Qeios

Peer Review

Review of: "Rethinking Practice in Mindfulness-Based Interventions: A Developmental Theoretical Model Integrating Formal Practice, Informal Practice, Practice Quality, and Dispositional Mindfulness"

Jonathan Davies[1,2]

1. Centre for Innovation in Pain and Health Research (CIPHeR), University of Queensland, Australia; 2. Contemplative Studies Centre, University of Melbourne, Australia

Hi Marcelo,

Thank you for continuing to move the dose–response agenda forward. I broadly agree with the need to move beyond simplistic notions of practice amount as the primary determinant of outcomes.

This manuscript addresses an important and underdeveloped question in mindfulness research. The attempt to integrate formal practice, informal practice, practice quality, and dispositional mindfulness into a developmental framework is both timely and potentially valuable. The manuscript's major strength is that it shifts attention from practice quantity to practice function. In particular, the emphasis on informal practice and practice quality offers a plausible explanation for why findings from the dose–response literature have often been inconsistent and why practice time alone may be an inadequate proxy for meaningful engagement with mindfulness training.

At the same time, I believe the proposed model currently rests on a narrower evidential foundation than the manuscript acknowledges. Although presented as a developmental framework, it does not engage sufficiently with the broader dose–response literature, including mixed findings from meta-analyses (e.g., Strohmaier, 2020), observational studies of cumulative lifetime practice (e.g., Bowles et al., 2022),

 doi.org/10.32388/RBZoVG

and recent attempts to reconcile these findings within a broader conceptual framework (e.g., Bowles et al., 2026). As a result, some aspects of the model appear more hypothetical than empirically established.

Relatedly, the proposed progression from formal practice to dispositional mindfulness and informal practice implies a relatively linear developmental pathway. This contrasts somewhat with the broader dose–response literature, which increasingly suggests non-linear, context-dependent, and heterogeneous patterns of development. Existing evidence suggests that practice trajectories are likely to be recursive and influenced by factors such as motivation, expectancy, personality, symptom burden, practice goals, prior experience, adverse effects, and context. These influences are only lightly incorporated into the framework.

I am also concerned that several key constructs remain under-specified. Practice quality is presented as a central mechanism, yet it remains unclear how it should be distinguished from related constructs such as engagement, effort, motivation, adherence, expectancy, or perceived benefit. More fundamentally, progress in meditation may not always manifest as increasingly "good" practice. Encountering obstacles, setbacks, distractions, or difficult experiences may sometimes represent important developmental milestones rather than indicators of poor-quality practice. This raises important questions regarding how practice quality should be conceptualised and measured. Similarly, as you acknowledge, dispositional mindfulness is treated as a marker of development despite longstanding concerns regarding the interpretation of self-report mindfulness measures. Without greater conceptual precision, it becomes difficult to determine whether the model will identify mechanisms of change or simply relabel existing measurement challenges.

Overall, I view this manuscript as a promising theoretical contribution. However, at present, the framework functions more as a useful organising heuristic than a sufficiently specified developmental theory capable of generating strong, falsifiable predictions. I believe it would be strengthened by deeper engagement with the broader literature, greater acknowledgement of competing explanations, and a more nuanced account of the complexity and heterogeneity of contemplative development.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.