

Theoretical Integration of Mindfulness and Psychoanalysis: Perspectives and Clinical Implications

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Conventional mindfulness protocols may prove inadequate for individuals with histories of trauma, developmental disruptions, or cultural backgrounds in which the language and framework of Western mindfulness are not meaningful. Psychodynamic concepts present valuable resources for enriching mindfulness practice while preserving its conceptual coherence and authenticity. This systematic review explores the potential of psychodynamic concepts to enhance mindfulness practice in the context of complex clinical presentations, culminating in the development of an innovative framework—the Mindfulness-Centred Psychodynamic Integration (MCPI) model. A systematic review was undertaken by searching the PsycINFO, Web of Science, and PubMed databases for articles published between 1990 and 2024, employing search terms such as "mindfulness AND psychoanalysis," "mindfulness AND psychodynamic," and "meditation AND unconscious processes." Out of the 273 articles initially identified, 60 fulfilled the inclusion criteria, concentrating on adaptations and applications of mindfulness for complex clinical presentations. The analysis revealed four domains in which psychodynamic concepts can enrich mindfulness practice: (1) attentional flexibility; (2) developmental approaches to self-observation; (3) transforming one's relationship to suffering; and (4) therapeutic presence. Additionally, four areas for potential expansion were identified: temporal integration, the balance between experiential and conceptual understanding, developmental approaches to self-experience, and adaptable intervention strategies. Fur-

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thermore, five enhancement frameworks emerged from the literature, which informed the formulation of the proposed MCPI model. The MCPI framework retains mindfulness practices as the core therapeutic component while strategically integrating psychodynamic concepts to deepen practice and enhance its efficacy. This approach holds value for complex clinical presentations in which conventional mindfulness protocols may prove inadequate. Future research should empirically assess these enriched mindfulness practices, establish training protocols for mindfulness instructors, and investigate cultural adaptations across varied populations.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Complex Presentations, Culturally Adapted Mindfulness, MCPI Framework, Developmental Approaches

Introduction

Background and Significance

Mindfulness-based interventions have significantly transformed contemporary mental health practice since their formal introduction to Western healthcare in the late 1970s. Rooted in Buddhist contemplative traditions dating back over 2,500 years, mindfulness practices were secularised and systematised by Kabat-Zinn with the development of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Subsequent advancements have led to the establishment of mindfulness-based programmes (MBPs), as defined by Crane et al. (2017), including Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), all of which have demonstrated strong evidence in the treatment of various psychological conditions (Hayes, 2004; Khoury et al., 2013; Sørensen et al., 2011).

Despite their proven efficacy, mindfulness-based interventions face notable limitations when applied to complex clinical presentations. As (Van Dam et al., 2018) argue in their critical evaluation of mindfulness research, standardised protocols often fail to address deeply ingrained psychological patterns stemming from developmental trauma, unconscious processes, or cultural factors. Research shows that approximately 30-40% of participants in conventional mindfulness programmes show minimal response or experience adverse effects, such as heightened anxiety, dissociative experiences, or emotional flooding (Baer et al., 2019; Britton, 2019). Treleaven (2018) specifically notes that trauma survivors may encounter meditation-induced adverse effects when standard protocols do not accommodate traumatic stress responses. These limitations have led mindfulness researchers to explore complementary frameworks that can enhance mindfulness applications for complex presentations (Doorn et al., 2020; Dyga & Stupak, 2015).

Psychodynamic approaches provide sophisticated frameworks for understanding unconscious processes, developmental patterns, and complex

psychological dynamics, which may complement mindfulness practices (Curtis, 2012; Gabbard, 2017). These approaches share conceptual similarities with mindfulness traditions—both emphasise deepening awareness, attending to subjective experience, and transforming, rather than merely eliminating, psychological suffering (Charles, 2024; Valle, 2019). This conceptual overlap suggests potential for meaningful integration, preserving mindfulness practices as the central therapeutic element while enriching them with psychodynamic insights to address the limitations identified in mindfulness research.

The clinical significance of this integration lies in expanding the scope and depth of mindfulness applications. As Crane et al. (2017) note, standard mindfulness protocols follow structured formats with predetermined practices and psychoeducational components, which, while facilitating research standardisation, may limit their applicability for individuals with complex presentations. Cultural factors further complicate standardised approaches, as (Kirmayer, 2015) demonstrates how mindfulness practices carry implicit cultural assumptions that may not translate effectively across diverse populations. Psychodynamic perspectives can inform culturally responsive and developmentally sensitive adaptations to standard mindfulness practices, providing conceptual tools for understanding resistance, defence mechanisms, and relational patterns that often arise during meditation practice but remain unaddressed in conventional protocols (Govrin, 2016; Konichezky et al., 2022).

Mindfulness teachers and researchers are increasingly recognising these limitations, with growing interest in adapting practices for complex presentations. Treleaven (2018) trauma-sensitive mindfulness approach represents a systematic effort to address these concerns, while Kirmayer (2015) calls for greater attention to cultural adaptations of mindfulness practices. However, as Van Dam et al. (2018) contend, the field still lacks comprehensive frameworks to guide such adaptations. Current approaches to customising mindfulness interventions often lack theoretical coherence, creating risks of diluting core mindfulness elements or applying clinically inappropriate modifications (Baer et al., 2019; Kalayasiri et al., 2023).

Research Objectives

This study aims to systematically explore how psychodynamic concepts can enhance and extend mindfulness applications through a comprehensive literature review and conceptual analysis. Specifically, it addresses four key research questions:

- (1) What theoretical commonalities and differences exist between mindfulness-based interventions and psychodynamic approaches that could inform adaptations of mindfulness for complex presentations?

- (2) How might psychodynamic concepts enhance the understanding of processes and phenomena encountered in mindfulness practice, particularly those not sufficiently addressed in standard protocols?
- (3) What frameworks for mindfulness-centred integration have been proposed in the literature, and how might they be synthesised into a coherent approach?
- (4) What specific adaptations to mindfulness teaching and practice emerge from this integration that might extend its applications to complex clinical presentations?

By addressing these questions, this study seeks to contribute to the development of mindfulness-based interventions by providing a theoretically grounded framework for extending their applications to complex presentations. The proposed MCPI framework offers mindfulness teachers and practitioners conceptual tools for understanding and addressing challenging phenomena that emerge during meditation practice, while preserving the essential elements of mindfulness as the central therapeutic approach.

Method

Search Strategy and Study Selection

This systematic review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). A comprehensive literature search was conducted across three major electronic databases: PsycINFO, Web of Science, and PubMed. To identify literature examining the intersection of mindfulness practices and psychodynamic concepts, we used the search terms "mindfulness AND psychoanalysis," "mindfulness therapy AND psychoanalytic," "mindfulness AND psychodynamic," and "meditation AND unconscious processes." The search covered articles published from January 1990 to March 2024, a period during which mindfulness received significant attention in Western clinical psychology and began to address more complex applications beyond standardised protocols.

Inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles in English; (2) theoretical papers, reviews, or empirical studies addressing the integration of mindfulness practices with psychodynamic concepts; (3) articles examining challenges and adaptations of mindfulness practices for complex clinical presentations; (4) studies discussing mindfulness teaching modifications based on an understanding of unconscious processes or developmental patterns. Exclusion criteria were: (1) articles focusing exclusively on either mindfulness or psychodynamic approaches without addressing their relationship; (2) book reviews, commentaries, or editorials; (3) articles not available in full text; (4) papers discussing integration

without specific reference to mindfulness practice or teaching adaptations. The initial database search yielded 273 records. After removing duplicates ($n=68$), 205 articles remained for title and abstract screening. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 122 articles were excluded during this phase. The remaining 83 articles underwent full-text assessment, resulting in 60 articles meeting all criteria for inclusion in the final analysis. Figure 1 presents the PRISMA flow diagram illustrating the selection process.

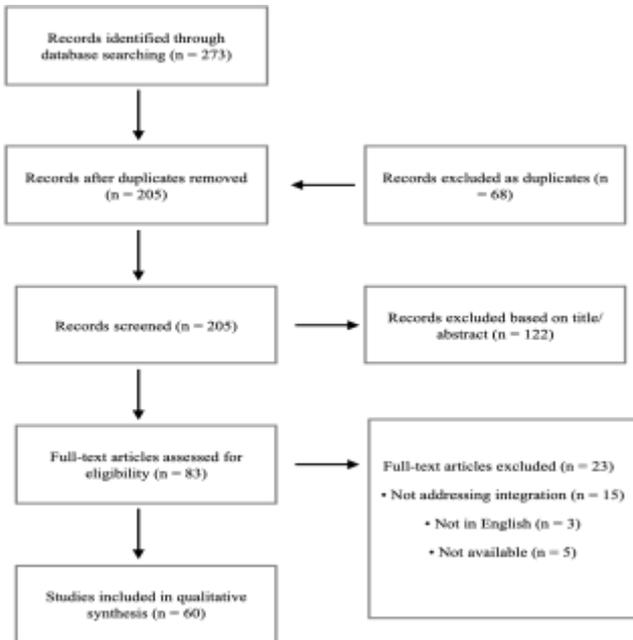


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection Process

Data Extraction and Analysis

We extracted data using a standardised form that captured: publication details, paper type, mindfulness approaches discussed, psychodynamic concepts addressed, integration frameworks proposed, mindfulness teaching adaptations, applications for complex presentations, and implementation challenges. Special attention was given to how authors described adaptations of standard mindfulness practices and the theoretical rationales provided for these modifications. The data was analysed using thematic analysis Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify patterns regarding theoretical commonalities, differences, mindfulness practice adaptations, and clinical applications across the literature. To ensure reliability, two researchers independently coded 10 articles, resolved discrepancies, and

refined the coding scheme before analysing the remaining articles. The research team regularly discussed emerging themes to maintain analytical consistency. The mindfulness approaches discussed in the literature were categorised according to their primary traditions: MBSR, MBCT, ACT, DBT, and traditional Buddhist meditation practices. A separate category was created for articles discussing adaptations of standard protocols for specific populations or complex presentations.

Our analysis involved several stages: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Particular attention was paid to how authors addressed the limitations of standard mindfulness approaches and proposed conceptual or practical adaptations. This focus enabled us to identify patterns in how psychodynamic concepts were used to understand and address challenges in mindfulness teaching and practice, particularly for complex clinical presentations (Bouchard & Lecours, 2004; Bradbury, 2014). From the 60 included articles, 10 core articles were identified as providing the most substantial contributions to understanding the integration of mindfulness and psychoanalysis, based on citation impact, theoretical depth, and influence on subsequent literature. These articles underwent detailed analysis and formed the foundation for our proposed MCPI framework.

Results

Characteristics of Included Literature

The 60 articles selected for this systematic review, covering the period from 1990 to 2024, explored multiple facets of integrating psychodynamic concepts with mindfulness practices. These articles included theoretical discussions, conceptual analyses, empirical research, and practical applications within clinical settings. The temporal distribution indicates a marked increase in research interest post-2010, with roughly 70% of the articles published during this period (see Table 1).

Table 1

Distribution of Publications by Year

Time Period	Number of Articles	Percentage
1990-1999	2	3.3%
2000-2009	16	26.7%
2010-2019	26	43.3%
2020-2024	16	26.7%
Total	60	100%

This growth reflects a rising scholarly focus on enhancing mindfulness practices through psychodynamic perspectives, coinciding with the expan-

sion of mindfulness applications to address more complex clinical presentations. The notable proportion of publications since 2020 (26.7%) highlights the ongoing active research interest in this field. Moreover, the literature was primarily dominated by theoretical and conceptual explorations (58.3%), followed by review articles (18.3%), as illustrated in Table 2. The relatively small proportion of empirical studies (13.3%) suggests that the integration of psychodynamic perspectives with mindfulness applications is still in a stage of theoretical development, with limited empirical validation (Block-Lerner et al., 2007; Hansen et al., 2009; Keng et al., 2017).

Table 2

Distribution by Article Type		
Article Type	Number of Articles	Percentage
Theoretical/Conceptual	35	58.3%
Review Articles	11	18.3%
Empirical Studies	8	13.3%
Case Studies	4	6.7%
Commentaries/Editorials	2	3.3%
Total	60	100%

The journal distribution analysis reveals that most of the research was published in psychoanalytic journals (36.7%) and general psychotherapy journals (25.0%), as shown in Table 3. This highlights an opportunity for greater involvement from the mindfulness research community. The relatively small proportion of publications in mindfulness or meditation-specific journals (8.3%) suggests that the integration of psychodynamic concepts with mindfulness applications is an emerging field with significant potential for growth within mindfulness research.

Table 3

Distribution by Journal Category		
Journal Category	Number of Articles	Percentage
Psychoanalytic Journals	22	36.7%
General Psychotherapy Journals	15	25.0%
Mindfulness/Meditation Journals	5	8.3%
Clinical Psychology Journals	8	13.3%
Psychiatry Journals	4	6.7%
Other Psychology Journals	6	10.0%
Total	60	100%

As presented in Table 4, our analysis identified 10 core articles with notably higher scholarly impact, evident from their citation counts, frequent publication in high-impact journals, and thorough exploration of integration models. These articles placed greater emphasis on clinical applications and offered a more expansive interdisciplinary approach, thereby

providing a richer theoretical and practical foundation for our study.

Table 4

Comparison Between Core and General Literature		
Characteristic	Core Articles (n=10)	Other Articles (n=50)
Average Citation Count	47.6	18.3
Published in High-Impact Journals (%)	60%	28%
Direct Discussion of Integration Models (%)	100%	36%
Clinical Application Guidelines (%)	70%	22%
Breadth of Interdisciplinary Citations	High	Low to Medium

Mindfulness Traditions and Integration Approaches

Our analysis revealed that the literature explored various mindfulness traditions and their integration with psychodynamic concepts. Although the specific mindfulness approaches varied across the studies, several key patterns emerged regarding how different mindfulness traditions intersected with psychodynamic perspectives:

- (1) **MBSR and MBCT Applications:** The most discussed mindfulness approaches were standardised protocols like MBSR and MBCT. Studies exploring these approaches primarily focused on how psychodynamic concepts could enhance the understanding of resistance patterns, emotional challenges, and relational dynamics that emerge during formal meditation practice but are often overlooked in traditional protocols. Crane et al. (2017) distinguish between the "warp" (core mindfulness elements) and "weft" (programme-specific adaptations) of mindfulness-based programmes, providing a framework for adapting these standard protocols while preserving their integrity. Empirical research by Lin and Seiden (2015a) and Michalak et al. (2019) illustrates how MBCT can be enriched through a psychodynamic understanding of emotional avoidance patterns, especially in depression with complex developmental roots.
- (2) **Third-Wave Approaches:** The literature on ACT and DBT examined how these approaches already integrate some psychodynamic elements, particularly in understanding avoidance patterns and interpersonal dynamics. The focus of these discussions was on enhancing the theoretical foundations of these practices rather than making fundamental changes to the techniques themselves. Doorn et al. (2020) demonstrate how DBT's concepts of emotional validation and dialectical processes can be effectively integrated with psychodynamic principles, while ACT's emphasis on psychological flexibility aligns with psychodynamic approaches to defensive processes (Hayes, 2004). Goodman and Calderon (2012) further explore the implicit

psychodynamic elements within ACT's approach to experiential avoidance.

- (3) **Traditional Meditation Practices:** A subset of articles focused on traditional Buddhist meditation practices, exploring the parallels between these practices and psychodynamic concepts such as Bion's "reverie" and the notion of self-observation. Kabat-Zinn (2003) highlights the significance of understanding mindfulness within its traditional context, while also recognising the value of contemporary psychological frameworks in making these practices more accessible. Pelled (2007) presents a detailed comparative analysis between Buddhist meditative awareness and Bion's concept of reverie, while Šumiga (2020) examines Fromm's pioneering work in integrating Buddhist meditation with psychodynamic understanding. These articles offer rich conceptual frameworks for understanding meditative states through complementary perspectives.
- (4) **Adaptations for Complex Presentations:** Several articles specifically discussed adaptations of standard mindfulness protocols for complex clinical presentations. Treleaven (2018) offers comprehensive guidelines for trauma-sensitive mindfulness, incorporating an understanding of traumatic stress responses, while King et al. (2013) explore modifications for individuals prone to psychosis. These adaptations generally involve adjusting meditation instructions, session structure, and the therapeutic stance based on psychodynamic insights into emotional regulation, attachment patterns, and trauma responses (Music, 2022; Ringel, 2018).

The variety of mindfulness traditions represented in the literature offers a rich foundation for developing an integrative framework that retains the core qualities of mindfulness practice while enhancing its applications through psychodynamic perspectives. As Kirmayer (2015) highlights, effective adaptations of mindfulness must take into account both cultural context and individual psychological factors, a principle that informs our proposed MCPI framework. Overall, research on enhancing mindfulness through psychodynamic perspectives demonstrates: (1) steady growth, particularly over the past 15 years; (2) a focus on theoretical exploration ahead of empirical validation; (3) emerging interdisciplinary interest, with significant opportunities for greater involvement from mindfulness researchers; and (4) limited clinical application guidelines, highlighting the potential for further development in translating theory into practice.

Enhancing Mindfulness: Conceptual Parallels with Psychodynamic Approaches

Our analysis identified four domains where psychodynamic concepts align with and can potentially enhance mindfulness practices, offering a foundation for broadening mindfulness applications to more complex clinical presentations.

Quality of Attention

Mindfulness practices primarily focus on fostering a non-judgmental, present-centred awareness, which facilitates the emergence and passing of experiences without selective emphasis. Our review revealed that psychodynamic traditions have similarly cultivated parallel attentional qualities, with Freud's concept of "evenly suspended attention" (*gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit*) being particularly relevant. This concept describes a receptive stance that refrains from prematurely focusing on specific content (Lin & Seiden, 2015a). Both mindfulness and psychodynamic traditions approach comparable attentional states, though they adopt different methodologies.

For mindfulness practitioners, the cultivation of receptive attention frequently encounters challenges that are not adequately addressed by standard protocols. Psychodynamic perspectives offer valuable frameworks for understanding resistance to this attentional stance. Bion's guidance for analysts to engage in sessions "without memory, without desire" aligns with the non-striving aspect of mindfulness, yet adds theoretical depth by considering unconscious factors that impede this stance (Pelled, 2007). Psychodynamic insights help explain the developmental and psychological factors that make attentional practice particularly difficult for many individuals, especially those with complex presentations. These insights allow mindfulness instructors to modify attentional instructions for individuals with complex clinical needs. For instance, instead of merely instructing practitioners to "pay attention to the breath" when distractions arise, teachers might acknowledge the protective role that attention naturally plays in shielding us from overwhelming experiences. For trauma survivors who find attention to bodily sensations to be triggering, teachers might initially direct attention towards external objects or sounds, progressively building the capacity for internal awareness. These adaptations render mindfulness practices more accessible to populations who often struggle with standard instructions (Harrington & Dunne, 2015; Pelled, 2007).

Self-Observation and Metacognition

The development of meta-awareness, or the ability to observe one's own mental processes, is a fundamental aspect of mindfulness practice. Our analysis highlighted that psychodynamic concepts, such as the "observing ego," provide complementary frameworks for understanding this

capacity. While mindfulness traditions offer practical methods for cultivating this observational stance, psychodynamic perspectives contribute models for comprehending its developmental foundations and potential disruptions (Lin & Seiden, 2015a). Psychodynamic concepts can elucidate why some individuals find it challenging to cultivate observational awareness. Masterpasqua (2016) introduces the concept of mentalization—the ability to recognise and understand mental states in oneself and others—as an important conceptual bridge. This framework explains how early attachment patterns influence our capacity to observe mental processes without becoming overwhelmed or dissociated. When mindfulness instructors understand the development of mentalization through attuned relationships, they can better tailor practices for individuals with developmental trauma or attachment difficulties.

This understanding holds significant practical value for adapting mindfulness interventions. For individuals with fragmented self-awareness due to developmental trauma, standard instructions to "observe thoughts without judgment" may be overwhelming or confusing. In such cases, modified approaches may involve more relational support, shorter practice durations, or a greater emphasis on grounding techniques prior to engaging in more challenging observational practices. These adaptations preserve the core elements of mindfulness while making practices accessible to those who might otherwise find standard protocols overwhelming (Beitman & Soth, 2006; Ivey, 2015).

Transforming Relationship to Suffering

Mindfulness practices fundamentally aim to alter one's relationship with suffering rather than merely eliminating it, acknowledging that acceptance can often reduce suffering more effectively than avoidance. Psychodynamic perspectives provide complementary frameworks for understanding this transformative process. The parallel between mindfulness approaches and Freud's goal of transforming "hysterical misery into ordinary unhappiness" underscores the shared recognition in both traditions of the limitations of symptom-elimination strategies (Lin & Seiden, 2015a). For complex emotional patterns, psychodynamic concepts assist in distinguishing between primary suffering and secondary reactions. Rather than merely instructing practitioners to "accept difficult emotions"—a task that can be particularly challenging for many—an enhanced approach focuses on identifying defensive patterns that arise during meditation. For instance, when a practitioner experiences anxiety during meditation, understanding these defences allows instructors to discern whether the person is encountering primary anxiety or defending against deeper emotional content. (Maaske, 2002) highlights how this integrated under-

standing facilitates more nuanced guidance, recognising the layered nature of suffering. This approach reduces dropout rates by helping practitioners understand their emotional experiences during meditation as meaningful rather than as evidence of "doing it wrong" (Shahar & Govrin, 2017).

Therapeutic Presence

The quality of presence that mindfulness instructors bring to their practice plays a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of their teaching. Psychodynamic concepts of therapeutic presence can enrich the understanding of this critical dimension of mindfulness instruction. Childs (2007) illustrates how concepts such as embodied presence, attunement, and the holding environment offer valuable frameworks for cultivating an effective teaching presence. For mindfulness instructors working with challenging populations, concepts like Bion's "maternal reverie"—a receptive state wherein difficult emotions can be contained and processed—provide important guidance. While standard mindfulness teacher training emphasises presence, it often lacks frameworks that explain how presence functions as a containing environment. When participants experience distress, resistance, or dissociation during practice, the teacher's capacity to maintain a containing presence becomes vital for helping them engage with difficult experiences without becoming overwhelmed. Understanding this containing function enables instructors to maintain therapeutic presence, even when confronted with strong emotional reactions in group settings (Konichezky et al., 2022).

These concepts offer valuable guidance on how mindfulness instructors can adapt their presence to suit different populations. In working with trauma survivors, for instance, an understanding of containment and regulation allows instructors to modulate their presence to create a safe space, while still encouraging exploration. Konichezky et al. (2022) found that practitioners integrating these perspectives reported an enhanced ability to attune to participants' needs when strong emotions emerged within mindfulness groups. These four domains represent areas in which psychodynamic concepts can enhance mindfulness teaching and practice, particularly in complex clinical presentations. While mindfulness traditions have developed effective methods for cultivating awareness, psychodynamic perspectives provide complementary frameworks that help elucidate developmental obstacles and the necessary adaptations. This conceptual enrichment forms the basis for the proposed MCPI framework.

Expansion Opportunities: Complementary Dimensions for Enhancing Mindfulness Applications

Our analysis identified four domains in which mindfulness and psychodynamic approaches offer complementary perspectives, thereby broadening the applicability of mindfulness practices for complex clinical presentations:

Integrating Temporal Dimensions: Enriching Present-Centred Awareness

Standard mindfulness practices emphasize present-moment awareness, which is a core strength. However, incorporating an understanding of developmental and historical factors can significantly enhance mindfulness applications for complex clinical presentations. Psychodynamic approaches provide frameworks for understanding how early experiences shape present-moment awareness patterns, offering mindfulness instructors deeper insight into practitioners' meditation experiences. For individuals with trauma histories or complex psychological patterns, present-moment awareness often triggers the intrusion of historical material. Standard instructions to "return to the present moment" may be inadequate when past experiences repeatedly surface. Turp (2016) describes how understanding the relationship between the "there and then" and the "here and now" can enrich mindfulness teaching by acknowledging how present experiences are influenced by past conditioning. This understanding enables more nuanced guidance when practitioners encounter difficult historical material during meditation.

The MCPI framework advocates for incorporating temporal flexibility into mindfulness practices when appropriate. For example, when teaching individuals with complex trauma, briefly acknowledging the connection between present reactions and past experiences can paradoxically strengthen present-moment awareness. For instance, when a trauma survivor experiences flashbacks during meditation, rather than simply instructing them to "return to the breath," a teacher might acknowledge, "Sometimes awareness of the body can connect us to past experiences. Noticing this connection is itself a form of present awareness." Lin and Seiden (2015a) note that this temporal integration makes mindfulness more accessible for individuals whose present experiences are frequently disrupted by historical material. This approach is especially valuable for populations with personality disorders, trauma, or developmental disruptions. For these individuals, standard instructions may cause confusion or distress when historical material emerges. By incorporating a developmental understanding, instructors can offer more effective guidance while preserving the essential qualities of mindfulness. For example, practices might be sequenced to gradually build the capacity for present-moment awareness, beginning with brief practices focused on neutral stimuli before progressing to more challenging body awareness exercises (Music, 2022; Pelled, 2007).

Enriching Experiential Practice with Conceptual Understanding

Mindfulness traditions place a strong emphasis on direct experiential awareness, often prioritising non-conceptual knowing over verbal elaboration. This experiential focus is considered a core strength of the practice. However, for many practitioners, especially those with complex presentations, integrating conceptual understanding with direct experience can enhance, rather than diminish, the effectiveness of the practice. Harrington and Dunne (2015) observe that standard mindfulness instructions typically emphasise "non-conceptual awareness" with minimal verbal processing. While this approach benefits many, it can be challenging for individuals with alexithymia (difficulty identifying emotions), emotional dysregulation, or those from cultures where verbal processing is emphasised. Psychodynamic approaches provide complementary frameworks for understanding how verbal reflection can support and enhance experiential awareness.

The MCPI framework proposes a rhythmic alternation between direct experience and reflective understanding. For instance, a body scan practice might be followed by guided reflection on emotional patterns encountered. A practitioner who notices tension in their shoulders might be guided to: (1) first experience the sensation directly, (2) reflect on associated emotions or patterns, and (3) return to direct experience with an enhanced awareness. Šumiga (2020) and Masterpasqua (2016) highlight how this alternation fosters a cycle where experience informs understanding, which in turn deepens subsequent practice. This integrated approach offers valuable flexibility for diverse populations. For highly intellectualising practitioners who rely on concepts to avoid direct experience, teachers may emphasise non-verbal awareness. Conversely, for those who struggle to make meaning of challenging experiences, appropriate conceptual frameworks can provide essential support. This adaptability is particularly valuable in cross-cultural contexts, where concepts of "mind" and "awareness" may carry different meanings and necessitate culturally sensitive explanations (Lin & Seiden, 2015b).

Developmental Approaches to Self-Experience

Mindfulness practices foster awareness of the changing nature of self-experience—often described in many traditions as "non-self" or selflessness. While this perspective provides a profound insight, a developmental understanding of self-experience can enhance the way mindfulness is taught, especially for individuals with fragmented or unstable self-experience. Psychodynamic approaches offer developmental models for understanding self-experience across the lifespan, which can inform how mindfulness is taught at various stages. Šumiga (2020) examines Fromm's integration of psychodynamic and Buddhist perspectives, highlighting how

strengthening ego functions may be essential before non-self-insights can be fully integrated without fragmentation or dissociation.

The MCPI framework proposes a developmental continuum of self-experience. For individuals with fragmented self-experience due to trauma, practices aimed at fostering self-cohesion may be necessary before introducing practices focused on selflessness. For example, a trauma survivor might begin with grounding practices that enhance bodily coherence and emotional regulation before engaging in practices that explore the constructed nature of self. Childs (2007) suggests adapting language and practices according to each practitioner's developmental needs, rather than applying a uniform approach. This approach is particularly valuable when working with populations affected by personality disorders, dissociative conditions, or severe trauma. For these individuals, standard instructions that emphasise selflessness may inadvertently trigger fragmentation instead of facilitating liberation. Maaske (2002) proposes tailoring mindfulness instructions based on developmental needs—focusing on stabilising narrative coherence for some while emphasising transcendence of self-concepts for others. By adopting this perspective, mindfulness teachers can skilfully navigate the spectrum from self-stabilisation to self-transcendence, making practices more accessible at various developmental stages. This approach helps avoid the conceptual confusion that Ivey (2015) cautions against by recognising that different self-related processes may be emphasised at different stages of practice (Ward, 2005; Zachary, 2019).

Flexible Intervention Strategies for Complex Presentations

Mindfulness interventions typically utilise structured protocols with defined practices and formats. While this standardisation has supported research and dissemination, introducing greater flexibility can significantly enhance mindfulness applications, particularly for complex presentations. Psychodynamic approaches provide frameworks for adapting interventions based on individual needs and readiness. Standard protocols often follow predetermined sequences with limited room for individual adaptation. Harrington and Dunne (2015) observe that while this standardisation is valuable for research purposes, it may limit effectiveness for individuals with complex presentations. Psychodynamic approaches, with their focus on case formulation and personalised planning, offer frameworks for tailoring interventions while maintaining the essential qualities of mindfulness practice. Konichezky et al. (2022) found that practitioners incorporating these perspectives developed greater flexibility in alternating between structured guidance and responsive attunement, depending on participant needs.

The MCPI framework advocates for flexible adaptation based on individual assessment rather than rigid adherence to protocol. For example, with trauma survivors, standard MBSR or MBCT protocols might be modified by: (1) shortening meditation duration from 45 minutes to 5-10 minutes initially, (2) starting with external awareness practices before focusing on the internal body, (3) incorporating more movement-based practices, or (4) providing more frequent guidance during silent periods. Lin and Seiden (2015a) suggest that this flexible approach makes mindfulness accessible to populations that might otherwise find standard protocols overwhelming. This approach maintains fidelity to mindfulness principles while adapting delivery methods. Pelled (2007) notes that practices can be modified in terms of duration, focus, environmental support, and teacher guidance without compromising the essential qualities of mindfulness. These adaptations make mindfulness accessible to individuals with attention deficits, emotional dysregulation, trauma histories, or psychotic vulnerabilities—populations that often struggle with standard protocols but could benefit from appropriately modified practices.

These four domains represent opportunities for expanding mindfulness applications rather than presenting incompatible tensions. By integrating psychodynamic perspectives into these areas, the MCPI framework broadens the scope and effectiveness of mindfulness interventions while preserving their essential qualities. This approach makes mindfulness practices more accessible to complex presentations that may not respond optimally to standard protocols.

Mindfulness Enhancement Frameworks: Models for Expanding Mindfulness Applications

Our analysis identified five frameworks for enhancing mindfulness applications through psychodynamic concepts. Each framework offers unique perspectives on adapting mindfulness practices for complex presentations.

The Mindfulness-Centred Clinical Adaptation Model

Lin and Seiden (2015a) propose a pragmatic framework that keeps mindfulness practices central while selectively incorporating psychodynamic concepts. This model prioritizes practical adaptation based on clinical judgment rather than strictly adhering to theoretical integration. The authors emphasize how mindfulness teachers can leverage psychodynamic understanding to identify and address resistance patterns, emotional reactions, and relational dynamics that emerge during meditation, which may not be sufficiently handled by standard protocols. The model's key feature is its pragmatic flexibility within a mindfulness-centred frame-

work. This approach enables teachers to discern when practitioners encounter challenges such as avoidance patterns, emotional flooding, or transference reactions during meditation and respond accordingly. For instance, if a practitioner consistently avoids body awareness by intellectualizing, teachers might acknowledge this tendency and introduce graduated approaches to embodiment rather than simply redirecting attention. Konichezky et al. (2022) found that this flexible approach aligns with many teachers' preferences, as it allows them to tailor mindfulness teaching to meet the specific needs of participants, rather than strictly following predefined protocols.

The Mentalization-Enhanced Mindfulness Model

Masterpasqua (2016) proposes enhancing mindfulness through mentalisation—the capacity to understand mental states in oneself and others. Rooted in contemporary psychodynamic theory, this model positions mentalisation as a complementary capacity that supports mindfulness, particularly for those with developmental trauma or attachment disruptions. For mindfulness teachers, it offers a framework for adapting practices to meet developmental needs. While mindfulness fosters key mentalisation abilities (e.g., mental state awareness, reduced thought identification, enhanced self-observation), individuals with disrupted attachment may require additional support. Adaptations—such as relational language, explicit affect labelling, and graduated emotional exposure—can make mindfulness more accessible. This approach is especially relevant for individuals with personality disorders or emotional dysregulation, where mentalisation deficits are common. By integrating mentalisation-based adaptations, mindfulness remains central while becoming more inclusive and developmentally attuned (Masterpasqua, 2016).

The Receptive Awareness Enhancement Model

Pelled (2007) presents a framework that enhances the receptive quality of mindfulness through psychodynamic concepts of containment and processing. Drawing on Bion's notion of "reverie"—a receptive mental state that processes difficult experiences—this model deepens understanding of how mindfulness fosters emotional receptivity. For mindfulness teachers, it offers insight into the containing function of awareness. Pelled highlights shared qualities between meditation and reverie: openness, suspended judgment, and tolerance for uncertainty—approaching experience “without memory, without desire.” These parallels support guiding practitioners in developing receptive awareness, especially when facing intrusive thoughts or intense emotions. This model is particularly useful for adapting mindfulness for individuals with trauma or emotional

dysregulation. Teachers might emphasise awareness as a container, helping practitioners hold difficult content rather than avoid it. This focus on containment, rather than simple observation, enhances accessibility for those experiencing overwhelming emotional states.

The Developmental Self-Awareness Model

Šumiga (2020) introduces a developmental framework grounded in Fromm's integration of psychodynamic theory and Buddhist philosophy, which emphasises the need to tailor mindfulness practices according to the developmental structure of the self. Rather than adopting a uniform approach to non-self-concepts, the framework posits that self-experience unfolds along a developmental continuum, necessitating differentiated practices at various stages. The model's notable contribution lies in its staged approach to cultivating self-awareness. It advocates a sequential process in which individuals with fragmented self-structures first develop a cohesive sense of self, followed by the gradual introduction of practices aimed at loosening rigid self-identities. For instance, in the case of trauma survivors, initial practices may emphasise stable self-identification (e.g., "noticing thoughts as a stable observer") before progressing to more traditional impermanence-based techniques (e.g., "watching thoughts arise and pass"). This structured progression facilitates accessibility to mindfulness practices across varying levels of self-organisation. For mindfulness instructors working with heterogeneous populations, the framework provides valuable guidance for adjusting self-awareness practices in accordance with developmental assessment. In cases involving personality disorders or severe trauma, the model recommends beginning with practices that foster cohesion and emotional regulation. As psychological stability is achieved, more traditional non-self-perspectives can then be gradually introduced. This developmental sensitivity enhances the accessibility of mindfulness for individuals who might otherwise find standard instructions concerning non-self-concepts confusing or destabilising (Šumiga, 2020).

The Therapeutic Presence Enhancement Model

Childs (2007) presents a framework focused on enhancing the quality of presence that mindfulness teachers bring to their practice. This model suggests that psychodynamic concepts of therapeutic presence can significantly improve how teachers embody and transmit mindfulness. The framework emphasizes developing qualities of presence that create optimal conditions for practice, particularly for individuals with attachment wounds or relational trauma. For mindfulness teachers, this framework provides valuable concepts for understanding the interpersonal dimension of mindfulness transmission. Childs highlights that effective teaching

requires qualities akin to those emphasized in relational psychodynamic approaches: attuned presence, embodied awareness, and openness to intersubjective experience. When working with individuals who have attachment trauma, teachers might prioritize co-regulation through their own grounded presence before expecting self-regulation, thereby creating a relational container for practice experiences.

This presence-focused framework is particularly relevant for trauma survivors and individuals with dissociative conditions. Ringel (2018) expanded on this approach, illustrating how teachers can modify their presence qualities when working with trauma survivors to create safety while encouraging exploration. The model emphasizes that the quality of presence embodied by the teacher may be just as significant as the formal practices they teach, especially for individuals with histories of relational trauma who are highly sensitive to subtle qualities of interpersonal engagement. These five frameworks offer complementary perspectives on enhancing mindfulness applications through psychodynamic concepts. Each addresses different aspects of practice and teaching: clinical adaptation, developmental understanding, receptive awareness, self-development, and teacher presence. Together, they form the foundation for the proposed MCPI framework, which is further explored in the discussion section.

Implementation Considerations for Expanding Mindfulness Applications

Our analysis identified three key considerations for implementing mindfulness practices enhanced by psychodynamic perspectives for complex presentations:

Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations

Theoretical considerations are crucial when adapting mindfulness practices. Ivey (2015) stresses the need to maintain philosophical coherence, warning that selective adaptations without clear foundations may undermine effectiveness. Teachers incorporating psychodynamic elements must preserve core mindfulness qualities—non-judgemental awareness, present-moment focus, and experiential orientation. Harrington and Dunne (2015) emphasise understanding mindfulness within its broader ethical and philosophical roots. Adapting practices for complex cases, such as trauma, requires alignment with mindfulness's core values. For instance, modifications that promote safety and gradual exposure remain consistent with the non-harming principle. The MCPI framework responds to these concerns by prioritising experiential awareness while integrating reflective insight when beneficial. Lin and Seiden (2015a) advocate a "both/and" approach, preserving mindfulness's expe-

rential basis while using conceptual understanding to enhance accessibility.

Clinical Implementation Considerations

Clinical implementation is crucial for applying the MCPI framework effectively. Konichezky et al. (2022) note that mindfulness teachers initially faced difficulties navigating between structured guidance and responsive, individualised approaches—particularly in deciding when and how to adapt practices without compromising their essential qualities or group coherence. Training is also a key factor. Pelled (2007) stresses the importance of thorough preparation before adapting practices for complex cases. The MCPI framework proposes a staged training model, beginning with a solid foundation in standard mindfulness instruction, followed by the integration of relevant psychodynamic concepts. This includes recognising defence mechanisms during meditation, understanding attachment influences, and responding skilfully to emotional dysregulation. Assessment skills further support effective implementation. Lin and Seiden (2015a) highlight the need for teachers to identify when standard protocols should be adjusted. The MCPI framework encourages assessments of trauma history, self-regulation, attachment patterns, and dissociative tendencies to guide modifications. This ensures adaptations are need-based and maintain the integrity of mindfulness practice.

Cultural and Contextual Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity is vital when adapting mindfulness practices. Šumiga (2020) highlights that mindfulness carries culturally embedded meanings that vary by context. The MCPI framework underscores cultural humility, acknowledging that both mindfulness and psychodynamic theories arise from specific cultural backgrounds. This sensitivity is particularly important when working with diverse populations, where understandings of mind, suffering, and healing may differ (Harrington & Dunne, 2015; Yun et al., 2023). The MCPI framework promotes culturally appropriate adaptations. Teachers should consider how language and practices can be modified for cultural relevance. For instance, in our case with Liu Wei, practices were tailored to the Chinese context by aligning breath awareness with qi and linking body awareness to traditional Chinese medicine. These changes improved accessibility while preserving practice integrity. Such sensitivity includes recognising that terms like "self," "mind," and "awareness" hold different meanings across cultures (Dugmore, 2012; Holmström et al., 2024). Attending to these theoretical, clinical, and cultural dimensions is essential for responsibly extending mindfulness practice. The MCPI framework offers structured guidance for enhancing accessibility while upholding the core principles of mindfulness.

Discussion

The MCPI Framework: Expanding Mindfulness Applications for Complex Clinical Presentations

Based on our systematic review, we propose the MCPI framework—an approach oriented clinically to expand mindfulness applications for complex clinical presentations. This framework places mindfulness practices at the core of the therapeutic process while selectively incorporating psychodynamic concepts to enhance their accessibility, depth, and effectiveness. Rather than attempting to achieve a comprehensive theoretical integration, MCPI provides practical guidance for mindfulness teachers and practitioners working with populations that may not optimally respond to standard mindfulness protocols. The MCPI framework focuses on four key elements that enhance and extend mindfulness applications.

Enhanced Attentional Flexibility

MCPI cultivates flexible attentional capacities capable of addressing complex psychological material. Standard mindfulness instructions, which encourage non-judgemental awareness, may be insufficient when practitioners encounter overwhelming emotions, traumatic memories, or dissociative experiences. The framework integrates psychodynamic understanding of attention regulation, enabling mindfulness teachers to recognise these challenges and adapt instructions accordingly. Drawing on the parallel between mindful awareness and "evenly suspended attention" (Lin & Seiden, 2015a; Pelled, 2007), MCPI offers specific modifications to attention instructions for various presentations, thereby making practices more accessible while maintaining their essential qualities.

Developmental Approach to Practice

MCPI acknowledges that mindfulness practices may require developmental scaffolding for individuals with complex presentations. Instead of applying standardised instructions without regard to developmental needs, the framework advocates for assessing practitioners' self-regulation capacity, attachment patterns, and emotional development to tailor practices. Building upon Masterpasqua (2016) concept of mentalisation, MCPI offers a structured progression of mindfulness practices that develops foundational capacities before introducing more challenging aspects. This developmental approach makes mindfulness more accessible to individuals who might otherwise find standard protocols overwhelming.

Culturally Responsive Adaptations

MCPI underscores the importance of cultural adaptation when teaching mindfulness practices. The framework recognises that both mindfulness

concepts and practices carry cultural meanings, which may require translation across different contexts. Drawing from our analysis of cultural considerations (Harrington & Dunne, 2015; Šumiga, 2020), MCPI provides guidance on adapting mindfulness language, metaphors, and practices to enhance their cultural relevance and effectiveness. These modifications preserve the essential qualities of mindfulness while making practices more accessible and meaningful across diverse cultural contexts.

Enhanced Teacher Presence

MCPI stresses the development of specific presence qualities that establish optimal conditions for mindfulness practice, particularly for individuals with complex presentations. Drawing on Childs (2007) work and empirical findings from Konichezky et al. (2022), the framework outlines how mindfulness teachers can develop presence qualities that help contain and process difficult experiences that emerge during practice. These presence qualities—including attunement, embodiment, and receptivity—create a holding environment that makes mindfulness practice accessible for individuals with trauma histories, attachment wounds, or emotional dysregulation.

The MCPI framework directly addresses the limitations of standardised mindfulness protocols for complex presentations. By selectively incorporating psychodynamic concepts while maintaining mindfulness as the central practice, it expands the accessibility and effectiveness of mindfulness interventions without compromising their essential qualities. This approach is particularly beneficial for mindfulness teachers working with populations that standard protocols may not adequately serve, such as individuals with trauma histories, personality disorders, attachment disruptions, or severe emotional dysregulation.

Clinical Applications of the MCPI Framework

The MCPI framework offers distinct strategies for broadening the application of mindfulness to complex presentations. These strategies maintain the core qualities of mindfulness while enhancing its accessibility through targeted adaptations:

Mindfulness Adaptations for Complex Presentations

Based on our literature synthesis, we propose the following adaptations for mindfulness teachers working with complex presentations.

Developmentally Informed Practice Instructions

Mindfulness instructions should be adapted according to practitioners'

developmental levels of self-regulation and mentalization. Van Dam et al. (2018) highlight that mindfulness engages cognitive capacities that develop along specific trajectories and may be impaired in some populations. Shapiro et al. (2006) identify attention, intention, and attitude as core mindfulness mechanisms, each requiring varying developmental scaffolding. For individuals with limited self-regulation, Treleaven (2018) recommends starting with brief (1–3 minute) practices centred on stable anchors before progressing to more challenging awareness. For example, trauma survivors might begin with safety-focused instructions such as: "Gently notice where in your body you feel most stable and allow your attention to rest there." These adaptations preserve the essence of mindfulness while respecting neurobiological development (Masterpasqua, 2016; Music, 2022).

Enhanced Inquiry Process

A structured post-meditation inquiry process ought to be established to support practitioners in assimilating challenging experiences. Crane et al. (2017) identify inquiry as a fundamental component of mindfulness programmes, one that can be modified to suit diverse contexts without compromising its foundational principles. (Kirmayer, 2015) argues that the process of meaning-making during meditation is inherently shaped by cultural frameworks, thereby necessitating deliberate and culturally sensitive facilitation. In line with Kabat-Zinn (2003), we propose a three-phase inquiry model: (1) a non-judgemental articulation of the immediate experience, (2) a reflective examination of emerging emotional patterns, and (3) the situating of awareness within the individual's broader personal narrative, where contextually appropriate. Britton (2019) demonstrates that this integrative approach offers psychological containment for distressing content and mitigates the risk of adverse outcomes associated with meditative practice. By providing structured interpretive frameworks, this method enhances the accessibility of mindfulness, enabling practitioners to engage with difficult experiences in a manner that preserves their experiential depth (Lin & Seiden, 2015a; Pelled, 2007).

Relational Awareness Practices

Mindfulness practices should be extended to address relational patterns, especially for those with attachment difficulties or personality disorders. This approach moves beyond individual focus to include interpersonal dynamics, reflecting the inherently relational nature of human experience often underemphasised in Western mindfulness adaptations (Kirmayer, 2015). Konichezky et al. (2022) demonstrate how mindfulness

practices can be effectively adapted for addressing interpersonal patterns, while Treleaven (2018) suggests modifications for trauma survivors with relational wounds. Instructions may include: "As you bring this person to mind, notice any sensations, emotions, or thoughts that arise... observing them with curiosity rather than judgment." Such adaptations are crucial for preventing adverse effects in practitioners with personality disorders or attachment disruptions (Konichezky et al., 2022).

Clinical Case Example: Cultural Adaptation of Mindfulness Through the MCPI Framework

Note: The following case is drawn from the first author's clinical practice. All identifying information has been modified to protect client confidentiality, and informed consent was obtained for the anonymized presentation of this case for educational purposes.

To elucidate the way the MCPI framework fosters mindfulness through cultural adaptation, the following case is drawn from the first author's pedagogical experience in China. Liu Wei (a pseudonym), a 36-year-old female university lecturer, sought assistance for chronic anxiety, insomnia, and interpersonal challenges. Her case underscores the necessity for cultural and psychological modifications to standard mindfulness protocols, particularly in contexts shaped by intricate cultural dynamics and developmental trajectories. Raised within a traditional Chinese household that prioritised academic excellence while discouraging emotional expression, Liu Wei's upbringing was marked by rigid familial expectations. Her father exercised stringent discipline and seldom conveyed affection, whereas her mother generally acquiesced to his authority. Consequently, Liu Wei developed tendencies towards perfectionism and emotional repression—traits that initially underpinned her academic accomplishments but eventually culminated in psychological strain.

Following the dissolution of a romantic relationship, Liu Wei's anxiety intensified, prompting her to enrol in a conventional 8-week MBCT programme offered by a university counselling centre. However, she encountered profound challenges with the formal meditative practices. During body scan exercises, she experienced distressing somatic sensations and intrusive recollections. Likewise, breath awareness practices provoked acute anxiety that the standard MBCT structure was ill-equipped to manage. As a result, she withdrew from the programme after three sessions, perceiving herself as having "failed at meditation" and concluding that mindfulness "wasn't for people like her." This initial struggle underscores the limitations of standardised mindfulness approaches for individuals whose psychological presentations are deeply intertwined with cultural influences. Following her unsuccessful experience with the standard

MBCT protocol, Liu Wei participated in a 3-month (12-week) individualised mindfulness programme structured according to the MCPI framework. Unlike the standardised approach she had previously discontinued, this intervention was specifically tailored to accommodate her individual needs through the following adaptations.

Culturally Responsive Mindfulness Adaptations

Rather than imposing conventional Western mindfulness protocols, the MCPI framework facilitated the integration of culturally salient elements. In Liu Wei's case, mindfulness instructions were reframed using principles derived from Traditional Chinese Medicine and Taoist philosophy. For instance, breath awareness was introduced as "balancing qi" rather than "focusing on the breath", and body awareness was contextualised through the traditional Chinese understanding of body–mind harmony. These culturally informed modifications rendered the practices more accessible and resonant within her sociocultural context.

Developmentally Sequenced Practice Introduction

The MCPI framework directed the incremental introduction of mindfulness practices, informed by developmental assessment. Rather than initiating with advanced techniques such as open awareness, Liu Wei began with short (2–3 minute) grounding exercises centred on external sensory stimuli. As her emotional regulation capacities improved, she progressed to internal awareness. Initial sessions focused on external objects (sounds, visual stimuli), later transitioning to less emotionally charged bodily sensations (hands, feet), and ultimately to more emotionally sensitive regions (chest, abdomen). This structured sequencing ensured that practices remained manageable despite her history of emotional suppression.

Enhanced Mindfulness Inquiry Process

Each mindfulness session was followed by an augmented inquiry process that supported Liu Wei in integrating her experiences. This process involved: (1) the non-judgemental articulation of immediate experience, (2) the compassionate exploration of emotional patterns, and (3) the contextualisation of awareness within culturally and personally meaningful narratives, where appropriate. When Liu Wei experienced racing thoughts during meditation, the inquiry process enabled her to recognise their association with perfectionist tendencies rooted in her familial upbringing. This reflection normalised her response while fostering deeper insight, facilitating a contemplative attitude towards otherwise overwhelming experiences.

Relational Awareness Practices

The MCPI framework also introduced relational mindfulness exercises designed to target Liu Wei's interpersonal dynamics. These included guided meditations focusing on compassion and relational awareness, which enabled her to observe how cultural norms and familial patterns shaped her relational behaviour. For example, she practised mindful attention to bodily sensations while visualising interactions with authority figures. This facilitated the identification of habitual responses such as deference and self-criticism, which had negatively impacted her professional relationships. These relational practices remained aligned with foundational mindfulness principles while directly addressing the interpersonal dimensions of her psychological difficulties.

Upon completion of the individualised programme, Liu Wei reported marked improvement in both her anxiety symptoms and her interpersonal satisfaction. She successfully established a consistent mindfulness practice, free from the previously overwhelming experiences. A six-month follow-up assessment confirmed the durability of these improvements. Furthermore, Liu Wei had begun to introduce her colleagues to culturally adapted mindfulness practices. She reflected that the cultural modifications allowed mindfulness to feel "like it belongs to my tradition too, not just a Western import," and that the developmental sequencing enabled a progressive and manageable engagement: "Before, meditation felt like being thrown into deep water without knowing how to swim. Now I understand how to start in the shallows and gradually go deeper."

This case illustrates the potential of the MCPI framework to broaden the applicability of mindfulness for individuals who may not respond effectively to standardised protocols. Liu Wei's challenges with MBCT underscore the limitations of conventional approaches, particularly when cultural influences and developmental histories complicate engagement. The adaptations implemented within the MCPI model rendered mindfulness both accessible and culturally resonant, without compromising its core experiential and therapeutic elements. This demonstrates the framework's capacity to support individuals for whom standardised methods may otherwise be unsuitable.

Implications for Mindfulness Theory and Practice

The MCPI framework holds significant implications for mindfulness theory and practice, especially in broadening its application to diverse populations and complex presentations.

Enriching Mindfulness Theory

The MCPI framework advances mindfulness theory in three significant respects:

Firstly, it broadens mindfulness theory beyond the confines of standardised protocols by promoting a more sophisticated comprehension of practice adaptations, informed by developmental, cultural, and psychological considerations. This shift acknowledges that mindfulness practices are enacted within multifaceted contexts that significantly influence their efficacy (Harrington & Dunne, 2015; Šumiga, 2020). Secondly, the framework enhances theoretical understanding of mindfulness mechanisms by integrating developmental perspectives on the formation and disruption of awareness capacities. By recognising the impact of attachment styles and self-regulatory abilities on individual engagement with mindfulness, the framework facilitates a more refined conceptualisation of why mindfulness proves effective for some yet necessitates modification for others. This developmental lens elucidates meditation-related challenges frequently overlooked in conventional mindfulness theories, such as dissociative responses during practice or the inability to sustain an observer perspective (Masterpasqua, 2016; Reyes-Ortega et al., 2020).

Thirdly, the framework clearly delineates how cultural adaptation can be implemented without compromising the integrity of mindfulness practice. Rather than diminishing its efficacy, cultural adaptation is posited to enhance mindfulness by situating practices within culturally meaningful frameworks. In response to critiques regarding the decontextualisation of mindfulness in Western settings, the MCPI model offers a balanced approach that preserves core practice principles while addressing the necessity of cultural responsiveness. It rejects the notion of mindfulness as culturally neutral, emphasising that meditation experiences are inherently shaped by cultural meanings, and therefore require context-sensitive adaptation principles (Cwik, 2017; Goren, 2020). In sum, this theoretical contribution surpasses prior approaches by offering a coherent framework to determine when and why adaptations are warranted, rather than simply altering techniques without conceptual justification. Although it draws upon trauma-sensitive mindfulness literature, the MCPI framework provides a more expansive theoretical base that encompasses developmental, cultural, and relational dimensions of mindfulness practice (Treleaven, 2018).

Advancing Mindfulness Teaching and Practice

The MCPI framework presents five key practical implications for mindfulness teaching:

Expanding Mindfulness Accessibility

It offers practical guidance to make mindfulness inclusive for populations who struggle with standard protocols, such as those with trauma histories, attachment issues, or diverse cultural backgrounds. This expansion promotes equity in teaching by recognising that standard approaches may exclude certain groups (Music, 2022; Ringel, 2018).

Enhancing Teacher Training

The framework highlights competencies beyond standard training, including developmental assessment, cultural adaptation, and recognising when to modify instructions. This reflects the need for more nuanced skills to effectively teach complex presentations (Konichezky et al., 2022; Lin & Seiden, 2015a).

Preventing Adverse Effects

By identifying when standard practices might overwhelm individuals, the developmental sequencing minimises risks, matching practices to regulatory capacities and potentially reducing dropouts and negative experiences. This is vital given emerging research on meditation-related challenges in vulnerable groups (Dyga & Stupak, 2015).

Cultural Responsiveness

It guides culturally sensitive adaptations of language, metaphors, and practices, addressing concerns about cultural appropriation by acknowledging both traditional roots and contemporary contexts. The Liu Wei case exemplifies how culturally familiar concepts improve accessibility and efficacy (Harrington & Dunne, 2015; Šumiga, 2020).

Flexible Implementation

Rather than enforcing rigid protocols, the framework promotes adaptable guidelines tailored to individual and group needs. This flexibility balances adherence to core mindfulness principles with responsiveness to diverse contexts (Pelled, 2007; Shahar & Govrin, 2017).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although the systematic review and the proposed MCPI framework offer valuable insights for broadening the scope of mindfulness applications, several limitations remain that indicate avenues for future research.

Methodological Limitations

The existing body of literature that explores the integration of psychodynamic concepts into mindfulness remains largely conceptual, with minimal empirical substantiation. As noted by (Van Dam et al., 2018), mindfulness research in general is beset by methodological difficulties, including variability in measurement approaches and limited consideration of individual differences. The MCPI framework necessitates thorough empirical evaluation employing both quantitative and qualitative research designs. Pertinent research inquiries include:

1. In what ways do culturally and developmentally adapted mindfulness interventions compare with standardised protocols for specific cohorts?
2. Do such adaptations enhance accessibility, reduce attrition rates, and yield improved outcomes among individuals who typically encounter difficulties with conventional approaches?
3. Through what mechanisms do developmental and cultural modifications shape mindfulness processes, particularly the attentional and awareness elements delineated by (Crane et al., 2017)?

Addressing these questions would significantly contribute to the understanding of how tailored mindfulness interventions interact with and influence core psychological processes (Britton, 2019; Hayes, 2004; Khoury et al., 2013).

Implementation Challenges

The MCPI framework posits that mindfulness instructors require additional competencies to effectively implement adaptations, yet optimal methods for developing these competencies remain undefined. Crane et al. (2017) introduced the Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI:TAC), but modifications to this tool would be necessary for handling more complex presentations. Kirmayer (2015) stresses that cultural competence in mindfulness teaching extends beyond technical skills, highlighting the need for deeper contextual awareness.

Research priorities in this area include:

1. Developing effective training methodologies that focus on skills such as developmental assessment, cultural adaptation, and flexible instruction, building on existing mindfulness teacher training frameworks (Crane et al., 2017)

2. Identifying the specific knowledge and skills required to implement the MCPI framework effectively.
3. Creating tools to assess fidelity, ensuring that adaptations preserve core mindfulness qualities while enhancing accessibility. This would extend Baer et al. (2019) work on defining the integrity of mindfulness programs;
4. Investigating teacher characteristics that contribute to the successful adaptation of mindfulness practices.

These research directions would be instrumental in translating the MCPI framework into actionable training programmes for mindfulness instructors (Konichezky et al., 2022; Pelled, 2007; Treleaven, 2018).

Cultural Considerations

The reviewed literature predominantly reflects Western perspectives, thereby limiting insights into cross-cultural adaptations. While Kirmayer (2015) lays important groundwork for understanding mindfulness within cultural contexts, empirical research on cultural adaptations remains scarce. Future studies should:

1. Incorporate perspectives from traditional lineages and diverse cultural settings, building on Kabat-Zinn (2003) emphasis on mindfulness's traditional roots.
2. Examine applications of the MCPI framework in non-Western contexts, with particular focus on indigenous understandings.
3. Explore the experiences of practitioners from varied cultural backgrounds.
4. Investigate how practitioners from marginalised populations respond to standard versus adapted mindfulness instructions, expanding established work on cultural adaptation of mindfulness practices (Kirmayer, 2015).

Such research would strengthen the framework's cross-cultural relevance and support its ethical implementation (Harrington & Dunne, 2015; Kirmayer, 2015; Šumiga, 2020).

Long-Term Effects

Research exploring whether MCPI-guided adaptations enhance long-term practice engagement would be valuable, especially given the high dropout rates associated with standard mindfulness protocols (Britton, 2019). Crane et al. (2017) emphasise the critical role of home practice in achieving long-term outcomes, yet adherence continues to pose a significant challenge. Key research questions to investigate include:

1. Do developmental sequencing, cultural adaptation, and enhanced inquiry contribute to sustained practice engagement, building upon longitudinal research by (Creswell, 2017)?

2. Do these adaptations facilitate the transfer of mindfulness skills to everyday life challenges?
3. How do practice continuation rates and real-world applications compare between standard and adapted mindfulness approaches, particularly for the 30-40% of participants who struggle with standard protocols (Baer et al., 2019) ?

Longitudinal studies addressing these questions would significantly deepen our understanding of the MCPI framework's long-term value (Creswell, 2017; Petelin et al., 2022; Vijayapriya & 2, 2023). These proposed research directions underscore both the challenges and opportunities involved in expanding mindfulness applications. While substantial validation is still required, the MCPI framework provides a theoretically grounded foundation for making mindfulness practices more accessible to diverse populations and complex presentations.

Conclusion

This systematic review explored how psychodynamic concepts can expand mindfulness to better serve complex clinical cases. We identified four key areas for enhancement: attentional flexibility, developmental practice approaches, awareness of suffering patterns, and therapeutic presence. Additional dimensions include temporal integration, balancing experiential and conceptual understanding, developmental self-awareness, and flexible interventions. Five existing frameworks were reviewed, leading to the proposal of the MCPI framework. MCPI keeps mindfulness central while selectively incorporating psychodynamic ideas to deepen and broaden its use with complex presentations. MCPI focuses on four elements: enhanced attentional flexibility, developmental scaffolding of mindfulness skills, culturally responsive adaptations, and enriched teacher presence. It offers a flexible model to adapt standard mindfulness, improving accessibility and effectiveness without replacing core protocols. While further empirical validation, training, and cultural adaptation are needed, MCPI provides a strong theoretical basis for expanding mindfulness to diverse populations and complex needs. Future research should test adapted protocols, explore mechanisms of change, develop teacher training, and assess cultural applications and long-term engagement. MCPI addresses limitations of standard mindfulness by promoting developmentally informed, culturally sensitive, and flexible adaptations. This approach can extend mindfulness benefits to underserved groups and complex cases, making practices more inclusive, accessible, and effective for alleviating suffering and promoting well-being.

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