

# Experience of Mindful Counseling Psychologists: A Preliminary Study

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## Abstract

The objective of this qualitative research is to examine the experience of five Thai counseling psychologists, who have been practicing mindfulness for at least five years and use diverse clinical theoretical approaches. Data were collected with the semi-structured interviews and analyzed with the grounded theory method. Results revealed four main categories: 1) background of mindfulness practice, 2) methods of practice mindfulness, 3) procedure and application of mindfulness into practice, and 4) outcomes of applying mindfulness to counseling sessions. The preliminary results show how the psychologists generally apply mindfulness practice into their counseling process, yet more detailed information is needed to clarify the process of application.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness, Grounded Theory, Counseling Psychology

## Introduction

Over the past 30 years, western psychologists have become more interested in ‘mindfulness meditation,’ a Buddhist wisdom, and have applied it into various therapeutic approaches in both America and Europe (Grepmaier et al., 2007). Such augmented interests have arisen from the success of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) of Kabat-Zinn (1994), which incorporated mindfulness practice into the therapy for depressive patients and, thus, defined the mindfulness meditation as “the awareness of things one is paying attention to at the moment without judgement, only being aware of what is happening at each moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Following this were many more therapies based on mindfulness meditation, resulting in greater recognition of Buddhist mindfulness practice as a fundamental academic structure of psychotherapies (Davis & Hayes, 2011). Many studies show the result of mindfulness practice that can enhance counseling skills (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006) and being a tool of self-care for counseling psychologists (Christopher & Maris, 2010).

## Mindfulness Based Therapy

In the psychology community, mindfulness has been explored and applied into many approaches of psychological therapeutic procedures, particularly among patients afflicted emotionally from such conditions as anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, eating disorders, and borderline personality disorders (Baer, 2006). At present, four mindfulness-based approaches have become common: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

(ACT), and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Mindfulness-based therapies have become 'the third wave' of psychotherapy (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), which has considerably risen in popularity due to their effectiveness in healing patients (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

## **Mindfulness Practice**

Two methods are used to apply mindfulness to therapy: 1) Buddhist mindfulness practice, including sitting and walking meditations and even breath-focusing yoga to maintain awareness (Germer, 2005), and 2) daily mindfulness practice that applies mindfulness to every moment of daily life, enabling a practitioner to integrate mindfulness into his/her lifestyle in harmony with the society and environment he/she lives in (Schomaker, 2013).

## **Qualitative Research in Mindfulness**

Mindfulness practice can, to a certain degree, help psychologists and practicum psychotherapists to become more flexible and stay non-judgmental with here and now. In other words, counseling psychologists who practice mindfulness are the very first to benefit from this practice: understanding how the mind creates suffering and generalizing this insight to help their clients (Galus, 2015). Many studies have shown that mindfulness practice is a key to develop primary therapeutic skills of psychologists and practicum psychotherapists while reducing the risk of getting burnout (Siegel & Bucynski, 2011).

Schure, Christopher, and Christopher (2008) conducted a qualitative study with 35 clinical psychology students who had been practicing mindfulness for 4 years. The students reported improvement in their clinical services because of mindfulness practices rendering ease of feeling, silence, and better concentration on their clients during the counseling process. Similar outcomes were present in another qualitative research by Dorn (2014), in which 7 experienced psychotherapists who regularly practiced mindfulness for several years were interviewed: the benefits they got included better control of themselves during the process, better concentration on clients, and greater spontaneity, resulting in better therapeutic relationships.

Mindfulness can be integrated into psychotherapy through three ways: mindful therapist, applying mindfulness to the psychotherapy process and teaching clients mindfulness skills (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005). Mindfulness can be beneficial to therapists in different psychotherapy approaches and enhance empathic understanding of psychologists and client's self-awareness (Gehart & McCollum, 2008; Keane, 2014). Even though, there are the successes of mindfulness in the mental health community, but they are researches only a select culture of clinicians utilizes mindfulness techniques in their practice (Davis & Hayes, 2011). There is a lack of literature on applying mindfulness in the counseling process (Germer, 2005). Especially the lack of research about how mindfulness-informed psychotherapy could be done. Mindfulness has been proposed as a necessary component of psychotherapy training (Bruce, Manber, Shapiro, & Constantino, 2010). In the meantime, the field of research about mindfulness in psychotherapy is wide open and need to know which form of mindfulness practice is the most effective in the counseling psychologist education curriculum as well as how to apply mindfulness practice in the counseling process (Caldwell, 2011). Furthermore, there is need for the qualitative study about Thai counseling psychologists who applied mindfulness practice in counseling process. Because there is only study of result of mindfulness practice with students, teachers and staff in industries (Peijsel, Teerapong, & Kreausukon, 2013). Clearly a need exists for exploratory research in the area of Thai counseling psychologists. This research attempted to fill this gap.

This study aimed to understand the experience of counseling psychologists who practice mindfulness, focusing on how they apply mindfulness practice to their counseling. The

findings would provide a body of knowledge that can be integrated into a curriculum to improve skills and knowledge of the next generation counseling psychologists.

## Methods

### Overview

As researchers aimed to study the experience of mindful counseling psychologists, we sought to understand the integration of mindfulness practice into counseling process through constructivist lenses (Creswell, 2007). Using the grounded theory methodology which offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it and represents knowledge constructed through interaction between researchers and participants (Charmaz, 2006).

### Participants

After IRB approval, the announcement of research recruitment was spread via online channels, e-mails, phone to networks of counseling psychologists in Thailand. The inclusive criteria were the age between 35-55 years, at least continuous 5-year experience of psychological counseling, and at least 5-year mindfulness practice.

The informants were 5 Thai counseling psychologists (3 males and 2 females), all of whom had over 10 years of counseling experience and had been practicing mindfulness for over 9 years. All participants provided written informed consent (see Table 1).

**Table 1** Participants' information

ID	Age/ Gender	Education	Experience practice as psychotherapist (years)	Experience of mindfulness practice (years)	Way of mindfulness	Theoretical Orientation
ID1	49/ Male	Ph.D.	18	11	Mindfulness in daily life	- Humanist - Buddhist Counseling - Contemplative Counseling
ID2	46/ Female	Ph.D.	11	11	Mindfulness in daily life	- REBT - Humanist
ID3	38/ Male	Ph.D. candidate	11	11	Sitting Meditation/ Aikido	- Buddhist Counseling - Gestalt Therapy
ID4	50/ Female	Ph.D.	11	25	Sitting Meditation/ Mindfulness in daily life	- Humanist - Buddhist Counseling - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
ID5	40/ Male	Master Degree	10	20	Mindfulness in daily life	- CBT - Satir Model - REBT

### Data collection

Data were collected via face to face and over the phone interview, 70-90 mins long.

### Researcher' Disclosure and Trustworthiness

To ensure that the result of this study provided the details necessary for readers to evaluate its usefulness to their contexts, the researcher followed Charmaz (2008) criteria for

trustworthiness of constructivism grounded theory; credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. The researchers collect data by recording the interview and verbatim transcribed. Then, coding and sending to each informant to recheck and confirm data that disclosure to their experiences. After that, researchers use literature triangulation to check the findings analyzed from the first interview sessions. Secondly, the researchers try to expand the process of integrated mindfulness in counseling process of Thai counseling psychologists which is new and not yet studied in this field. Thirdly, researchers provided the result of the study in detail and systematically. Finally, the result of this research can be integrated into a curriculum to develop counseling psychologists who are interested in mindfulness practice.

### Data analysis

The study was conducted using a constructivist grounded theory guided by Charmaz (2006). The researchers analyzed the transcripts using open coding and axial coding procedures. During this process the researchers use 2 types of grounded theory coding; initial line-by-line coding and focused coding to separate, sort and synthesize large amounts of data. In this study, the data were coded, analyzed and grouped in themes which category appeared to be related to participants' experiences. Information from this coding phase was then organized into a figure, a coding paradigm, that presents a theoretical model of the process under study. In this way, a theory is generated (Creswell, 2007).

## Results

This study resulted as a preliminary result of the first round of interview. The transcripts were coded, analyzed, and grouped in 4 themes (see Table 2).

**Table 2** Name of main themes and sub themes

Theme	Main Theme	Sub Theme
1	background of mindfulness practice	a) personal interest b) personal suffering
2	methods of mindfulness	a) formal practice b) daily-life practice
3	procedure and application of mindfulness into practice	a) realizing benefits of mindfulness practice in the counseling process b) mindfulness practice during the counseling process c) development of mindfulness application in the counseling process
4	outcomes of applying mindfulness to counseling sessions	a) personal improvement as counseling psychologists who practice mindfulness b) effects on clients c) effects on therapeutic relationships d) obstacles in applying mindfulness practice to the counseling process

### Theme 1: Background of Mindfulness Practice

This theme includes reasons, origins, and interests leading to mindfulness practice of each informant. **Background of Mindfulness Practice** consisted of two sub-theme which were: a) personal interest and b) personal suffering. **Personal interest** was the perception of each informant revealed about how they became interested in mindfulness practice. Some informants were curious about mindfulness while some informants believed in benefits gained from developing mindfulness and eventually started practicing. Like ID4 stated "*My personal interest. I thought it is good by itself and good for this profession. Interested in the goals of Buddhism, besides Dāna, Sila, and this Bhavana.*" (ID4) **Personal suffering:** some

informants started mindfulness practice because they experienced bereavement, loss, and stress. Whatever they had done to cope with it was in vain. Since they started practicing mindfulness, they have been able live with those sufferings better.

### **Theme 2: Methods of Practice Mindfulness**

This theme includes information about methods and approaches that the informants use.

**Methods of Practice Mindfulness** consisted of 2 subthemes: a) formal practice and b) daily-life practice.

**Formal practice** included sitting and walking meditations, most of the informants started with, on their own, from books, or under mentorship before assuming individual regular practice. *“Practice quite continuously, once a few days. Observing respiration mainly as well as anything that intensely crops up in the mind. While focusing on breaths, if anything crops up, I will observe it.”* (ID3) **Daily-life practice** was the way informants practicing mindfulness in daily life, such as walking to work, doing dishes, etc. The informants choose daily-life mindfulness practices that suit their lifestyles. The interviews revealed that the informants apply mindfulness practices to several short-time activities during the day to resume their mindfulness frequently. *“Since the beginning, I have been trained to apply it to my daily life, so I get quite used to it when walking, getting up, sitting. All is well aware, just slipping sometimes. Around 2 or 3 pm, I will sneak behind the building. There’s a long peaceful path. I walk there for a while, around 15-20 minutes.”* (ID5)

It had taken years until each informant could find a daily practice that suits his/her life, enabling regular practice for years on. It is not just following instructions from some books, but a self-discovery process to find the best match, which can be the single one or multiple practices together. Finding the practice best suited to oneself is the most vital component for long-term regular practices.

### **Theme 3: Procedure and Application of Mindfulness into Practice**

This theme revealed a procedure that informants integrated mindfulness into counseling practice. It consisted of 3 subthemes: a) realizing benefits of mindfulness practice in the counseling process, b) mindfulness practice during the counseling process, and c) development of mindfulness application in the counseling process. **Realizing benefits of mindfulness practice in the counseling process** reflected how informants seeing the benefits of mindfulness in therapy. Participants had positive experience that derived from personal mindfulness practice. So they believe that mindfulness can be beneficial to clients.

*“Seeing benefits. I have my own disturbance and know that the other also has his. And what I have experienced myself, I can offer that solution and invite my client to try or help him organized his thoughts, which would lead to similar outcomes. That is, to bring stability into everything.”* (ID1)

All the informants, the finding reveals, have got good experience and benefits from their mindfulness practice and are aware that there are means to integrate mindfulness practice into psychological counseling. **Mindfulness practice during the counseling process** reflected the methods by which the informants applied mindfulness to their counseling practice. Three methods were mentioned: 1) having the client practice mindfulness directly, as an example from ID1, *“if the client develops anger, he will respond to it and imagine further. So, it is like organizing his thoughts or communication or trying to have the client pause from thinking to follow his breath.”*; 2) creating an experience that combined mindfulness practice with counseling, as an example from ID2 *“asking her to touch her hand or to feel where her right hand was.”*; and 3) applying mindfulness practice with oneself while giving counseling. Not only applying mindfulness practice with clients, the informants also employed a mindfulness practice to bring themselves back to the present time and fully focus on their clients. The methods used include awareness of one’s own body, thought, and sensations at the present moment.

**Development of mindfulness application in the counseling process** reflected the method to develop ways of applying mindfulness practice into the counseling process. Two phrases can be identified: 1) *the beginning* and 2) *the present process*.

*The beginning:* The informants followed the theoretical structure and their experience of mindfulness practice, doing repeatedly until they formed an understanding toward mindfulness practice.

*The present process:* The counseling process that combines the mindfulness practice of the counselor informants who are also practicing mindfulness include three main attributes which were *self-awareness within the process*, *mindful counseling process*, and *resolving the client's ordeal*.

*Self-awareness within the process:* with more than 5 years of experience in providing counseling services and practicing mindfulness, the informants share what they have been aware about themselves in the counseling process and how they have become more skilled and patient in solving clients' issues. They can also see their thoughts more clearly and manage unnecessary thoughts more properly, using their mindfulness to stay more effectively with their present clients.

*Mindful counseling process:* the informants explained about their present counseling process since the beginning of the session to find solutions to their client's ordeals. At the beginning is a brief self-introduction and a little account on the process based on the chosen approach to develop rapport and inquire background information on the issues and goals of the client. The client has to address his problem in any way and practice mindfulness to induce calmness, clarity, and awareness of thoughts and feelings to deal with that problem. Like an example from ID 3, "*When the client enters this room, if he has nothing to talk about instantly, I will ask what he is having in his mind that he can observe it then. For example, 'sitting here, do you notice any thought and feeling arising in your mind, or any obvious sensations in your body?' Anything that appears clearly, any phenomenon that can be observed, I will start from that point.*"

*Resolving the client's ordeal:* Besides the usual counseling process to resolve the client's misery, mindfulness practice can be applied during the process in 4 ways: *to observe the client's readiness*, *to prompt awareness*, *to inform*, and *to be assigned as homework*. *To observe the client's readiness:* in the counseling session, the counselor informants assess whether the clients are ready to practice mindfulness by observing the degree of rumination and attachment to the past and anxious facial expression hinting obsession over one's own troubles, which means they are not ready to accept anything else. In this case, the informants will continue the usual counseling process and attentive listening. However, when the clients show any signs of readiness, the informants might suggest practicing mindfulness straightforwardly or gradually insert the practice into the process, depending on the nature of each client and preference of each counselor informant. Like an example from ID2, "*We can't just plunge into it all of sudden. Actually, it's like gradually adding in, not the main course, not telling outright it's mindfulness. Just hinting. So, at first, we need to observe the client's readiness.*" *To prompt awareness:* the counselor informants facilitate clients to be aware of their problems and sufferings through different mindfulness practices they prefer, such as, inquiry to prompt awareness of actual feeling toward anxiety or fear, providing concrete explanation of feelings using metaphors of colors or features to encourage the clients to clarify their feelings. If not ready or not able clarify this feeling, the clients will not be pressured but accepted and given space and time understandingly. ID3 gave an example how he used mindfulness with his client "*If you are to compare the feeling now, what colors, tastes, lights, or temperature is it like? We have just talked about the body, where you feel sensations, how your body is. If the feeling had a form, what shape would it be, how thick its mass would be, how wide, if you could touch it with you hand.*" *To inform:* mere mindfulness

practice is not enough to solve life issues that a client is facing, so psycho-education is needed to enhance the client's understanding of his psychological process and enable him to further resolve his own problems with a proper process. *To be assigned as homework:* clients are asked to practice mindfulness outside counseling sessions with the approach suitable for each of them to develop their skills in turning back to the present and happiness. The homework can be returning to activities they used to do happily or keeping a journal of daily experience for discussion in the coming session. Like an example from ID4 “*Yes, I assign my clients to practice themselves, observe, and be aware. Starting with something easy in the session and do the same at home.*” (ID4)

#### **Theme 4: Outcomes of Applying Mindfulness to Counseling Sessions**

The outcomes that the informants got from applying mindfulness to their counseling process can be divided into 4 subthemes: a) personal improvement as counseling psychologists who practice mindfulness, b) effects on clients, c) effects on therapeutic relationships, and d) obstacles in applying mindfulness practice to the counseling process.

**Personal improvement as counseling psychologists who practice mindfulness** includes benefits and growth on part of counseling psychologists who get improved after practicing mindfulness. Three attributes are discovered: 1) *better staying with here and now*, 2) *better empathy with clients*, and 3) *personal growth*.

*Better staying with here and now:* the informants, who practice mindfulness, explained that they can stay with their present moment better in their counseling sessions. “*I think I can devote my energy better. That's to say, from what I have learned from myself, I can give my energy to things that are more important and necessary, not all of it yet more of it. That is what I have got from learning about mindfulness.*” (ID1)

*Better empathy with clients:* mindfulness practice reduces internal conflicts that the informants have towards their clients and enhances responsiveness to transference between clients and the informants, enabling the informants as counseling psychologists to be more aware and empathetic to clients' experiences. This leads to greater acceptance of clients' expression and harmonious relationship with them. “*Practicing mindfulness, I can be more responsive to what is happening to clients and to my feelings. I can empathize with them better than others do.*” (ID5)

*Personal growth:* The informants reported about their personal growth, not only professionally as counseling psychologists but also spiritually as human beings who dare to reach their deepest fear, accept their unsightly sides, see repeated emergences of such characteristics as perfectionism or wrath, and gradually change those thoughts and behavior via mindfulness practice. “*Willingness to let myself return to be a human who actualizes himself. This is a precious one. We don't hurt others and ourselves. But to become like this needs constant practice. I have done it every day until now. I anchor myself on my feeling. Whenever negative feelings crop up, I will return to stay with the present.*” (ID2)

**Effects on clients:** According to the informants, include 3 characteristics: 1) *better focus on the present moment*, 2) *having tools to deal with life difficulty*, and 3) *resolving problems*.

*Better focus on the present moment:* According to the informants, after the counseling session, clients were capable of staying with the present and observing their thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations at present better, leading to more proper behavior. “*...for cases I can successfully help to get connected with their 'selves', they can answer to the point, more quickly, taking less time. Like, well I'm worried, I feel more at ease, I'm hungry, for example.*” (ID5)

*Having tools to deal with life difficulty*, with greater mindfulness, for example, awareness of suffering in mind and means to heal that suffering, more confidence and mental stability, more realistic self-scrutiny methods, and more appropriate interactions with people around them. As statement from ID1, “*Some told me that in the past they hardly observed*

*themselves. They are observing themselves more, more receptive to what is happening to their children. In the past, when their children talked to them, they assumed that was their children's wants. So, they put their guard on, rejecting it. But now they embrace their children's wants to consider how these wishes affect their own mind and what their minds tell them to do so as to stay with their children. Not to accept or reject, but ponder, "Oh, you want it, but not now."*

**Resolving problems:** after the counseling sessions with mindfulness practice, most clients can resolve their own problems. In some cases, external difficulties may not change, but their internal problems have been dealt with. *"There's a case that told me he was good and warm. It's like I had helped him. He felt kind of warm. Though he didn't succeed, or abruptly changed, but every time he came, he felt that way."* (ID4)

**Effects on therapeutic relationships:** The mindfulness practice could improve rapports between the informants and their clients, leading to better therapeutic relationships. As the informants were aware of unhelpful thoughts arising during the sessions, such as doubt in their ability as psychologists, they can handle those thoughts and return to focus fully on the clients. The clients themselves can sense that the informants care, so they have courage to confide their deeper problems to the informants. Like ID4 stated, *"Oh, I always feel good. Nothing goes wrong in my therapeutic relationship."*

**Obstacles in applying mindfulness practice to the counseling process** included unready psychologists, especially physical unfit or insufficient concentration on the counseling sessions. Clients can also be unready: a lack of experience in mindfulness practice, resulting in inability to be aware of the present moment, to explain clearly things they are aware of, and to understand what the psychologist is doing. To deal with these obstacles, the informants can return to their mindfulness practice in case of their own unreadiness, fatigue, and boredom, by observing their bodies at the present moment or asking themselves whether they truly understand their clients. If the obstacle is clients' unreadiness, the informants will ask them to clarify, inform, and facilitate their themes as detailed in the mindfulness practice so that they can continue the practice at home before coming back to discuss their experience in the next session. *"I know I was not ready, not aware quick enough. So, later my counseling is lightened up, not too serious. I just stay there, using my mind as it is naturally. Use nature, everything is already there."* (ID4)

## Discussion

After the use of literature triangulation to check the robustness of the findings, four main themes were confirmed: *background of mindfulness practice, methods of practice mindfulness, procedure and application of mindfulness into practice, and outcomes of applying mindfulness to counseling sessions.* The results indicated mindful counseling psychologists' experiences in practicing mindfulness. The process started from their inspiration to practice mindfulness. Then they explained about the core reasons that influenced them to continue practicing mindfulness which were seeing benefits of mindfulness for themselves and their practice as psychologists. As a seasoning therapist and mindfulness practitioner, they were able to integrate mindfulness into the counseling process in many ways, such as, using mindfulness directly with clients. The result from this research supported current literature regarding using mindfulness in psychotherapy.

The result from this study indicated that in order to use mindfulness in counseling practice efficiently, therapists had to have first-hand experience with mindfulness. Some therapists might started practice mindfulness with the objective to deal with their personal issues. As Felton, Coates, and Christopher (2015) found that counseling psychology students who reported their poor life management, stress, insomniac knew what they should have done but could not do accordingly, leading to doubt in their capabilities and relationships and suffering

from these situations, the reason they turned to practice mindfulness. Counseling psychologists in this study described reasons of mindfulness practice also from personal interest and personal suffering. These two reasons are supported by relevant literature in the Western contexts, including recognition of the benefits, curiosity, and faith in the mindfulness instructors, which further show that the interest in mindfulness practice is not necessarily and exclusively Buddhist (Cigolla & Brown, 2011). This finding was in accordance with the reasons why counseling psychologists in general take up mindfulness practice.

The finding in this research also revealed the methods of practice mindfulness. It can be either formal practice mindfulness or daily-life practice mindfulness. The informants of this study practiced mindfulness by formal practice which includes sitting and walking meditations 3-4 times a week, 15-30 minutes/session regularly. They also practiced mindfulness in daily life by applying mindfulness practices to daily routines. Relevant literature suggests that, excluding religious beliefs and rites, mindfulness is a practical skill requiring just some fundamental practice at the beginning, and then daily practice can help apply mindfulness more skillfully. Lykins and Baer (2009) found that counseling psychologists who had been practicing mindfulness for a long time practiced formal meditation regularly, such as a few 20-40 min per sessions per week in addition to attending mindfulness training courses for more than 10 days a year. Therefore, the formal practice can be a foundation for a person to practice mindfulness regularly.

The result also indicated the benefits from practice mindfulness continuously. The benefits included, stable mind, attentiveness, clarity, and flexibility when facing grave accounts of their clients. This finding supported by Galus (2015) reported that the therapists with at least 2-year mindfulness practice reported daily practice in the past 6 months and further applied mindfulness practice to their clients during the therapeutic sessions. Thus, mindfulness practice can be integrated into the counseling process, both as exercises for clients and tools for counseling psychologists to stay here and now for greater firmness during counseling sessions. Accordance with Christopher and Maris (2010) found that counseling psychology students with a background in mindfulness allowed them to integrate mindfulness and clinical training within themselves.

In fact, the counseling psychologists' application of mindfulness practice into counseling process consists of 2 phases, the beginning and the present process. In the beginning, the mindful counseling psychologists followed theories and learned from their hands-on experience, comprising repeated trials and errors until they understood the practice more profoundly. Shapiro and Carlson (2009) suggested that mindful awareness has always been an implicit part of successful psychotherapy though mindful counseling psychologists. This kind of learning gradually enables the mindfulness-practicing psychologists via self-awareness and mindfulness-based counseling in the counseling process to develop the foundation for adapting mindfulness from the beginning of the session to resolve the client's suffering: the psychologist informants would look for signs of readiness in clients, encourage their awareness, educate them, and assign them homework. This is in accordance with Dreifuss (1990) findings that psychologists who had been practicing mindfulness for over 5 years could integrate their personal experience of mindfulness practice into their therapeutic sessions, being able to detach themselves from the clients while becoming more aware of their performance as psychotherapists.

Even the research result revealed methods of mindfulness practice, but none reflected the causes of regular and continuous practice. Therefore, the researchers suggested a further study to focus on the reason why therapists continuously mindfulness practice. Although the findings suggest that these experiences of the informants are part of their professional growth, yet it is not found from the information how exactly, or by what skills and methods,

mindfulness practice is applied to their counseling process. Therefore, the next step after this preliminary research, the researchers planned to enhance an understanding about the process of mindfulness practice and the effect of mindfulness practice on counseling psychologists as a person. Moreover, current literature showed that the outcomes of mindfulness application into psychological counseling in this study are consistent with many other studies regarding counseling skill development (empathy and personal growth as counseling psychologist) and effects on clients and therapeutic relationships (Buser, Buser, Peterson, & Seraydarian, 2012; Davis & Hayes, 2011). Still, from the 1st interview sessions, the informants mentioned about difficulties in applying mindfulness practice to the counseling process, yet the analysis did not show how the mindfulness-practicing counseling psychologists deal with arising obstacles. Hence, to elucidate the working process of the informants as counseling psychologists in this regard, the researcher suggested further study on how counseling psychologists make decisions about when and how to incorporate mindfulness practice in counseling sessions.

## **Limitation**

As with all research, variable interpretations are possible. This study carries with it because the themes emerged from the interviews and the present data in this study is the preliminary result from the first-round interview of the research. To address this limitation, we acknowledged existing biases and assumptions and remained open to new discoveries in further data collection and analysis.

## **Conclusion**

From this preliminary research, four themes emerged: background of mindfulness practice, methods of practice mindfulness, procedure and application of mindfulness into practice, and outcomes of applying mindfulness to counseling sessions. Although these four themes portrayed experience of the counseling psychologists, who have been practicing mindfulness, and their counseling process that assimilates mindfulness practice, clarity and comprehensive connections are missing in associating long-term experience of the informants, methods applied, procedure, application of mindfulness into the counseling process, and assessment of clients' readiness for mindfulness practice.

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