

## Review Article

# Mindfulness Education Across Age Groups: A Taiwanese Instructor's Reflections

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## Abstract

This study investigates the experiences of a Taiwanese mindfulness educator in implementing structured mindfulness programs for children, adolescents, and adults with visual impairments. The first author, serving as both teacher and researcher, facilitated 12-week sessions for 22 children, 10-week sessions for 20 adolescents, and 8-week sessions for 16 adults. Following each session, the teacher recorded reflective notes documenting participants' engagement, questions, feedback, and observable responses. These reflections also included critical evaluations of teaching strategies. The collected records formed the primary dataset for a thematic analysis conducted collaboratively by two researchers. Three central themes emerged: (1) children demonstrated enthusiastic and active participation in mindfulness learning; (2) adolescents exhibited mixed levels of engagement, with some showing commitment and others struggling; and (3) visually impaired adults displayed a range of capacities and challenges in comprehending and practicing mindfulness. The study emphasizes the importance of developmentally responsive and learner-centered instructional design, highlighting intrinsic motivation as a key factor for successful practice in mindfulness. Educators are encouraged to motivate learners and to tailor curricula that align with learners' psychological and developmental profiles to support meaningful engagement and long-term commitment.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness, Mindfulness education, Child, Adolescence, Adult

## Introduction

Mindfulness, originally rooted in Eastern philosophy and meditative traditions, has evolved significantly through integration with neuroscience and psychology. Since the 1990s, mindfulness-based interventions have gained traction across educational and therapeutic contexts, supported by empirical evidence demonstrating their physical and psychological benefits [1,2]. As interest in mindfulness continues to grow, educators face increasing demands to adapt their teaching approaches for learners across diverse age groups, backgrounds, and motivational profiles. This study examines the instructional experiences of a Taiwanese mindfulness educator working with children, adolescents, and visually impaired adults. The first author, a supervisor in mindfulness-based therapy and education, draws upon over a decade of teaching experience and maintains extensive records of classroom observations and reflective teaching journals. These records inform ongoing pedagogical refinement and curriculum design. The second author, also formally trained in mindfulness, integrates mindfulness principles into their teaching practice and collaborated in the thematic analysis. The aim of this study is to explore the challenges and insights gleaned from the first author's teaching experiences across developmental stages, with particular attention to learner engagement, instructional strategies, and the role of intrinsic motivation in sustaining mindfulness practice.

## Mindfulness

Kabat-Zinn [3] defines mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." This practice emphasizes sustained awareness of the present moment through non-reactive observation of bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions. Core mindfulness techniques include sitting meditation, mindful breathing, body scanning, mindful walking, stretching, and mindful eating. These exercises foster openness, kindness, curiosity, and acceptance, cultivating emotional resilience and balanced decision-making [4]. Mindfulness-based approaches also encourage individuals to enhance appreciation and gratitude in their interactions with others and their surroundings [5]. As such, mindfulness programs are increasingly used to promote well-being and self-regulation. Learner motivation is pivotal to successful mindfulness education. Educators must employ strategies that enhance engagement and encourage consistent practice [6]. When learners understand the rationale for mindfulness training and clarify personal goals, they are more likely to cultivate sustained interest. Shapiro [7] identifies three core motivations for mindfulness engagement: self-regulation, self-liberation, and self-exploration. Clarity of intention can lead to deeper commitment and integration of mindfulness into everyday life.

## Literature on Mindfulness-Based Programs in Taiwan

Mindfulness-based programs have seen substantial growth in

Taiwan, with their principles and practices applied across diverse populations and institutional contexts. These include children [8], adolescents [9], university students [10,11], adults [12,13], older adults [14], patients [15], and clients receiving psychological services [16,17]. Empirical studies consistently highlight the psychological and cognitive benefits of mindfulness. For instance, Chen and Yu [18] conducted a comprehensive review indicating that mindfulness practice within educational settings effectively supports students' stress reduction, cognitive functioning, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills. Similarly, Chao [19] emphasized the role of mindfulness in improving emotional regulation, reducing habitual reactivity, alleviating anxiety and pain, and promoting psychophysiological balance. Expanding on this evidence, Chen et al. [20] found that short-term mindfulness interventions in Taiwan led to significant improvements in attention, bodily awareness, emotion regulation, self-compassion, and overall quality of life. At the neurobiological level, mindfulness practices have been shown to dampen emotional reactivity and enhance connectivity in brain regions associated with regulation and stability [21].

Programs tailored for children prioritize the cultivation of foundational emotional and physical well-being. These curricula are typically brief and developmentally appropriate, grounding present-moment awareness in everyday experience [22]. Huang noted that children frequently engage with mindfulness in spontaneous and intuitive ways, yielding insightful shifts in self- and social awareness. The adolescent years, characterized by intense physical and psychological transitions, often involve curiosity, confusion, and emotional vulnerability [23]. Adolescents may demonstrate resistance toward authority and a heightened focus on self-concept [24]. In this context, mindfulness serves as a stabilizing tool. McGeechan et al. [25] implemented mindfulness programs with adolescents facing emotional and academic challenges, reporting improvements in concentration, stress management, and family dynamics. Other studies underscore the practice's positive influence on adolescent well-being, emotional regulation, and self-esteem [26,27].

In higher education, mindfulness is increasingly embedded within course curricula. For example, Chiang documented that university students participating in a mindfulness-integrated psychology course reported enhanced self-awareness, present-moment focus, and emotional acceptance. Among middle-aged and older adult populations, mindfulness training has facilitated improvements in emotional management, interpersonal relationships, and appreciation of daily life. Nevertheless, these groups also encountered challenges in practice. Yu and Chen found that effective program design for older adults necessitated adjustments in class duration, group size, and pacing to accommodate physical and cognitive needs.

### **Mindfulness Education for Children, Adolescents, and Adults**

The first author of this study is a university professor and licensed clinical psychologist, certified as a mindfulness supervisor. With extensive experience in promoting mindfulness education across Taiwan, they have worked in diverse educational and community settings—including elementary schools, universities, community groups, nonprofit organizations, social welfare agencies, community

colleges, and correctional institutions. The second author is also a university professor and practicing counseling psychologist, specializing in the professional development of undergraduate and graduate counseling students, with an emphasis on mindfulness-based approaches. Drawing upon years of practical experience, the first author primarily utilizes standardized curricula rooted in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). The second author integrates mindfulness principles into academic instruction, particularly within courses focused on counseling theories, applied practices, and school guidance. Between 2020 and 2022, the first author implemented three distinct mindfulness programs tailored to the developmental needs of different age groups: the Paws b curriculum for children (2020), the Dot b curriculum for adolescents (2021), and the MBCT curriculum for adults (2022). The Paws b and Dot b programs, developed by a UK-based consortium of educators, mindfulness practitioners, and researchers, are widely recognized for their age-appropriate design and evidence-based methodology. The MBCT curriculum, originally formulated by Segal, Williams, and Teasdale [28], is broadly employed in clinical and educational contexts. While each program was adapted for its respective audience, all shared core objectives: fostering participants' attentional control, present-moment awareness, emotional regulation, self-management, and interpersonal competence. These goals reflect a commitment to the holistic development of learners through structured, developmentally sensitive mindfulness instruction.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Program Implementation**

The mindfulness programs were implemented across three distinct groups in northern Taiwan. The first author conducted a mindfulness program during homeroom periods with 22 third- and fourth-grade students (ages 9–10). A homeroom teacher supported classroom management throughout the sessions. The program consisted of 12 weekly sessions, each lasting 30 minutes, delivered over 12 consecutive weeks. Another mindfulness program was offered to 20 high school students (approximately age 17) as part of an elective curriculum. The program comprised 10 weekly sessions of 90 minutes each, spanning a 10-week period. Finally, the first author facilitated a mindfulness program at a community institution serving visually impaired adults. Sixteen participants, aged 20 to 60, received one introductory session followed by eight weekly sessions of 120 minutes, totaling nine weeks.

### **Researchers**

The first author is a university professor and licensed clinical psychologist with over a decade of experience in mindfulness-based therapy and education. As a certified mindfulness supervisor, she has facilitated numerous workshops and programs across Taiwan, working with children, adolescents, and adults in both school and community settings. The second author, also a university professor and counseling psychologist, completed four months of formal mindfulness training and regularly integrates mindfulness principles into her academic instruction and personal practice. Both researchers are committed to advancing mindfulness-based education and recognize its potential to foster physical, emotional, and social well-being.

## Data Collection

Before the programs commenced, participants were informed of the structure, procedures, and purpose of the study. They were notified that an anonymous satisfaction survey and feedback form would be distributed prior to the final session. Participation in these instruments was voluntary. Additionally, the instructor explained that she would document classroom observations after each session, focusing on instructional strategies and learner responses. All observational data were anonymized, and informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the first session.

Following every session, the instructor composed detailed observational notes and reflective journal entries, recording participants' engagement, feedback, and learning progression. She also critically evaluated her own pedagogical approaches. These anonymized reflections constituted the primary dataset for analysis. Supplementary data included survey responses and written feedback forms. Ethical protocols—such as informed consent, confidentiality, and data protection—were strictly followed.

## Data Analysis and Validation

Qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's [29] reflexive thematic analysis. The process involved six stages: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) theme construction, (4) theme revision, (5) theme definition and naming, and (6) report writing. The researchers engaged in repeated readings of the data, annotating emergent ideas, emotional tones, and thematic patterns. Semantic and latent content were coded and grouped into preliminary themes and subthemes. These were organized into an initial thematic map and refined through iterative review, with irrelevant codes eliminated or reassigned. Final themes were defined with attention to internal consistency and inter-theme relationships. To ensure methodological rigor, the analysis adhered to qualitative research criteria including credibility, coherence, persuasiveness, reflexivity, practical relevance, and verifiability. The reporting prioritized clarity and logical structure, avoiding redundancy while maintaining fidelity to participants' perspectives.

## Results

Three major themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) children demonstrated enthusiastic and active participation in mindfulness learning; (2) adolescents exhibited mixed levels of engagement, with some showing commitment and others struggling; and (3) visually impaired adults displayed a range of capacities and challenges in comprehending and practicing mindfulness. Overall, the participants' openness and receptivity varied across developmental stages.

### Enthusiastic and Active Participation Among Children

Elementary school participants showed high levels of enthusiasm, focus, and engagement with mindfulness practices. Activities were perceived as novel and enjoyable, prompting the student participants to experiment with new behaviors and cultivate present-moment awareness. The instructor's guidance, combined with the supportive presence of the homeroom teacher, contributed to a safe and relaxed learning atmosphere conducive to participation.

Children expressed positive emotional responses and identified concrete benefits from mindfulness practices. Sample reflections included:

- "When I'm upset, I do mindful breathing, and then I calm down and can go back to doing my homework."
- "The activities are fun. I feel great during the practice, and I'm learning to concentrate."
- "I look forward to the mindfulness teacher coming more often. My grades are getting better, and I feel happier."
- "Mindfulness is interesting and always feels relaxing. I want to keep practicing it regularly."

The instructor observed that a conducive learning environment for children includes ample physical space and active homeroom teacher involvement to facilitate attentiveness and emotional safety.

### Mixed Engagement Among Adolescents

High school participants responded to the mindfulness curriculum with varying levels of interest and engagement. Approximately one-quarter to one-third of the students demonstrated a clear willingness to participate. These students understood core mindfulness concepts, actively contributed to classroom discussions, and offered thoughtful reflections on how practices influenced their daily lives. For example:

- "Mindful breathing helps me calm down before I give a speech or take an exam."
- "[The mindfulness practice reminds me to] pause when I argue with my family members."

In contrast, the majority of students appeared disengaged and exhibited signs of impatience throughout the session. Many reported difficulties with sustained attention and present-moment awareness. Their feedback commonly reflected experiences such as boredom, distraction, and mental fatigue. Typical responses included remarks such as: "The activity felt dull," "It was boring," "I was easily distracted," "I couldn't focus on the task," "My mind kept drifting," "I felt sleepy," and "I wasn't sure what I was supposed to be doing." These reactions suggested low motivation and limited understanding of mindfulness principles and practices. The instructor noted that many students exhibited difficulty in recognizing or articulating their internal experiences, indicating a developmental need for clearer instruction and contextual relevance.

### Diverse Comprehension and Engagement Among Visually Impaired Adults

The adult group, comprised of visually impaired individuals recruited through a social welfare institution, presented a heterogeneous profile in terms of psychological vulnerability and openness to mindfulness training. Approximately half of the participants approached the practice with openness and gradually developed awareness of mood fluctuations and concentration challenges. They practiced techniques such as mindful breathing, walking, and eating, which they found effective for stress reduction and emotional regulation. However, the remaining participants faced

notable challenges in understanding key concepts. Many expressed boredom or perceived practices—such as body scans or stretching—as irrelevant to their lived experiences. Entrenched cognitive and emotional patterns, including persistent negative thoughts about their impairment and life circumstances, contributed to disengagement. Mental fragmentation and emotional turbulence further hindered their ability to focus and cultivate present-moment awareness. Some participants misunderstood mindfulness as a method for suppressing thoughts or achieving relaxation alone. They struggled with accepting and observing their internal experiences, making it difficult to apply mindfulness principles in meaningful ways.

## Discussion

The participants who demonstrated a willingness to engage with mindfulness practices experienced mindfulness as a novel and enriching approach to self-awareness, emotional regulation, and present-moment attention. The findings of this study reinforce the notion that mindfulness training may reduce reactivity to negative emotional stimuli, foster emotional regulation, and improve psychological well-being and emotional stability. These results align with prior evidence suggesting that mindfulness can help individuals recognize and regulate emotions, relieve anxiety and physical discomfort, and improve psychophysiological balance. Echoing Chiang's findings, the integration of mindfulness into educational settings appears to enhance learners' mindfulness-related awareness and application. Moreover, these results are consistent with Chen et al., who reported that short-term mindfulness interventions improved attention, bodily awareness, and emotion regulation while reducing psychological symptoms. This study also supports Yu and Chen's assertion that classroom environments and instructional pacing must be appropriately adjusted to accommodate the physical and psychological needs of participants. Children in this study demonstrated sincerity, openness, curiosity, and eagerness to engage with novel experiences—qualities that foster mindfulness learning through authentic awareness. These dispositions supported active engagement and self-application of mindfulness practices. As Huang noted, children often make spontaneous discoveries about themselves and their surroundings through mindfulness, expressed through candid and unfiltered reflections. The present study underscores that childhood may be a particularly sensitive and promising period for introducing mindfulness education, given children's intrinsic motivation, adaptability, and receptiveness to experiential learning.

By contrast, adolescent participants revealed more complex responses. While approximately one-third reported benefits such as emotional regulation and stress relief, the majority appeared disengaged or resistant. This ambivalence likely reflects the developmental transitions of adolescence, characterized by psychological turbulence, identity formation, and emotional volatility. Consistent with Lawlor and Zenner et al., mindfulness has the potential to support adolescents' self-regulation and stress coping; however, resistance among participants suggests that traditional formats may not fully align with adolescents' developmental needs or motivational styles. Adolescents' reluctance may be rooted in a tendency toward defiance or egocentrism. To increase engagement, mindfulness

educators must consider strategies that are both developmentally appropriate and contextually relevant—such as curricula grounded in adolescent experiences and interests. Additionally, the active presence of homeroom teachers may enhance classroom management and contribute to a supportive learning atmosphere conducive to focused practice.

The adult participants with visual impairments presented significant diversity in both motivation and comprehension. Their enrollment, which was not entirely voluntary, may have influenced initial levels of engagement. While half of the participants gradually cultivated self-awareness and benefitted from mindfulness exercises (e.g., breathing, walking, eating), the other half struggled to grasp core concepts and exhibited skepticism or disinterest. For some, entrenched cognitive and emotional patterns related to disability and adversity limited their capacity to connect with mindfulness instruction. Misunderstandings—such as equating mindfulness solely with relaxation or thought suppression—further impeded their practice. These findings underscore the crucial role of learner motivation, particularly in vulnerable populations. As Lin emphasized, motivation is a pivotal determinant of learning success. Educators must therefore proactively foster motivation by helping learners understand the purpose and benefits of mindfulness, and by designing accessible and psychologically attuned curricula. For visually impaired adults, long-term, structured mindfulness education tailored to their unique needs may be essential to achieving meaningful engagement and outcomes [30-32].

## Implications and Conclusions

This study underscores the importance of aligning mindfulness education with the developmental characteristics of children, adolescents, and adults. Educators should tailor program duration, instructional pacing, and content complexity to meet the cognitive and emotional capacities of each group. For example, children benefit from shorter sessions and activity-based approaches that support attentional focus and engagement. Adolescent programs should emphasize the relevance of mindfulness to everyday life and progressively integrate more advanced techniques to sustain interest and deepen reflection. Across all age groups, the learning environment should be psychologically safe, physically comfortable, and responsive to learners' developmental needs.

Furthermore, efforts should be directed toward localizing Western-developed mindfulness curricula to better reflect the cultural and contextual realities of Taiwanese learners. Adapting core principles to suit local educational, psychological, and social frameworks will increase the accessibility and resonance of mindfulness instruction. For learners exhibiting low motivation or cognitive challenges, instructors must simplify abstract concepts into concrete, meaningful experiences that facilitate gradual engagement and practice. Ongoing refinement of curriculum design and pedagogical strategies is critical to ensure the effectiveness and inclusivity of mindfulness education. By continuously evaluating and improving instructional methods, educators can better address diverse learner profiles and foster the emotional and cognitive well-being of participants across developmental stages.

## Author Note

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose. Yi-Hsing Claire Chiu is a licensed clinical psychologist, and an assistant professor, Hsuan Chuang University, Taiwan. Yii-nii Lin is a licensed counseling psychologist and a professor, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan.

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