organisations to offer it?

- What would the need be that this kind of intervention would meet?

### **About manager and leader participants (mental models)**

- For whom is an IMP-based leadership development program/module likely to be successful (Readiness for change? Perceptions of mindfulness and the IMP? Mental models?)
  - What might get in the way?
  - What are the potential “contra-indications” that suggest a particular individual should not participate (i.e., factors that might indicate that a particular person might not benefit from, or might even be harmed by, participating in an IMP-based leadership development program/module)?
- How should managers be selected and prepared for an IMP-based leadership development program/module?
  - How to explain it to managers? How to get manager buy-in/sell the intervention to managers?
  - Could it be made mandatory or is that setting it up to fail?
  - What if participants know one another (in which case they will, inevitably, hold assumptions about each other)? What if they work together? What about having participants of different levels of seniority?

### **Next steps**

Run through the next steps in the research process... Then:

- Can you think of anyone that I could include in the questionnaire survey?

**Thank you very much indeed for your time today!**

**Appendix 2 – Further Details of How the Guidelines Developed Across the Phases**

<i>Section of the guidelines</i>	<i>Themes that emerged from Phase 1 interviews</i>	<i>Main changes resulting from Phase 2 survey</i>	<i>Changes resulting from Phase 3 survey and remaining areas of non-agreement resolved in Phase 4 workshop</i>
Guidelines on developing an IMP-based leadership development program	1. Aims and purpose of the program	Ranking of aims, minor rewording, e.g. “focus on relationships not business objectives” changed to “focus on relationships in service of business objectives”	No changes to wording. Non-agreement on mention of business objectives.
	2. Active ingredients of the IMP/ID that must be included	Introductory paragraph added, ranking of “ingredients”, more nuanced phrasing of items	Minor rewording. Non-agreement on mention of the “three bases of ID”.
	3. Program facilitator	Introductory paragraph, fit with context and connection with participants split into two separate items, “essential” distinguished from “helpful”	Minor rewording. Consensus achieved.
	4. Atmosphere of the program	Introductory phrase, “essential” distinguished from “helpful”, mention of Buddhism removed	Minor rewording. Consensus achieved.
	5. Gaining buy-in	Ranking of benefits of the program, additional wording and some rephrasing	Minor rewording. Non-agreement on phrase of item about time off for participants

<i>Section of the guidelines</i>	<i>Themes that emerged from Phase 1 interviews</i>	<i>Main changes resulting from Phase 2 survey</i>	<i>Changes resulting from Phase 3 survey and remaining areas of non-agreement resolved in Phase 4 workshop</i>
	6. Pre-program fact-finding about the organisation	Introductory paragraph, additional information about how to conduct fact-finding, reordering of items in order of importance	Minor rewording. Consensus achieved.
	7. Pre-program individual fact-finding, orientation, and preparation	Introductory phrase, additional information about fact-finding, orientations and preparatory activities, making preparation less prominent than the fact-finding and orientation	Minor rewording. Consensus achieved.
	8. Pre-program and start of program introduction	Clarification of which elements need to happen when, making some items essential and others helpful, rephrasing some items	Minor rewording. Consensus achieved.
	9. Program delivery format	Rephrasing some items, making one-to-one delivery “generally not recommended” rather than “not recommended”	No changes to wording. Consensus achieved.
	10. Program design to adapt the program to leadership development settings	Reordering of items according to importance, addition of sentence about mentioning Buddhist origins, introductory paragraph	Minor rewording. Consensus achieved.

<i>Section of the guidelines</i>	<i>Themes that emerged from Phase 1 interviews</i>	<i>Main changes resulting from Phase 2 survey</i>	<i>Changes resulting from Phase 3 survey and remaining areas of non-agreement resolved in Phase 4 workshop</i>
	11. Home practice and post-program follow-up	Clarifying “essential” and “helpful”, addition of ideas for supporting participants to embed practice and for avenues of ongoing practice	Minor rewording. Consensus achieved.
Checklist of organisational contextual factors that will act as facilitators of and barriers to IMP-based leadership development	1. The organisation	Removal of items about organisation size and sector, introductory paragraph, clarification that items are not essential	No changes to wording. Non-agreement on wording of item about the organisation’s situation
	2. Supportive individuals within the organisation	Clarifying which items are essential and which helpful, additional text about taster sessions and over-zealous champions	Minor rewording. Consensus achieved.
	3. Organisational culture and environment	Introductory paragraph, ordering of items, additional text about how to explore these areas	No changes to wording. Consensus achieved.
Guidelines on selection and screening of participants for an IMP-based leadership development program	1. Mandatory or voluntary?	Additional text about situations in which the program might be run for those who have not volunteered	No changes to wording. Non-agreement on wording about situations in which the program might be run for those who have not volunteered.

<i>Section of the guidelines</i>	<i>Themes that emerged from Phase 1 interviews</i>	<i>Main changes resulting from Phase 2 survey</i>	<i>Changes resulting from Phase 3 survey and remaining areas of non-agreement resolved in Phase 4 workshop</i>
	2. Seniority of and relationships between participants	Removal and rewording of items, additional text about how to explore issues and choosing practice partners	No changes to wording. Non-agreement on wording about choosing practice partners.
	3. Individual characteristics that are supportive for getting the most out of the program	Introductory paragraph, listing items in order of importance, additional item and wording	No changes to wording. Consensus achieved.
	4. Contra-indications for individuals participating in the program	Introductory paragraph, clarification that items do not indicate definite exclusion and must be explored, additional wording about how to explore these factors	Minor rewording. Consensus achieved.