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Mindfulness in Virtual Leader-Follower Communication: Its Effect on Respectful Inquiry and Perspective Taking in Time Pressured Environments

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Table of Content

Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Virtual Communication.....	6
Respectful Inquiry.....	6
Mindfulness.....	7
Mindfulness and Respectful Inquiry.....	7
Time Pressure and Respectful Inquiry.....	8
Time Pressure, Mindfulness and Respectful Inquiry.....	8
Perspective Taking.....	9
Mindfulness, Perspective Taking and Respectful Inquiry.....	10
Time Pressure, Perspective Taking and Respectful Inquiry.....	10
A Potential Moderated Mediation.....	11
Method	11
Sample.....	11
Design and Procedure.....	13
Manipulations.....	13
Coding Method.....	14
Scenario.....	14
Qualitative Coding of Respectful Inquiry.....	14
Measures.....	15
Mindfulness Manipulation Check.....	15
Time Pressure Manipulation Check.....	16
Perspective Taking.....	16
Results	16
Descriptive Statistics and Manipulation Check.....	16
Examination of Main and Moderating Effects.....	18
Examination of Mediating and Moderated Mediating Effects.....	18
Discussion	20
Limitations and Future Directions.....	22
Practical Implications.....	24
Conclusion	24
References	25
Appendices	31
Appendix A: Email Scenario.....	31
Appendix B: Coding Schema of Respectful Inquiry.....	32

Abstract

Virtual communication between leaders and followers has become an irreplaceable necessity, especially in times of physical distance due to COVID-19. Therefore, the present research investigated whether practicing mindfulness, a condition in which individuals attend to the present moment in a non-judgmental way, increases the amount of respectful and appreciative communication. Moreover, we examined whether this relationship is mediated by perspective taking and how time pressure influences leaders communication behaviour. An experimental set-up was used to investigate the effect of a mindfulness and time pressure manipulation on leaders' ($N = 129$) respectful inquiry in a virtual communication exercise. The results showed that the mindfulness manipulation positively influenced respectful inquiry. However, the study did not find significant effects for time pressure and perspective taking on respectful inquiry. The following paper provides implications for future research and organisational practices in the discussion section.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Virtual leader-follower communication, Respectful inquiry

Introduction

The accelerated pace of digitalization has brought major changes to our society and the corporate world. The transformation from analogue to digital companies significantly influences the way of communication (Stewart, 2020). Already in 2008, Irene Rosenfeld (CEO Mondelēz International) noticed: “Even in developing markets, we’re seeing the growth of digital communication is proceeding at a very rapid pace.” Nowadays, virtual communication has become as important as traditional face-to-face communication (Liu et al., 2018). Especially in times of COVID-19, virtual communication tools such as email, video conferencing and chat systems became irreplaceable. Consequently, also leader-follower communication changes and the understanding of key leadership behaviours develops. Due to the rapid increase in the use of virtual communication, it is crucial to enhance the communication quality in virtual environments to ensure the best possible organisational effectiveness.

Prior research has shown that a key function of leadership in virtual settings is efficient communication with followers (Liu et al., 2018; Arendt et al., 2019). More specifically, Van Quaquebeke and Felps (2018) argue that respectful inquiry is a crucial communication behaviour of leaders. Characteristics of respectful inquiry are asking open questions and attentive listening (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). Both behaviours enhance communication quality since they contribute to feelings of worth and dignity leading to followers’ satisfaction (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). While the pivotal role of leaders’ communication behaviour in virtual environments has been recognised, surprisingly open questions on how to increase respectful inquiry in virtual communication remain.

Despite some initial research, there is little evidence on how to increase key communication behaviour in virtual leadership. Addressing this issue is of great practical relevance because the experience from traditional communication settings cannot be necessarily applied to virtual settings (Liu et al., 2018). A promising concept that seems to address this open question is mindfulness. Mindfulness fosters present moment attention and increases awareness with an open, non-judging attitude (Brown et al., 2007). While practicing mindfulness has shown beneficial effects regarding positive communication behaviour (Arendt et al., 2019), organisational research on mindfulness mainly focused on intrapersonal aspects like emotion regulation (Hülshager et al., 2014) and job performance (Reb et al., 2015). As acknowledged by Good et al. (2016), only few researchers studied the effects of mindfulness on interpersonal aspects like leadership behaviour or relationship quality (Arendt et al., 2019). Yet, the importance of interpersonal aspects should be recognised, since they form the core of leaders’ communication behaviour (Good et al., 2016; Arendt et al., 2019). Thus, knowledge on interpersonal effects of mindfulness is especially interesting for companies that want to improve communication behaviour (i.e., respectful inquiry) of leaders.

To address this open question, we consider the dynamics around the potential salutary effects of mindfulness on leaders' respectful inquiry. While some theoretical work has addressed potential mechanisms and boundary conditions (e.g., Glomb et al., 2011), empirical evidence is scarce. Therefore, we investigate perspective taking as a potential mechanism since it has been previously discussed in regard of interpersonal effects of mindfulness (Krasner et al., 2009; Block-Lerner et al., 2007). Perspective taking is the ability to see the world with someone else's eyes (Wolgast et al., 2019). Since practicing mindfulness fosters leader's awareness of other's needs (Hougaard et al., 2016), we investigate whether perspective taking underlies the effects of mindfulness and time pressure on respectful inquiry. Moreover, we examine mindfulness as a potential boundary condition when leaders communicate in time-limited environments that elicit feelings of stress (Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2017). Van Quaquebeke and Felps (2018) stated that leaders often struggle to communicate successfully when facing *time pressure* or physical distance, although it is then needed the most. Specifically, we explore to what extent the effect of mindfulness can buffer potential detrimental effects of time pressure on respectful inquiry. Such knowledge would allow organisations to promote leaders' engagement in mindfulness.

The present article offers three valuable contributions to literature as well as to practice because it connects research on mindfulness to leaders' virtual communication behaviour. Firstly, it enriches literature of mindfulness in the workplace (Hougaard et al., 2016; Reb et al., 2015). So far only little is known about its interpersonal impact (Good et al., 2016), compared to a growing body of research on intrapersonal effects of mindfulness (Hülshager et al., 2014; Reb et al., 2015). Therefore, we examine the influence of mindfulness on concrete communication behaviour like respectful inquiry.

Secondly, the study advances our understanding of written leader-follower communication (Tyran et al., 2003) by shedding light on boundary conditions and mechanisms that impact respectful inquiry. By examining mindfulness as a potential buffer of the expected detrimental effects of time pressure, we provide knowledge on important leadership skills needed for positive written communication. In addition, we contribute to the understanding of mechanisms potentially enhancing leaders' communication skills.

Lastly, our work comes with practical implications for organisations which strive to increase the communication quality between leaders and employees. Mindfulness is a promising concept for leaders since it can easily be practiced and implemented throughout the day (Reb et al., 2015). Therefore, our findings may highlight the urgency of promoting mindfulness in companies, since it is a cost and time efficient tool to support leaders in a world of virtual communication.

Theoretical Background & Hypotheses

Virtual Communication

Virtual communication between leaders and followers has been defined as a way to share knowledge and to interact by means of technological tools when being physically separated (Malakyan, 2019). A few scholars focused their research on leaders' communication in virtual settings. For instance, Kelloway et al. (2003) used a vignette approach to show that recipients of virtual communication can accurately distinguish between different leadership styles even in virtual settings. Other researchers stated that leaders need to promote positive psychological states in order to maintain leader-member exchange in virtual settings (Hill et al., 2014). Both studies provide a starting point for examining dynamics in written virtual communication. However, further knowledge from traditional face-to-face communication needs to be translated to virtual settings to understand the mechanisms of virtual communication. This is essential since communication between leaders and followers is vital for organisational effectiveness (Liu et al., 2018; Arendt et al., 2019).

Respectful Inquiry

Communication between leaders and followers determines their relationship quality making valuable communication behaviour a prerequisite for effective leadership (Arendt et al., 2019). An important communication behaviour which has been discussed in the literature is respectful inquiry (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). *Respectful inquiry* refers to a combination of behaviours such as asking open questions and attentive listening (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). Question asking includes any statement that invites an answer and exists of different levels of openness (Stewart & Cash, 2007). More open questions produce greater communication quality since they indicate commitment and interest. Therefore, leaders that ask open questions are perceived as more effective and dedicated to the follower (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). Next, attentive listening includes alertness and responsiveness which indicate that what the speaker says is interesting and valuable (Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2010). Therefore, listening increases job satisfaction and strengthens leader-follower relationships (Lloyd et al., 2015). Although both behaviours are important on their own, the interplay between question asking and attentive listening provides the strongest motivational power (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). Question asking alone is insufficient for respectful inquiry since attentive listening needs to follow in order to convey interest in the respondent's answer. Generally, leaders high on respectful inquiry show personal concern, appreciation, and willingness to understand the follower's opinion, thereby contributing to the follower's perception of worth and dignity (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is defined as a mental state of being aware of the present moment by purely observing without making judgments (Brown et al., 2007). It involves open monitoring of the current moment which enables unbiased attention and awareness regulation. Engaging in these behaviours helps individuals to “step back and to observe rather than to identify with thoughts and emotions” (Hülshager et al., 2014, p.2). Importantly, depending on the research focus, scholars differentiate between the trait and state perspective of mindfulness (Hülshager et al., 2014). On the one hand, mindfulness can be researched as a trait which is a dispositional characteristic contributing to differences between individuals (Reb et al., 2014). On the other hand, mindfulness can be a state fluctuating across situations, thereby causing differences within the individual. This means, the state of paying attention to the present moment with an open attitude is situation dependent (Reynolds et al., 2015). In the present study, mindfulness is considered as a state.

There are many studies on the benefits of mindfulness in clinical research (Creswell, 2017; Goldberg et al., 2018), which show improvements of mental and physical well-being. Over the last few years, researchers have started to investigate mindfulness also in occupational settings (Allen et al., 2015; Eby et al., 2019; Good et al., 2016; Virgili, 2015). A meta-analysis by Virgili (2015) showed that mindfulness-based interventions promote emotion regulation, well-being and attention by reducing anxiety and stress in working adults. Consequently, positive organisational outcomes like work engagement and employee satisfaction increase (Allen et al., 2015). Interestingly, already a single mindfulness session in the workplace contributes to changes in one’s emotional state and to a less judgmental perception of the own thoughts (Hafenbrack, 2017). In addition, Reb et al. (2014) argued that leaders high on mindfulness engage more strongly with their followers leading to higher employee satisfaction.

Mindfulness and Respectful Inquiry

A prerequisite for leaders to communicate in an effective manner is to pay attention and to be aware of the followers needs (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). Mindfulness as a way to stimulate present moment attention and awareness (Brown et al., 2007) may enable leaders to ask open questions, listen attentively and show respectful reactions. Thereby, mindful engagement is likely to enhance the feeling of being respected and appreciated which is a fundamental aspect of respectful inquiry (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). In accordance with this potential link between mindfulness and respectful inquiry, mindful leaders show higher attention for their followers (Reb et al., 2015). Further, mindfulness might impact respectful inquiry since it potentially relates to both of its major components: question asking and attentive listening. For example, mindfulness exercises generate high levels of awareness, enabling

leaders to consider their followers' needs (Arendt et al., 2019). Thereby levels of question asking might increase because leaders are enabled to invite input of their followers more openly. Furthermore, mindfulness increases attention capacities (Arendt et al., 2019) which leaders need to listen effectively. Also, meditation exercises support leaders in understanding and managing their thoughts (Hougaard et al., 2016) which might enable leaders to focus on their followers' needs by means of question asking and attentive listening. Thus, we hypothesize that the induction of mindfulness increases levels of respectful inquiry.

Hypothesis 1: A mindfulness induction will positively influence respectful inquiry.

Time Pressure and Respectful Inquiry

Leaders often operate in challenging and quickly changing environments where time pressure is constantly high. Hougaard et al. (2016) define such environments as "PAID reality". It describes four challenging aspects of today's work environments: being pressured, always-on, information overloaded and distracted. *Time pressure*, a key aspect of the "PAID reality", is a subjective experience of feelings like being rushed, busy or short on time (Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2017). Therefore, common consequences are stress, work overload or emotional exhaustion since opportunities to recover are rare (Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2017). This, in turn, increases the risk for leaders to suffer from poor well-being which lowers the communication quality towards their followers (Nielsen & Taris, 2019).

Behaviours like asking questions and attentive listening contribute to positive communication but both urge time investment (Drollinger et al., 2006; Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). In line with this, Schmelzter and Fann (1989) noted that managers perceive time pressure to be a major cause for poor communication with followers. Specifically, Van Quaquebeke and Felps (2018) argued that perceived time pressure pushes leaders towards controlling and directive communication, opposed to open inquiry, because it seems to save time. Consequently, the amount of asked questions decreases. Also, listening behaviour requires leaders to spend resources (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018) which are often not available when time pressure is high (Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2017). Thus, time pressure might negatively influence question asking as well as attentive listening, making us expect, that when time pressure increases, the amount of respectful inquiry decreases.

Hypothesis 2: Time pressure will negatively influence respectful inquiry.

Time Pressure, Mindfulness and Respectful Inquiry

After shedding light on the direct effects on respectful inquiry, we want to investigate mindfulness as a promising mean to support leaders in dealing with time pressure effectively. Since leaders operate in the "PAID reality" where time pressure is constantly high, mindfulness is expected to help leaders to slow-down and to successfully manage on-going activities

(Hougaard et al., 2016). This is because mindfulness increases present moment attention and fosters awareness of stimuli (Brown et al., 2007). This regulatory power of mindfulness allows individuals to purely notice what is going on (Brown & Ryan, 2003). By helping individuals to disengage from automatic thoughts, mindfulness serves as a “de-automatization” function (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Interestingly, research in the occupational field has supported the idea that mindfulness facilitates the handling of stressful situations (Hougaard et al., 2016; Hülshager et al., 2018; Lawrie et al., 2018). Specifically, leaders in the “PAID reality” can benefit from these salutary effects of mindfulness since it combats the autopilot mode they often operate in (Hougaard et al., 2016). Hülshager et al. (2018) stated that mindful individuals can manage stressful experiences more successfully because events are attended more objectively, preventing negative behavioural reactions and a loss of energy. In line with this, Lawrie et al. (2018) argued that mindfulness has a regulatory power because attentional capacities can be refilled by focusing openly and receptively on the present moment. This is, leaders’ refilled attention capacities increase awareness for others (Arendt et al., 2019) which may even facilitate the use of respectful inquiry. Furthermore, by changing the perception of time pressure to less stressful (Wittmann et al., 2015), leaders’ mindfulness might enable higher levels of respectful inquiry. Specifically, mindfulness might allow leaders to put followers’ concerns and feelings in the centre of attention which potentially buffers the negative consequences of time pressure. Therefore, being mindful helps to cope with the experience of time pressure (Wittmann et al., 2015; Lawrie et al., 2018) which, in turn, might increase respectful inquiry because more resources are available. Consequently, we assume that the negative consequences of time pressure on respectful inquiry might be diminished if state mindfulness is high.

Hypothesis 3: The negative effect of time pressure on respectful inquiry is moderated by the mindfulness induction. The effect of time pressure will be weaker in the mindfulness condition as compared to the control condition.

Perspective Taking

Apart from investigating the direct relationships between mindfulness, time pressure and respectful inquiry, the present study aims to shed further light on specific underlying mechanisms in these relationships. Therefore, we consider *perspective taking* as a potential mechanism underlying the beneficial effects of mindfulness. Wolgast et al. (2019) define perspective taking as the “ability to step outside oneself and assume other points of view” (p.356) which helps to understand another individual’s behaviour. It belongs to one of the four facets of empathy which is known to be important for leaders (Hougaard et al., 2016). Also, perspective taking has previously been considered as a central determinant of successful

communication behaviour (Drollinger et al., 2006, Arendt et al., 2019). There is a trait- and state viewpoint of perspective taking. Since we are interested in the ability of perspective taking in a specific situation, we will focus on state perspective taking. This is the capacity to reflect on another person's mental state and processes in a specific situation (Wolgast et al., 2019).

Mindfulness, Perspective Taking and Respectful Inquiry

In the present study, we focus on perspective taking as a potential underlying mechanism of the effect of mindfulness on respectful inquiry. Some studies have found positive correlations between mindfulness and both perspective taking (Beitel et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2019) and positive communication behaviours (Arendt et al., 2019; Wolgast et al., 2019). Specifically, mindfulness increases attention and awareness of others mental states (Brown et al., 2007), which may function as a predictor of perspective taking, thereby improving levels of respectful communication behaviours. Additionally, mindfulness enables an open and attentive attitude (Brown et al., 2007), helping leaders to understand followers needs, which might increase leaders' interest in the follower by engaging in more respectful inquiry. Indeed, research showed that mindfulness leads to greater concern for others (Beussink et al., 2017) which has been found to be an antecedent for positive communication behaviour like effective listening (Drollinger et al., 2006). A mindfulness intervention might, thus, enhance consideration of the follower's perspective, thereby increasing the communication quality between leaders and followers. In line with prior evidence, we assume that leaders high in mindfulness may be better equipped to engage in respectful inquiry due to an improved understanding of their followers' psychological states.

Hypothesis 4: Perspective taking mediates the effect of mindfulness on respectful inquiry.

Time Pressure, Perspective Taking and Respectful Inquiry

Another question concerns the role of perspective taking in the relationship of time pressure and respectful inquiry. Taking the perspective of followers requires leaders to invest time. Since time is rare in today's "PAID reality" (Hougaard et al., 2016), less time may be spent to understand the follower's viewpoint, thereby potentially harming positive relationship behaviours like respectful inquiry. Indeed, research showed that time pressure increases self-focus (Roberts et al., 2019), which fosters negative consequences for interpersonal behaviours and relationships (Lewandowski et al., 2014). Specifically, when leaders are under time pressure, they focus less on the ideas and needs of others because they rank their own needs and thoughts higher (Škerlavaj et al., 2018). This makes it less likely for them to engage in respectful inquiry. Therefore, we examine whether time pressure results in less perspective taking, and whether this translates into lower levels of respectful inquiry. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 5: Perspective taking mediates the effect of time pressure on respectful inquiry.

A Potential Moderated Mediation

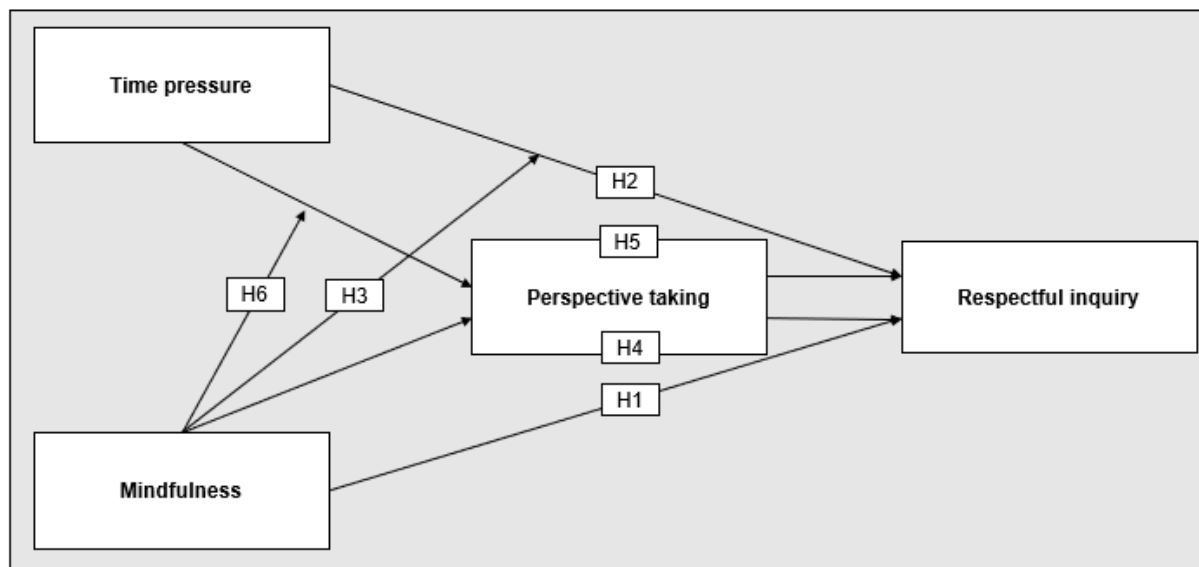
Overall, time pressure may negatively influence positive communication behaviour of leaders (i.e., perspective taking and, in turn, respectful inquiry). Hence, we consider mindfulness as a mean to effectively handle time pressured situations in order to avoid detrimental consequences for perspective taking and respectful inquiry. As noted above, researchers highlighted that time pressure contributes to a loss of energy (Hülshager et al., 2018). Therefore, we propose that mindfulness buffers the harmful effects of time pressure by refilling leaders depleted resources. This, in turn, might increase perspective taking capacities potentially contributing to higher communication quality (i.e. more respectful inquiry). Indeed, Lawrie et al. (2018) showed that mindfulness supports individuals in replenishing their attentional resources, which facilitates perspective taking. Finally, this may contribute to higher levels of respectful inquiry. In a similar vein, researchers showed that mindfulness fosters leader's awareness of the follower's situation even in time pressured environments (Wittman et al., 2015; Hougaard et al., 2016). Thus, negative consequences of time pressure like focussing on the self might decrease (Roberts et al., 2019), making perspective taking more likely and thereby increasing respectful inquiry (Drollinger et al., 2006). Consequently, we expect that leaders can use their resources regained through mindfulness to facilitate perspective taking and thereby enhance respectful inquiry even when time is limited. Thus, in addition to the other hypotheses (see Figure 1), we expect the following:

Hypothesis 6: The mindfulness induction moderates the indirect effect of time pressure on respectful inquiry via perspective taking. The detrimental effects of time pressure on respectful inquiry via respectful inquiry are weaker in the mindfulness condition as compared to the control condition.

Method

Sample

Since this thesis is part of a larger research project, data collection was done in collaboration with a fellow student. The sample was a convenience sample composed of participants who stem from personal networks. Participants were recruited from diverse branches and organisations. Most participants were approached by email. A small minority of participants was recruited via postings on social media (e.g., LinkedIn) or via the snowball procedure. In total, the study was distributed to approximately 240 individuals in leadership positions.

Figure 1*Graphic Illustration of the Overall Research Model*

A total of 134 responses were recorded (63 intervention group, 71 control group), resulting in a response rate of 55.83%. The actual response rate is likely to be lower since participants recruited via social media or by the snowball effect were not considered in the number of total individuals approached. Furthermore, participants did not receive any monetary compensations but were provided with the results of the study combined with insights on successful virtual communication. To check whether all participants fulfilled the study criteria, participants were asked to indicate their amount of leadership experience and number of followers. A total of five participants was dropped from the analysis since they either indicated to have less than three months of leadership experience or less than three followers. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 129 participants (60 intervention group, 69 control group). On average, 35.7% females and 64.3% males participated with a mean age of 42,62 years ($SD = 10.86$), an average leadership experience of 10.41 years ($SD = 8.16$) and an average tenure of 11.51 years ($SD = 10.23$). In total, individuals of 26 nationalities participated, the following being most represented: 49.6% German, 8.5% Greek, 7.0% Dutch and 5.4% British. Also, participants worked in diverse branches: manufacturing (20.9%), human health (17.1%), service activities (11.6%), electricity and gas supply (10.9%) and information technology (10.1%). Importantly, we conducted two independent t-tests to compare the groups mean of the different intervention and control groups. The results showed no significant differences between participants of the intervention or control group regarding gender, age, tenure and leadership experience.

Design and Procedure

We used an experimental 2 (mindfulness / mind-wandering) x 2 (time pressure / no time pressure) between subject design in which participants were randomly assigned to one of the four online conditions by the survey software. Before participating in the study, participants were informed about the general purpose of the experiment, namely, that they take part in a study on virtual leader-follower communication. Also, leaders were encouraged to be in a silent room with little distraction for the duration of the experiment. The experiment either started with a mindfulness breathing or a mind-wandering exercise which are described in the following section. After the induction phase, participants were asked to read an email from a hypothetical follower and to respond to the follower's email in a written form. In order to manipulate the perception of time pressure in the communication task, they were either in a neutral or time pressured condition. The last sequence of the experiment was a questionnaire including manipulation checks, a set of questions on perspective taking and demographics, followed by a written debriefing. The study was approved by the Ethics Review Committee Psychology and Neuroscience of Maastricht University (ERCPN 221_56_03_2020-V02).

Manipulations

The study consisted of four different conditions. One manipulation aimed at changing the participants' current state of mind by either inducing a mindful or neutral state. We shortened the audio files by Hafenbrack and Vohs (2018) to 5 min in order to decrease the drop-out rate since leaders were expected to have only little time available. The new audio file length was still in line with suggestions by Hafenbrack (2017) who stated that single sessions of mindfulness meditation with durations between 3 and 30 min have led to changes immediately after the exercise. Also, one experienced mindfulness instructor was used for all conditions which previously have been proven to be successful manipulations (Hafenbrack, 2017). The purpose of the mindfulness exercise was to bring participants' awareness to the sensations of their own breath in order to reach a state of non-judgemental present moment awareness. The mindfulness exercise was based on a script by Arch and Craske (2006) which followed mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) principles. Participants of the active control conditions did a mind-wandering exercise which encouraged to think of whatever popped up in their mind to resemble a neutral state.

The second manipulation targeted the perception of time pressure by limiting the available time for the communication task to 4 min (cf. Bakker et al., 2010). To determine the right amount of time for this exercise, pilot testing with 11 participants was done before. Pilot participants were divided in three groups each assigned to a different time frame (3.5, 4.0 & 4.5 min). Afterwards, pilot participants were asked to indicate whether they felt pressured and could finish the communication task. The pilot participants of the 4 min group reported to have

felt time pressured while still having the opportunity to execute the task. Therefore, a time limit of 4 min was chosen for the actual study. Importantly, participants were informed initially that they would only have a limited amount of time. Also, they saw a countdown while answering the follower's email.

Coding Method

We used contrast coding to code the independent variables (mindfulness and time pressure). In case a manipulation was present (intervention conditions), the conditions were coded +.5, whereas the absence of a manipulation (control conditions) was coded -.5 (Cohen et al., 2003). Contrast coding has several benefits, but most importantly it allows variables to be almost independent. Also, contrast coding allowed us to specify the directions of our hypothesis a priori by assuming certain differences between the group means (Cohen et al., 2003).

Scenario

For the present study, an email scenario has been created presenting a hypothetical follower addressing certain team and company issues (see Appendix A). Prior research used scenarios for related purposes, although this was to examine the followers' perspectives (Kelloway et al., 2003). Therefore, this email scenario was newly created since to our knowledge no prior scenarios for examining leader's communication behaviour existed. In a first step, the email scenario has been built based on the recommendations for creating a vignette study by Aguinis and Bradley (2014). Especially the recommendations of providing enough information and having a high level of immersion to make the scenario as realistic as possible were closely followed. Furthermore, the content of the scenario was chosen in light of recent topics to ensure high realism. Since the COVID-19 pandemic was a highly recent topic connected to many changes in the business world, it was included in the scenario.

In order to increase the quality and applicability of the scenario, several testing rounds were executed. A short questionnaire was designed to assess the level of realism and clarity as well as to investigate whether the scenario encourages diversity of answers and whether individuals feel pushed to give advocating answers. Firstly, the scenario was rated by two leadership experts. After implementing their feedback, four leaders and six regular employees were asked to rate the scenario on the same criteria. Moreover, they were asked to write an answer to the email. Only minor improvements had to be made since the levels of realism and clarity were rated very high and also diversity of answers was given.

Qualitative Coding of Respectful Inquiry

Since respectful inquiry was previously only assessed in face-to-face communication, we followed suggestions by Van Quaquebeke and Felps (2018) to measure respectful inquiry in written communication. In order to generate scores of respectful inquiry, leaders' email

responses to their hypothetical follower were coded. First, a coding schema was created. A holistic approach was chosen for coding the qualitative data relating to behaviours of respectful inquiry (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014). By using the holistic approach, we could identify specific themes or behaviours instead of scoring every sequence of words separately (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014). The schema consisted of behavioural codes derived from an active listening scale by Drollinger et al. (2006), a respectful inquiry scale by Van Quaquebeke and Felps (2016) and an article about respectful inquiry (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). The overall coding categories were “question asking” and “attentive empathic listening”. Each category consisted of several subcategories, which were listed in a hierarchical order according to their quality (see Appendix B). For example, two subcategories of question asking were “inviting further discussion” and “inquiry on opinion without advising”. Since the second category incorporates a higher quality of respectful inquiry as discussed in the literature (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018), this subcategory received two points, whereas the first category received one point. Furthermore, each category included a behavioural description and a scoring weight. In a final step, examples from the emails were added to the schema to facilitate a similar understanding of the two raters.

To test the applicability of the derived codes, the raters conducted two pilot coding rounds in which eight randomly chosen emails were assessed. After rating the texts, the raters fine-tuned the coding schema and participated in a coding training together with a leadership expert to reach a shared understanding of the codes. As a follow-up, eight more emails were coded and discussed to practice the coding activity thoroughly. In a next step, the emails were divided between the raters with an overlap of 12,4% (i.e. 16 emails). For the purpose of assessing the interrater reliability, the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated based on the sixteen emails coded by both raters (Ranganathan et al., 2017). The overall interrater reliability was considered excellent due to an agreement of 87,5% for respectful inquiry (question asking = .95; attentive listening = .80).

Measures

Qualitative data was derived from the written exercise and a general survey. The general survey asked for participants demographics and additional background information, such as leadership experience, number of followers, tenure and current working situation. The experiment materials were fully provided in English and all scales were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Mindfulness Manipulation Check

The items of the manipulation check were previously validated in studies with similar types of inductions (Hafenbrack & Vohs, 2018; Long & Christian, 2015). Immediately after the exercise, participants had to rate their experiences during the mindfulness practice as recommended by

Bishop et al. (2004). The two items ($r_s = .42$) to check the degree of state mindfulness are “I was mostly thinking about the present moment” and “I was focused on my breathing” derived from Hafenbrack and Vohs (2018). To verify the control condition, the extent of mind-wandering was assessed by using two items of a study by Long and Christian (2015) “I thought about anything I wanted to” and “I let my mind wander freely” ($r_s = .55$).

Time Pressure Manipulation Check

Two items were used to check whether participants felt time pressured. These items were taken from research with a similar time pressure manipulation by Bakker et al. (2010). The items are “I had to work very fast” and “I worked under time pressure” ($r_s = .84$). These items were administered directly after the time-limited communication task.

Perspective Taking

Situational perspective taking during the communication exercise was assessed by using four items ($\alpha = .68$) from a communication study by Edwards et al. (2017). They adapted some items of the perspective taking scale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) by Davis (1983). The IRI has originally been constructed to measure individual differences in empathy, thus trait perspective taking. Since Edwards et al. (2017) were interested in state perspective taking, the wording of items was slightly changed to measure perspective taking in a specific situation. A sample item is “I tried to imagine how I would feel if I were in my employee’s place”.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Manipulation Check

Table 1 depicts means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations between the study variables. There are positive correlations between leadership experience and age ($r = .80, p < .001$), tenure and age ($r = .64, p < .001$), as well as between leadership experience and tenure ($r = .68, p < .001$). Furthermore, the experimental inductions and the corresponding manipulation check items correlated positively. The time pressure induction correlated with the manipulation check items for time pressure ($r = .40, p < .001$) and the mindfulness induction correlated with the manipulation check items for mindfulness ($r = .52, p < .001$). We conducted manipulation checks by comparing group means with independent sample t-tests. Participants in the mindfulness condition ($M = 3.31, SD = 0.70$) reported higher awareness for their breath and the present moment than participants in the control condition ($M = 2.47, SD = 0.68$), $t(127) = -6.922, p < .01, d = 1.24$. In a similar vein, we tested whether the time pressure induction had a significant effect on participants’ perceived time pressure. Participants in the time pressure condition ($M = 3.44, SD = 1.08$) reported stronger feelings of time pressure opposed to the control condition ($M = 2.52, SD = 1.04$), $t(126) = -.919, p < .01, d = .87$. These results indicate that the mindfulness induction and the induction of time pressure had the intended effects.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among the Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender ^a	1.35	.48	-										
2. Age	42.63	10.86	-.03	-									
3. Leadership experience	10.41	8.16	-.13	.80**	-								
4. Tenure	11.51	10.23	-.12	.64**	.68**	-							
5. Man. check mindfulness ^b	2.86	.80	.12	.02	.04	.09	-						
6. Man. check time pressure	3.02	1.15	.08	-.03	-.17	-.04	.07	-					
7. Perspective taking	4.09	.54	.13	-.03	.00	.03	.03	-.03	-				
8. Respectful inquiry	4.57	4.53	.16	-.04	-.15	-.12	-.01	-.06	.12	-			
9. Mindfulness induction ^c			.02	.00	.05	.12	.52**	.01	-.05	.15	-		
10. Time pressure induction ^d			.01	-.04	-.01	-.02	-.05	.40**	-.14	-.12	-.03	-	
11. State mindfulness x time pressure			.03	.09	.07	.01	.06	-.10	.10	.04	.07	-.07	-

Note. N = 129.

^a Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female.

^b Manipulation check mindfulness variable includes state mindfulness items and reversed mind-wandering items.

^c Coding: -0.5 = control: mind-wandering, +0.5 = intervention: mindfulness induction.

^d Coding: -0.5 = control: no time pressure, +0.5 = intervention: time pressure induction.

* p < .05 (two-tailed). ** p < .01 (two-tailed).

Examination of Main and Moderating Effects

In order to test hypotheses 1-3, we conducted a regression analysis including respectful inquiry as a dependent variable. Since the directions of the first and second hypotheses were specified a priori, we used a one-tailed significance test to analyse the main effects of mindfulness and time pressure on respectful inquiry (e.g. Nübold et al., 2013). Also, we included an interaction term in the regression analysis to test the moderating effect of mindfulness on the effect of time pressure on respectful inquiry (hypothesis 3). Table 2 shows the results of the regression analysis.

The first hypothesis stated that a mindfulness induction positively influences respectful inquiry. The relationship between mindfulness and respectful inquiry was significant ($\beta = .14$, $t(127) = 1.62$, $p < .05$). Results showed that leaders in the mindfulness condition showed higher levels of respectful inquiry than leaders in the control condition, thus supporting the first hypothesis. According to the second hypothesis, time pressure was expected to have a negative influence on respectful inquiry. However, the main effect of time pressure on respectful inquiry did not reach significance ($\beta = -.11$, $t(126) = -1.26$, $p = ns$). Thus, hypothesis 2 was not supported. Following hypothesis 3, an interaction effect between time pressure and mindfulness on leaders' respectful inquiry was expected. The regression analysis, including the predictor variables and the interaction term, did not confirm this expectation, as the effect was not significant ($\beta = .02$, $t(126) = .27$, $p = ns$). Thus, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Examination of Mediating and Moderated Mediating Effects

In a next step, we tested the potential mediating role of perspective taking between mindfulness and respectful inquiry (hypothesis 4) as well as between time pressure and

Table 2

Regression of Mindfulness and Time Pressure on the Dependent Variable Respectful Inquiry

Block	Variable	Respectful Inquiry		
		ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	β
1	Predictors	.04		
	Mindfulness		1.29	.14*
	Time Pressure		-1.00	-.11
2	Interaction	.00		
	Mindfulness x Time Pressure		.43	.02
R ² total		.04		

Note. $N = 129$. Coefficients are taken from the last step of the regression analysis.

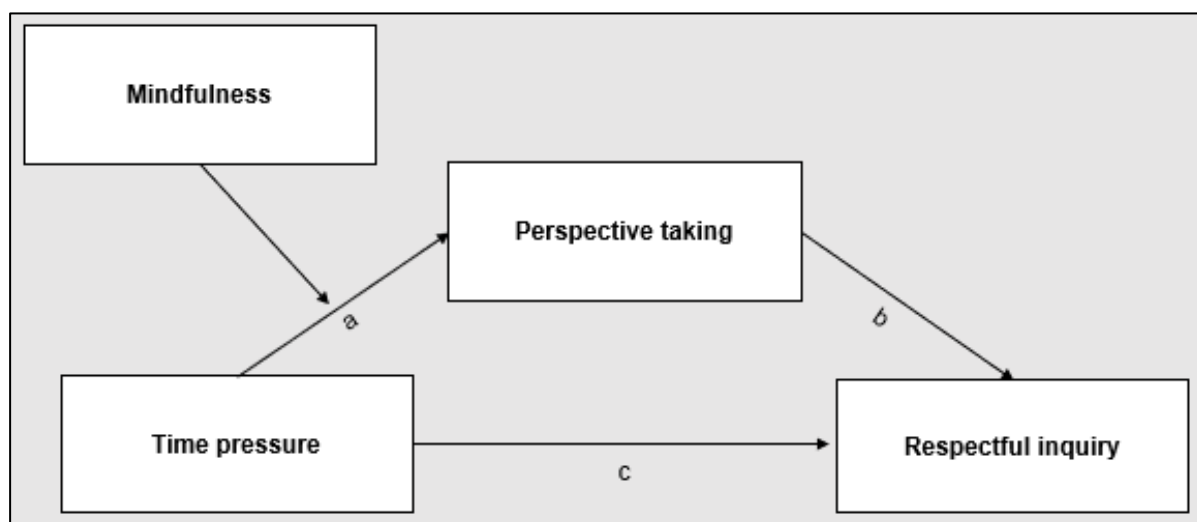
* $p < .05$ (one -tailed). ** $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

respectful inquiry (hypothesis 5). Therefore, we followed the procedure described by Hayes (2017) and used the SPSS macro PROCESS. For hypothesis 4 and 5, we used the model template 4 to analyse simple mediation effects (Hayes, 2017). These indirect effects were based on bootstrapped confidence intervals at the 90% significance level. Finally, we tested the expected moderated mediation effect by using the model template 7. Model 7 analyses the moderated mediation with moderation of path a but not path c (see Figure 2). Table 3 shows the results of the indirect effects.

According to hypothesis 4, perspective taking was expected to mediate the effect of mindfulness on respectful inquiry. In the analysis, we included mindfulness as the predictor, perspective taking as the mediator and respectful inquiry as the dependent variable. The resulting confidence interval did include zero (90% CI [-.29; .12]). Thus, the indirect effect was not considered statistically significant. Hypothesis 5 suggested perspective taking as potential mediator between time pressure and respectful inquiry. Since the confidence interval also included zero (90% CI [-.41; .04]), hypothesis 5 did not reach significance. Hence, the same pattern of results showed up as for hypothesis 4, showing that both hypothesis 4 and 5 could not be confirmed. As stated in hypothesis 6, a moderated mediation effect was expected in the sense that the indirect effect of time pressure on respectful inquiry via perspective taking might be moderated by mindfulness (see Figure 2). Hypothesis 6 did not reach significance since zero was included in the confidence interval (90% CI [-.11; .68]). Thus, hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Figure 2

Graphic Illustration of the Hypothesized Moderated Mediation Model



Note. Mindfulness was analysed based on the expectation that it moderates the effect of time pressure on perspective taking (path a).

Table 3*Results Indirect Effects With Process Macro*

	Respectful Inquiry (Y)			
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Indirect effect (MFL→PT→RI)	-.06	.13	-.29	.12
Indirect effect (TP→PT→RI)	-.14	.15	-.41	.04
Indirect effect mindfulness group (TP→PT→RI)	-.04	.15	-.31	.18
Indirect effect control group (TP→PT→RI)	-.22	.23	-.68	.04
Index of moderated mediation	.18	.26	-.11	.68
Total R ²	.03			

Note. *N* = 129.

MFL = Mindfulness Induction; TP = Time Pressure Induction; PT = Perspective Taking; RI = Respectful Inquiry

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed). ***p* < .01 (two-tailed).

Discussion

In an experimental online study on written leader-follower communication, we tested the effects of a mindfulness induction on leaders' respectful inquiry. Our findings suggest a positive relation because leaders in the mindfulness group showed significantly higher levels of respectful inquiry than leaders in the control group. Furthermore, we included a time pressure induction to investigate potential consequences for respectful inquiry. Results revealed that time pressure does not negatively influence respectful inquiry. The buffering effect of mindfulness as potential boundary condition of the effect of time pressure on respectful inquiry was not significant. In addition, the examination of perspective taking as mediator in the relationships between mindfulness and respectful inquiry as well as between time pressure and respectful inquiry did not reach significance. Finally, the moderating effect of mindfulness on the indirect effect of time pressure on respectful inquiry via perspective taking did not reach significance.

Overall, the present results add to the literature on mindfulness in the workplace. They show that a short mindfulness induction promotes leaders' respectful inquiry in virtual environments. Specifically, leaders' active engagement in mindfulness at work promotes their open question asking and attentive listening in the virtual context. A possible explanation for this link is that when leaders actively engage in mindfulness exercises, their present moment attention and awareness for themselves as well as for others is stimulated (Brown et al., 2007). These effects, in turn, might be responsible for an increase of respectful inquiry in written communication. In line with our findings, previous research highlighted the beneficial influence of mindfulness on face-to-face communication since it promoted communication quality

(Arendt et al., 2019). Since prior research highlighted the importance of respectful and efficient communication in virtual settings (Liu et al., 2018; Arendt et al., 2019), knowledge on how to increase respectful inquiry is useful for organisations. Thus, our results provide important practical implications for organisations, because mindfulness is a cost- and time efficient mean for leaders to increase positive written communication in virtual settings (Hafenbrack, 2017).

Furthermore, the present findings contribute to our understanding of how time pressure influences respectful inquiry. Even though leaders in the time limited condition indicated feelings of time pressure, their levels of respectful inquiry were not affected significantly. Thus, our results showed that leaders' respectful inquiry does not suffer when they feel pressured by time. A potential explanation can be found in research by Dóci et al., (2020). They argued that every leader has an individual specific average of time pressure. If the perceived time pressure does not exceed the individual's average, their behaviour is not influenced negatively (Dóci et al., 2020). Accordingly, it is possible that the period of induced time pressure in the present study was too short to exceed leaders' personal average level. Although feelings of time pressure were present, leaders' respectful inquiry was not harmed. Moreover, leaders in the time pressure condition were able to effectively handle time pressure no matter whether they practiced mindfulness or engaged in mind-wandering. Thus, mindfulness did not have a significant influence on the relationship between time pressure and respectful inquiry. In contrast to our findings, earlier research has found beneficial effects of mindfulness in stressful situations (Wittman et al., 2015; Hougaard et al., 2016). However, these studies differ from ours as they considered a combination of critical influences (e.g. time pressure, information overload and distraction) over longer periods, whereas the present study only used a very short time pressure induction. This argumentation was supported by Baethge et al. (2018) who stated that time pressure is not always a hindering factor. They suggested that, in contrast to prolonged time pressure, a singular exposure to time pressure can be managed well. Importantly, the combination of detrimental influences over a longer period might impact available resources more strongly than a single time pressure experience. Future research may examine the effect of time pressure on respectful inquiry when administered over time. Such knowledge would aid organisations in the development of a better understanding about which conditions make time pressure a hindering or challenging factor (Baethge et al., 2018).

Finally, we tested perspective taking as an underlying mechanism in the relationships mentioned above. The indirect effects of mindfulness or time pressure on respectful inquiry via perspective taking were not significant. Thus, leaders' perspective taking capacity did not appear to play a crucial role in these relations. In contrast to positive findings (Block-Lerner et al., 2007; Krasner et al., 2009), the present study did not confirm the beneficial effect of mindfulness on perspective taking even though the manipulation of mindfulness was significant. These inconsistencies in results might be due to two reasons. First, most previous

studies examined the effect of regular mindfulness practices (i.e., trait mindfulness) on perspective taking (Krasner et al., 2009). For instance, the longitudinal study by Krasner et al. (2009) found significant changes in trait perspective taking after repeated mindfulness practices. Opposed to that, the present research used a single mindfulness exercise (i.e., state mindfulness) in order to influence perspective taking. Thus, it might be that mindfulness needs to be practiced regularly to positively influence perspective taking. Second, the order of how constructs were assessed in the present study differs from prior ones (Beitel et al., 2005). In the present study, perspective taking was assessed at the end, instead of immediately after the mindfulness induction, as we were interested in leaders' perspective taking *while* writing the email to their follower. Thus, leaders had to evaluate their levels of perspective taking afterwards without having paid attention to it during the task itself. This way of retrospectively assessing perspective taking might have caused distortions in perspective taking scores potentially explaining the non-significance of our results. Given the findings from previous research showing that mindfulness enhances perspective taking (Block-Lerner et al., 2007), it may be fruitful to investigate this potential link in a different experimental set-up.

In addition, different to our expectation, time pressure did not relate to leaders' levels of respectful inquiry through perspective taking. As argued above, leaders have an individual specific average level of time pressure they can handle (Dóci et al., 2020), causing time pressure having no effect on their perspective taking capacity. Therefore, we did not find the expected mediation. Finally, the indirect effect of time pressure via perspective taking on respectful inquiry was not significantly moderated by mindfulness. This might be explained by considering a combination of two previously stated arguments. First, leaders' resistance towards time pressure centred around their individual average (Dóci et al., 2020) and second, the possible bias due to the way perspective taking was assessed (i.e., retrospectively). To summarize, perspective taking did not influence the levels of respectful inquiry in either of the hypothesized indirect effects. A more general explanation for these results might be that other mechanisms than perspective taking play a more crucial role for the promotion of respectful inquiry. Past research, for example, focused more strongly on the effect of perspective taking on listening behaviour than on respectful inquiry as whole (Lloyd et al., 2015). This potentially explains why previous research was able to demonstrate links between perspective taking and communication behaviour, while we were not. Future research might want to examine further potential mechanisms which influence respectful inquiry as a whole.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the benefits of our experimental study, it comes with several limitations. The first one concerns the assessment of attentive listening as a component of respectful inquiry in a written format. Opposed to question asking which can be easily assessed in written contexts, attentive

listening had to be inferred from written communication. Van Quaquebeke and Felps (2018) suggested to assess attentive listening in written contexts by considering leaders' answers to followers' questions as well as the repetition of followers' comments. These suggestions were followed while additional behavioural codes from an active listening scale by Drollinger et al. (2006) were translated into written formats. However, assessing listening in emails is challenging. Although leaders might have listened attentively to followers' emails, they rarely express it explicitly and rather mention it between the lines. Since capturing implicit content is very difficult and ambiguous, we focused our coding schema on explicit content. Future research could investigate other assessment methods to gather insights on written communication. For example, Tyran et al. (2003) asked followers to rate the emails motivational power and levels of trust. Since efficient communication is a key function of virtual leadership (Liu et al., 2018), further knowledge on written leader-follower communication is warranted.

The second limitation concerns the email scenario in the communication exercise which was a first attempt to examine issues arising from COVID-19. Due to digitalization and specifically because of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual communication has become increasingly prevalent in the corporate world. We based our email scenario on vignette recommendations (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014), example scenarios (e.g., Kelloway et al., 2003), as well as expert and novice ratings in order to establish a comprehensive and appropriate scenario. Even though almost every pilot participant indicated high levels of realism and clarity, future research could develop additional scenarios displaying a range of diverse follower issues in order to validate and extend the given findings. Additional scenario studies could advance our understanding of mechanisms in written communication and provide helpful advices for leaders in order to enhance successful written communication.

Furthermore, the present study examined perspective taking as a potential mechanism in the association between mindfulness and respectful inquiry. Thereby, cognitive aspects of communication are evoked (i.e. perspective taking), whereas other aspects of empathy might also play a crucial role. At this point, it is worth highlighting that written communication suffers from a lack of emotional information, since visual or oral emotional cues are absent (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). Therefore, emotional concern might be beneficial for enhancing respectful inquiry in written communication since it evokes the explicit expression of emotional messages (Beitel et al., 2005) and thereby increasing respectful inquiry. It seems important that future research continues to investigate the role of empathy in written communication by assessing the effects of other empathy aspects in virtual settings.

Practical Implications

The findings of the present study may offer valuable insights for organisations in order to support leaders in effective written communication. Our results highlight the benefits of short mindfulness inductions in leader-follower communication since it enhances levels of respectful inquiry. Hence, short mindfulness exercises provide multiple advantages for leaders. First, it can be practiced and used on the spot. Therefore, leaders specifically benefit from it when needed the most (Reynolds et al., 2015). Second, only little time for implementation is needed in comparison to long-term mindfulness trainings requiring more time investment (Hafenbrack, 2017). Third, the implementation of mindfulness exercises is cost efficient for organisations, since many materials and exercises are free and available online (Hafenbrack & Vohs, 2018). Therefore, mindfulness should be promoted and implemented in companies in order to increase communication quality of leaders, which, in turn, has a positive impact on the well-being and satisfaction of employees (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). Next to promoting and providing access to mindfulness exercises, mindfulness could also be implemented in leadership trainings. Due to daily business routines, not all leaders might take the initiative to practice and implement mindfulness where needed. Therefore, the concept of mindfulness can be discussed during leadership trainings to introduce the theoretical background, highlight advantages and try out various exercises (Eby et al., 2019).

Conclusion

By identifying mindfulness as a mean to effectively enhance leaders' respectful inquiry in virtual environments, the present study advances our understanding on how to increase written communication behaviour of leaders. Thereby, our study adds to the existing literature on mindfulness in the workplace by extending knowledge of its beneficial effects from traditional to virtual communication. Since the present study was a first attempt to investigate respectful inquiry in written communication, it hopefully stimulates future research to identify further means to enhance leaders' virtual communication behaviour. When looking at the rapid pace of digitalization and the increase of employees working remotely, the present research emphasizes the importance for organisations to implement mindfulness in order to enable leaders for respectful virtual communication.

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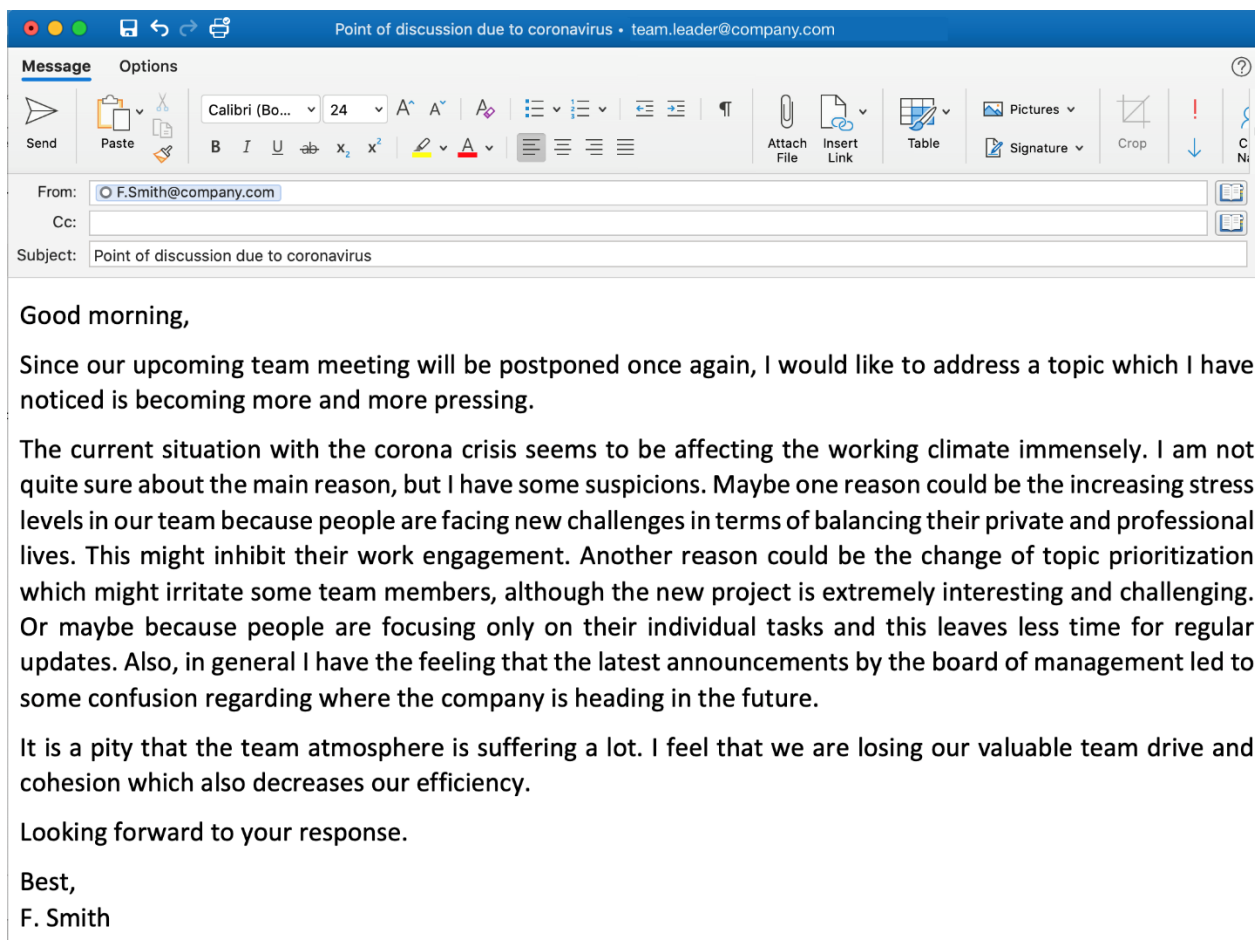
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Appendices

Appendix A: Email Scenario



The screenshot shows an email client window with a blue header bar. The title bar reads "Point of discussion due to coronavirus • team.leader@company.com". Below the header is a "Message" tab and an "Options" menu. The main toolbar includes icons for Send, Paste, Attach File, Insert Link, Table, Pictures, Signature, and Crop. The email header shows "From: F.Smith@company.com", "Cc:", and "Subject: Point of discussion due to coronavirus". The body of the email contains the following text:

Good morning,

Since our upcoming team meeting will be postponed once again, I would like to address a topic which I have noticed is becoming more and more pressing.

The current situation with the corona crisis seems to be affecting the working climate immensely. I am not quite sure about the main reason, but I have some suspicions. Maybe one reason could be the increasing stress levels in our team because people are facing new challenges in terms of balancing their private and professional lives. This might inhibit their work engagement. Another reason could be the change of topic prioritization which might irritate some team members, although the new project is extremely interesting and challenging. Or maybe because people are focusing only on their individual tasks and this leaves less time for regular updates. Also, in general I have the feeling that the latest announcements by the board of management led to some confusion regarding where the company is heading in the future.

It is a pity that the team atmosphere is suffering a lot. I feel that we are losing our valuable team drive and cohesion which also decreases our efficiency.

Looking forward to your response.

Best,
F. Smith

Appendix B: Coding Schema of Respectful Inquiry

Main Category	Sub-category	Description	Example	Code	Weight
Question Asking <i>Questions = Statements or question which invite any form of an answer</i>	Inquiry on well-being	Asking openly how they are doing/how they are being affected. (high emotional tone)	<i>"I am very sorry to hear that. How do you currently feel?"</i>	QA_IP	(+) 3
		Leaders let the follower know that they are always approachable for them (future perspective).	<i>"Please feel assured, that you can always contact me with any concerns you might have." (open)</i>		
	Inquiry on opinion <i>without</i> propositions	Open question: Asking about their opinion <u>without</u> proposing a solution/giving advice.	<i>"Can you tell me how we can improve the situation? Do you have any ideas?" "I think it is urgent to act. What is your idea about a solution?" "Can you explain to me why you think..."</i>	QA_NP	
	Inquiry on opinion <i>with</i> propositions	Open question: Asking about their opinion <u>and</u> proposing a solution/giving advice	<i>"I propose we should organize a virtual team meeting soon. What do you think about this? Is there something else you think we should do?" "Let me know what you think about it." "If you have any further/alternative ideas, please let me know."</i>	QA_OP	(+) 2
	Inviting further discussion	Leader proposes next steps/actions (directive).	<i>"I'll phone you later so we can discuss what we can do better." (inviting but postponing) "Would tomorrow 10 am be a good time to talk?"</i>	QA_DP	
	Showing signs of friendliness	Asking openly how they are doing/how they are	<i>"How're u?"</i>	QA_FP	(+) 1

Question Asking <i>Questions = Statements or question which invite any form of an answer</i>		being affected. (low emotional tone)			
	Clarification	... facts about the situation (not about personal assessment) - less quality more neutral	"Can you let me know some more details about the current situation...."	QA_CP	
	Unmotivated reaction/not being interested	Leader proposes next steps/actions but does not seem very motivated/ /enthusiastic.	" If necessary , we can talk to address this"	QA_AN	(-) 1
		Generalising/ playing down the situation & making the follower feel the situation is not unique to them (although the follower feels like this)	"The situation you're describing is in no ways unique to our team." "Your opinion is a single one and I am sure the rest of the team thinks differently."		
	Limiting opinion sharing	Limited answer questions/ Asking about the opinion but giving choices.	"Would you rather prefer to do it like that (solution A) or to do it like this (solution B)?"	QA_LN	
	No inquiry on opinion <i>only</i> propositions	Closed questions (don't require an answer): Advocating a solution in a directive way without asking for their opinion.	"I in the first place want to learn how the rest of the team perceives the situation, what the issue is and what solutions are proposed. I think it is crucial to solve this issue with all team members collectively."	QA_DN	(-) 2
	Expressing disrespect	Being disrespectful towards the feelings and situation of the follower	"You figured some possible issues but without solutions this analysis is worth nothing."	QA_IN	(-) 3
	Repelling further personal involvement	Stating explicitly that they are unapproachable/do not want to be contacted. (closed)	"I do not want to be contacted about this situation again." "I am unavailable to speak to speak about this."		

Main Category	Subcategory	Description	Example	Code	Weight
Attentive empathic listening	Showing understanding & empathy	By understanding the explicit emotions and feelings.	<i>"I understand that you are under a lot of stress at the moment...."</i>	AL_UP	(+) 3
		By picking up the implicit hidden emotional messages of the follower	<i>"I can imagine you must feel very unsatisfied and maybe even sad, but...."</i>		
		By directly expressing understanding for their situation or opinion.	<i>"I am sharing your opinion." "What you mention in your email is true." "I can really relate to what you are saying."</i>		
	Showing engagement	Stating that you actively listened/understood.	<i>"From what I have read so far,..." "I hear you!"</i>	AL_EP	(+) 2
		Relating to follower's opinion by sharing own opinion without adding extra value (high emotional tone)	<i>"I also experienced that the team motivation...."</i>		
		Summarizing/reframing/ repeating/ picking up information that was provided/ keeping track of mentioned points, concerns or issues.	<i>"I also have noticed a change in our team dynamic regarding the work spirit, communication and efficiency."</i>		
	Showing signs of receptiveness	By appreciating the factual information provided about the situation.	<i>"Thank you for your message and for bringing this situation to my knowledge." "Thanks a lot for your email."</i>	AL_RP	(+) 1
		By appreciating the sharing of feelings (more personal).	<i>"Thank you for sharing your feelings so openly."</i>		
		By thanking for sharing their opinion/thoughts. (giving feedback)	<i>"Thank you very much for sharing your opinion and thoughts with me." "Thank you for your open and direct communication."</i>		

	No signs of receptiveness	Leader shows actively that he/she is not interested in the feelings of the follower.	<i>"Come on...."/ "Don't be pathetic...!"</i>	AL_RN	(-) 1
	No understanding nor empathy	By not understanding the explicit emotions and feelings/ obviously being insensitive	<i>"I don't understand that you are under a lot of stress at the moment...." "I do not get your point...." "As the situation won't change soon, we'll have to live with it."</i>	AL_UN	(-) 3