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ORIGINAL PAPER

What Do Supervisors' and Supervisees' Think About Mindfulness-Based Supervision? A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

Objectives Mindfulness-based supervision (MBS) is a vital support for teachers of mindfulness-based programmes (MBPs), and good practice guidance requires mindfulness teachers to have at least 4 hr of MBS a year. Despite this, underpinning theory and research on MBS is sparse. This study explores the perspectives of supervisors and supervisees to identify helpful and unhelpful processes within MBS.

Method A total of 12 supervisors and supervisees participated. Two phases of semi-structured interviews took place, the first with all 12 and the second phase with a selected six participants. A conceptual model of how MBS affects the teaching of MBPs was developed using a constructivist grounded theory approach.

Results All participants spoke of how MBS is a highly experiential way of developing skills to competently teach MBPs, supported through the relationship between supervisor and supervisee. MBS uses a mindfulness-based relational inquiry process characterised by specific ways of speaking, listening, and pausing. This inquiry supports the supervisee to cultivate an embodied way of knowing, a deliberate stance of "not knowing", and to take an approach mode rather than avoidance mode towards vulnerability. During the interviews, participants emphasised the collaborative approach within MBS, but showed little acknowledgement or recognition of the inherent power with the role. Potential tensions in the holding of professional and ethical frameworks within MBS were identified.

Conclusions Recommendations are made about how the key findings can be brought into the ongoing good practice within MBS. Future changes within MBS should address issues of bias, diversity, and inclusivity.

Keywords Mindfulness-based supervision · Grounded theory · Relational inquiry · Learning · Professional and ethical practice · Qualitative study

Mindfulness-based supervision (MBS) is an important area of engagement for teachers of mindfulness-based programmes (MBPs), as it is an essential and integral part of MBP teacher training (e.g. Crane et al., 2010, 2017; Evans, 2019, 2021; Evans et al., 2015; Marx et al., 2015). A number of mindfulness associations have formed to set guidelines and codes of conduct to ensure the integrity of MBP delivery (e.g. British Association of Mindfulness-Based Approaches (BAMBA); International Mindfulness Integrity Network, IMI). All guidelines include a requirement that MBP teachers receive regular MBS. An example of MBS requirements by BAMBA (2015) is that teachers should receive "regular supervision with an experienced mindfulness-based teacher including: i. opportunity to reflect on/inquire into personal process in relation to personal mindfulness practice and mindfulness-based teaching practice ii. receiving periodic feedback on teaching through video recordings, supervisor sitting in on teaching sessions or co-teaching with reciprocal feedback" (guideline C.2.i&ii). The IMI guidelines state that supervision is an essential part of maintaining ethical standards for mindfulness teachers and trainers during training, as ongoing good practice post training, and as part of the criteria and standards for organisations which provide teacher training pathways (Kenny et al., 2020). However, Burton et al. (2023) found that 12.2% of 98 mindfulness teachers in their study

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were not having any supervision. This finding supports a case for needing a stronger evidence base to recommend MBS.

There has been an increased interest in the quality of MBP teaching in recent years, with a concern that as MBPs are implemented in the real world, the bar for training gets lowered due to resource constraints (Dimidjian & Segal, 2015). Therefore, the mindfulness field needs to ensure that to remain impactful for participants, effective, safe, and authentic MBP teaching is supported through teacher training, supervision, and retreats. To date, the main way that good practice is being construed and articulated is through the expertise of those facilitating training, supervision, and retreats for MBP teachers. A small number of pedagogical studies have looked at the effectiveness and processes in teacher training (Bowden et al., 2020; Griffith et al., 2019; Ruijgrok-Lupton et al., 2018) and supervision (Evans et al., 2015). Adamson and Brendgen (2022) have recently published a book about mindfulness-based relational supervision, which explores how a relational and mindfulness-based approach to supervision can be mutually transformational.

As little research has been conducted on MBS, we first turn to the wider, more established research base into supervision within clinical and helping professions to gain context, draw upon universal learning, and support the development of professional standards around supervision in the mindfulness field. There are several reviews of clinical supervision (Buus & Gonge, 2009; Kilminster & Jolly, 2000; Kühne et al., 2019; Milne & James, 2000; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). They concluded that, similar to MBS, the practice of supervision in clinical and helping professions is usually based on models formed from expert narratives. Clinical supervision is assigned high importance for its role in developing and maintaining competency and upholding ethical and professional standards of good practice. However, these reviews also point to the lack of robustness in the research base, which leaves wide knowledge gaps; for example, what are the active components of supervision and the effects of supervision on supervisees (Kühne et al., 2019)? The practice of supervision is an integral part of professional standards in clinical contexts. The importance of supervision is mirrored in the mindfulness field; therefore, it is paramount that there is a clarity about what constitutes effective MBS, to ensure it is effective, supports practitioners to learn, and increases the quality of care.

Supervision of practitioners is common to many professions, such as psychotherapy, counselling, social work, and coaching, and is a complex activity with many definitions, functions, and modes of delivery. There are many definitions of supervision, such as Milne and Watkins (2014) who wrote: "The formal provision, by approved supervisors of a relationship-based education and training that is work focussed and which manages, supports and evaluates the work of colleagues" (p. 4). Within the many varied approaches to supervision, the consensus across the literature is that functions fall within three areas: normative (ensuring quality and ethical practice); restorative (emotional and coping support); and formative (developing skills and competency) (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993; Milne & Watkins, 2014). Several different supervision models are generally used within professional contexts: (a) developmental models — which include progression, stages, and phases in how to become competent (e.g. Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 1997), (b) therapy models — models that extend the concepts and practice of the therapy/intervention (e.g. a CBT-based model, Milne, 2009; a psychotherapy-based model, Hess et al., 2008), (c) supervision-specific models (e.g. seven-eyed model, Hawkins & Shohet, 2012), and (d) no theoretical model — a pragmatic approach taken, often based on how one was supervised.

MBS is relatively new, with less articulation at present. It would seem to sit within three of the models used for clinical supervision; first, the "therapy" model, as MBS is rooted in mindfulness concepts and practices; second, the developmental model in relationship to building competencies; and third, the supervision-specific model, for which the MBS framework could be used (Evans, 2021; Evans et al., 2015). There is just one framework to date about MBS for teachers of MBPs (Evans et al., 2015). This framework has three concentric circles which describe the nature of MBS. The outer circle represents the concepts and practice of mindfulness as a *container* for supervision: this would include mindful awareness and being grounded in the body, an attitude of friendliness and compassion, and a willingness to turn towards all experience, so both the supervisor and supervisee thus embody a present moment awareness. The intermediate circle represents the *content* that supervisees bring to supervision, and the areas that the supervisor has more experience and knowledge of. This includes teaching skills, personal mindfulness practice, an understanding of underpinning theory, and skills in managing individuals and the group process. The inner circle represents the *process* in MBS based on collaborative inquiry. A safe space is created for supervisees to explore arising teaching and personal practice issues through an embodied dialogue with the supervisor to enable integration back into teaching, practice, and life. This framework has been developed and used as a basis for training in MBS delivered by a UK-based organisation since 2016 (Cooper et al., 2015; Evans, 2021) (Fig. 1).

The supervision interventions utilised within MBS mirror those used within other modes of professional supervision. For example, Watkins (2017) lists six universal supervision interventions: modelling, teaching/instruction, self-reflective questioning, case conceptualisation, discussion, and providing feedback. MBS uses mindfulness-specific versions of such interventions, for example, embodying mindfulness,

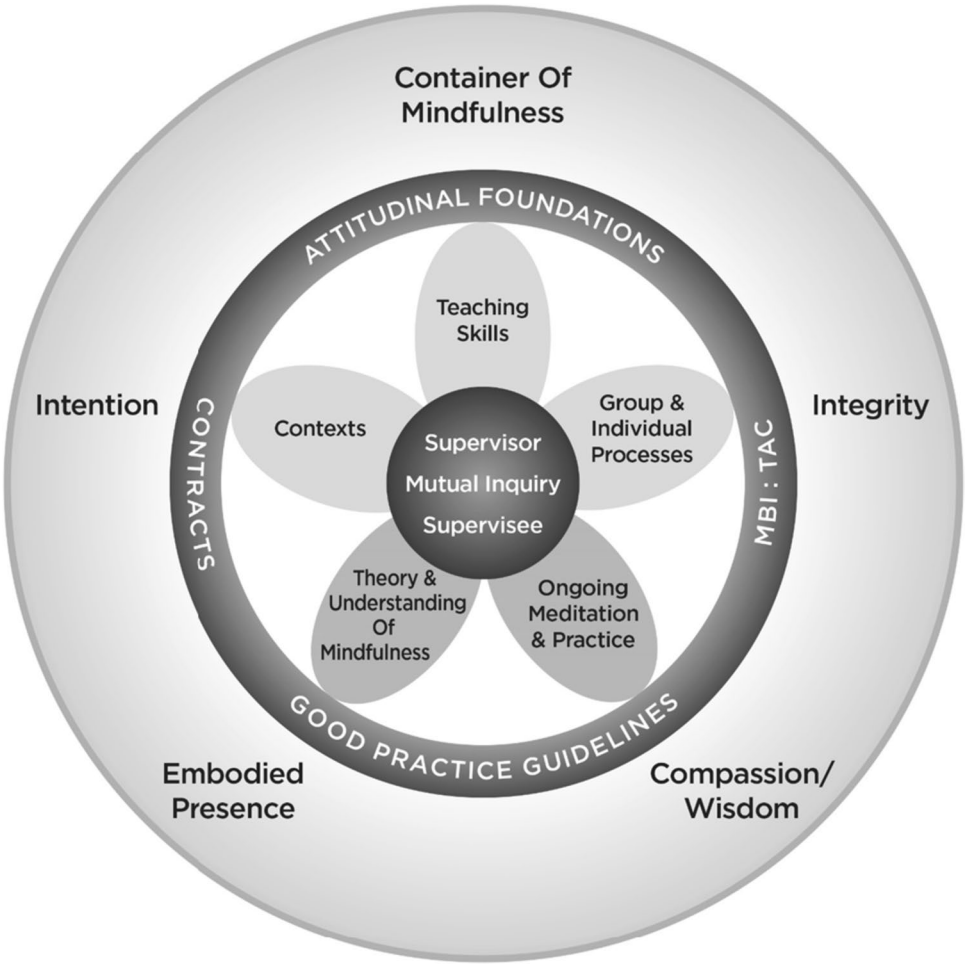

Fig. 1 A framework for mindfulness-based supervision

guidance and feedback after observation of teaching skills within the supervision session, the encouragement of a self-reflective stance, the mindful inquiry approach to discussion and questions, and the use of the Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI:TAC; Crane et al., 2021), a tool that describes MBP teaching skills, as a basis for discussion and feedback. Evans et al. (2021) outlined five ways that the MBI:TAC can support developmental learning within MBS: (a) providing a shared language about the skills and processes of teaching MBPs, (b) framing and mapping the core pedagogical features of teaching MBPs, (c) providing a way of staging learning, (d) giving a clear picture of where the supervisee is in their development; and (e) empowering supervisees to be proactive in the development of their learning. The newly developed Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Learning Companion (MBI:TLC; Griffith et al., 2021), based on the MBI:TAC, provides teachers with a self-reflection tool and is likely to be useful for MBS.

There is a need to deliver MBS that supports teachers to offer high-quality and effective MBPs (Crane et al., 2020). Therefore, a greater understanding of the processes that support effective supervision is vital. The aim of this study was to explore perceptions of MBS among both supervisees and supervisors, for example, does MBS support learning and development? What aspects of MBS do supervisors/ees think make a difference to the teaching of MBPs? What aspects of MBS, if any, need to change?

Method

Participants

The 12 participants were trained MBP teachers who met BAMBA's good practice guidance for teaching MBPs (this is a minimum of a 12-month training pathway, ongoing personal mindfulness practice, attendance on an annual retreat, and regular supervision). In addition, participants met the inclusion criteria for being either a mindfulness-based supervisor (completion of a 2–3-day MBS training course, being a mindfulness-based supervisor for at least 6 months, and actively in the last 6 months) or mindfulness-based supervisee (had received MBS whilst teaching at least two MBP

courses, with one MBP course in the last 6 months). During recruitment, the first author made decisions not to include close colleagues as participants, e.g. two close colleagues took part in the pilot interviews only, and their own supervisees were not recruited. Recruitment of supervisors was easier. The study was limited by time and resources, so as the supervisors also received supervision, we decided to continue with the ratio of participants we had. A summary of participant demographics can be found in Table 1.

Procedure

Participants were recruited via an invitation email sent through three mindfulness teacher training organisations within the UK and an organisation that hosted mindfulness supervisors. If a potential participant then contacted the researcher, they were sent an information sheet and asked to complete a written consent form prior to being invited for interview.

There were two phases of interviews and coding. In Phase I, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 12 participants, with grounded theory analysis to generate a theoretical understanding (Charmaz, 2014). The second phase involved semi-structured interviews with 6 of the 12 participants from Phase I using a theoretical sampling method. The first aim of the second round of interviews was to explore the theoretical understandings and emerging theory being developed from the data analysis in more depth, with a smaller group of participants, ensuring that they represented a range of experience, e.g. those more experienced and those newer to supervision, and from a range of MBPs, such as an MBSR supervisor and MBCT clinical supervisor. The second aim was to explore more divergent views (for example the lack of diversity), so participants expressing views that differed from other interviewees were invited.

Measures

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the data collection method. Questions for Phase I were developed by two of the authors. The interview schedule was piloted with one supervisor and one supervisee. Changes were incorporated after the pilot interviews. The schedule began with three warm-up questions, e.g. can you give three words that describe what makes supervision mindfulness-based? And then moved into questions to explore their experience of MBS in more depth, e.g. from your experience as a supervisor/supervisee how do you think that MBS affects your practice of teaching MBSR/MBCT? How does your relationship with your supervisor affect outcomes from supervision? (With a prompt to ask about positive and negative relationships and outcomes) are there aspects of MBS that you think could usefully change?

The interview schedule for Phase II picked up on the themes and emerging theory from the analysis for Phase I, and asked the participants questions on these themes, e.g. embodiment is a common term used within MBIs. What is your understanding of it in relation to MBS? Are there any ways that you feel the inquiry within MBS is different to the inquiry within MBSR/MBCT? Issues around equality, diversity and inclusion did not feature strongly in the first round of interviews. Do you have any thoughts why this may be so?

Table 1 Summary of participant demographics

Participant Supervisor	Highest level of MBI training	Years of personal practice	MBP speciality	Time since first supervised	Total sessions as supervisor	Phase interviewed at
S'vor 1	Level 2	10+	MBSR	5yrs+	24+	1
S'vor 2	MSc/MA	10+	MBSR/MBCT	2–5yrs	24+	1 and 2
S'vor 3	MSc/MA	10+	MBSR/MBCT	2–5yrs	24+	1
S'vor 5	Post grad dip	5–10	MBSR	2–5yrs	24+	1 and 2
S'vor 6	Post grad dip	10+	MBCT	5yrs+	24+	1
S'vor 7	MSc/MA	10+	MBSR/MBCT	6mth–1yr	6–12	1
S'vor 8	Level 2	10+	MBCT	5yrs+	12–24	1 and 2
S'vor 9	Post grad cert	10+	MBSR	2–5yr	24+	1
Participant Supervisee	Highest level of MBI training	Years of personal practice	MBP speciality	Time since first a supervisee	Total sessions as supervisee	Phase interviewed at
S'vee 10	Post grad cert	10+	MBSR	1–2yrs	6–12	1 and 2
S'vee 11	Level 2	10+	MBSR	5+ yrs	12–24	1 and 2
S'vee 12	Post grad dip	10+	MBSR/MBCT	2–5 yrs	12–24	1 and 2
S'vee 13	Level 2	10+	MBSR	5+ yrs	24+	1

Level 2 training involves completing two intensive 8-day trainings, a curricula specialist training and teaching at least 3 MBP courses under supervision, thereby under UK standards at the time, being recognised as a trained teacher

Data Analyses

A constructivist grounded theory approach was taken (Charmaz, 2014). This approach uses several methodological principles which were utilised throughout the analysis process: (a) the constant comparative method — where data are constantly compared within and between each other; (b) reflexivity — a process of acknowledging that the researcher brings their own knowledge, experience, and subjectivity into the research, which is made explicit; (c) memo writing — a process to assist the stage between data collection and writing up, alerting the researcher to gaps in the data that require elaboration; and (d) theoretical sampling — a strategy to sample new cases or data to develop, refine, and elaborate emerging grounded theory. A constructivist grounded theory approach was chosen as there is minimal existing theory in MBS, so we were keen to develop theory through the perspective of participants and their data. We also thought the roots and assumptions of a constructivist approach could be a good fit with what may be happening in MBS, in terms of co-creation within the relationship.

Twelve participants were interviewed in Phase I and six participants from the original 12 were interviewed in Phase II, which resulted in a total of 18 transcripts. The first author did the line-by-line initial coding of the transcripts using NVivo, and by using gerunds (words ending in "ing" to help to capture and preserve action), as is standard practice in constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). The second phase was focussed coding and the analysis, where the researcher held in mind questions from Charmaz (2014), e.g. which ways might your initial codes reveal patterns? Which of these codes best account for the data? Do your focussed codes reveal gaps in the data?

Findings were then compared across participants, looking at common themes and divergences. As there was so much similarity between the data from supervisors and supervisees, it was decided to amalgamise the data together and keep a record of any specific places where there was divergence. The construction of the theory was an iterative process, moving between the data and categories, and examining the relationship between the different focused codes and subsequent categories to find ways of explaining and understanding. Memos were used and diagrams developed of new ideas, and gaps and shifts in thinking were captured as the theory developed. Coding and analysis continued until the categories had reached saturation point with no new categories being generated.

We used Charmaz's (2014) evaluative criteria for grounded theory studies as a guide for quality and adherence to the grounded theory method, namely, credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. Participants' own words played a strong part in the theory building. A reflexive stance was an integral part of this research, using Charmaz's (2014) definition of reflexivity:

> The researcher's scrutiny of the research experience, decisions, and interpretations in ways that bring him or her into the process. Reflexivity includes examining how the researcher's interests, positions, and assumptions influenced his or her inquiry. A reflexive stance informs how the researcher conducts his or her research, relates to the research participants, and represents them in written reports (p. 344).

Reflexivity was woven throughout all stages of the research, through individual reflexivity, and through working with others. The first author's dual role as an MBS supervisor and researcher was acknowledged, both in terms of how their experience and knowledge aided the analysis, and the possibility of this hindering a more objective view. Care was taken, therefore, to represent all the data as objectively as possible. Working with others to support reflexivity included regular discussions with first and second research tutors to help see where their decisions and interpretations were being influenced by their own view. A small group of peers on the same doctoral programme, all in professions allied to medicine, who were not mindfulness teachers or practitioners, were also consulted at different points in the research process. They contributed by acting as inter-raters, coding small sections of the data and discussing codes and categories. The research was presented at different stages to this group of peers for comment and questioning. The aim was to add in new thoughts and contributions that may have been missed, and to confirm the themes. The authors generated a conceptual model based on the data, which offers a theoretical perspective of how MBS supports the learning and development of MBP teachers.

Results

The conceptual model that represents all the categories, subcategories, and relationships between them was developed from the analysis and is presented here as the relational inquiry mindfulness-based supervision (RIMBS) model (Fig. 2). We first offer an overview of the conceptual model, followed by a more detailed description of a selection of the categories. The first category is "valuing MBS", this represents both the intention and desired outcome of supervisees who come to supervision to learn, find their own authenticity and embodiment as MBP teachers, so that they can deliver good quality MBPs to participants who attend their courses. The second category is "learning within MBS" which represents how the supervisee learns new skills, how learning is a key function of MBS, and why it is an important part of training and ongoing good practice. This category

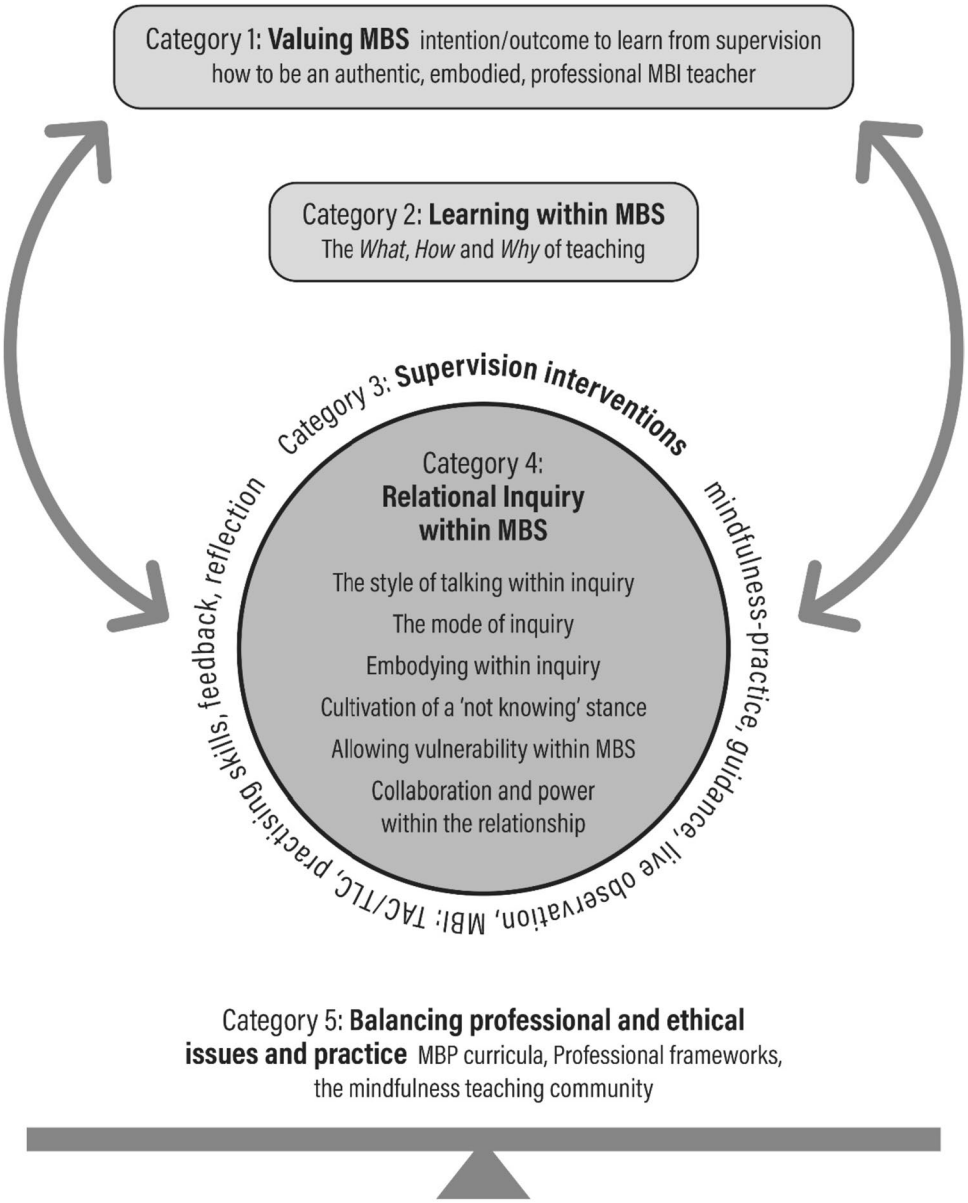

Fig. 2 Relational inquiry within mindfulness-based supervision (RIMBS) model. A conceptual framework representing the categories and relationships as developed from the analysis

encompasses the different aspects of learning that is supported by the supervisor, namely, the *what*, *how*, and *why* of teaching. The third category is "supervision interventions" which represents the variety of interventions used within MBS, similar to other professional supervision modalities (e.g. feedback, self-reflection, modelling) but with a key difference of being grounded in mindfulness pedagogy (e.g. the use of the MBI:TAC for feedback and self-reflection, the embodiment of mindfulness as a way of modelling). The fourth category is "relational inquiry within MBS" which represents the embodied conversation that occurs within MBS. The fifth and final category "balancing professional and ethical issues and practice" is represented at the bottom of the figure and shows how MBP teaching is held within this broader context of professional and ethical issues. When using quotes, we use a pseudonym and either S'vor (supervisor) or S'vee (supervisee). Where there were differences of views between the supervisors and supervisees, we have highlighted this.

Category 1: Valuing MBS

Both supervisors and supervisees spoke about how MBS makes an essential positive difference to teaching MBPs, with comments such as: "I don't even know if I would teach without supervision because it's so important to me" (Vicky, S'vee). Participants said how MBS helped improve their skills and confidence as an MBP teacher, supported learning and development, was a supportive place for dialogue and reflection, and provided a safeguarding and integrity

function. Participants gave examples of how MBS helped, such as reassurance and confidence building, checking ideas, suggestions for different ways of teaching, gathering new resources, getting to know the programmes in detail, discussing difficult teaching moments, and holding the integrity of teaching which complies with good practice and professional standards, as well as finding their own authentic stance:

> To discuss those difficult times, or the delights as well, to reflect on the good teaching and the tricky teaching and unwind as well (Vicky, S'vee).

> I mean, I feel like it's absolutely essential in safeguarding the integrity way of working (Dawn, S'vor).

Overall, there was a strong sense of participants valuing MBS, as part of what supported them to be competent and professional teachers. This desire to teach with competency and integrity is why they come to MBS and they valued the outcomes of MBS. In addition to valuing MBS, participants also recognised other supportive structures, such as co-teaching, peer relationships, sharing, and teacher networks, so MBS is not the only thing that helps, but rather, forms part of a jigsaw of professional and personal development, "I have people I can network with as well, so I can speak to people outside of supervision as well which I feel very, very lucky to have" (Marion, S'vee). The responses about MBS were overwhelmingly positive, to the point where the authors noted the lack of questioning and critical reflection about MBS, which may be a result of participants being highly invested in MBS and mindfulness more generally, with many years of committed training and personal mindfulness practice.

Category 2: Learning Within MBS

Defining Characteristics: the What of Teaching, the How of Teaching, the Why of Teaching

Participants described how MBS supported their learning of the *what* of teaching, e.g. the nuts and bolts of how the curricula fits together, such as how to lead a particular exercise or practice. The supervisors offered resources for teaching, and supervisees received feedback on their teaching and advice on how to improve further. Another aspect of learning how to teach MBPs lies in the personhood of the teacher, and is the embodied, attitudinal way of teaching MBPs (the *how* of teaching). For example, how to keep the inquiry open, curious, and in the present moment, how to keep the teaching grounded in mindfulness, how the teacher can stay grounded/embodied as they teach, and how to cultivate being non-reactive. Supervisors spoke of a fine balance between responding to the supervisees' need to learn both the *what* and the *how* aspects, and described tensions if MBS becomes too focussed one way or the other:

> I mean, as always with everything to do with mindfulness, there are those edges around doing and being. I guess in those sessions where I felt like we've had half an hour together and the supervisee has wanted to bring so many practical questions like we're so much in doing, there's not enough space for being, or something like that (Dawn, S'vor).

> That balance is crucial,… but actually unless the skills to convey the intentions and the understanding are there (.) then we are in a danger of just kind of cultivating a race of great practitioners but who don't have that way of bringing that into an understandable researched context and understand what of their own experience fits with what it is, and where it belongs in the curriculum (Esther, S'vor).

The learning process during MBS was described as a continuously evolving one and was tailored to develop alongside the supervisees' level of training and experience in teaching. One supervisee spoke of how MBS gave them material to keep learning and improving, whilst another supervisee spoke about finding searching questions from their supervisor helpful, and different to what friends (non-experienced) might offer. It also took time in MBS for the working relationship to develop; one supervisee recalled sessions where the supervisor was focusing on basic skills which the supervisee already felt they had:

> I felt I had to maybe prove where I was a bit with my teaching, I think there was something around the inquiry, it felt a bit like sucking eggs a little bit. But that was her needing to get to know where I was with my journey, so I understood that… (Marion, S'vee).

For example, with less experienced supervisees, supervisors spoke of how they had to tailor MBS at times to be concrete and supportive:

> So, if I think about particular supervisees, especially at the beginning of the journey, I would say there'd be a lot more doubt, confusion, worry, about the what do I do, maybe things that really can be clarified very quickly, very easily … a very simple conversation or explanation can really just sort that out (Robin, S'vor).

Supervisees spoke of how important it was to feel confident in their teaching. Supervisees expressed a need to feel supported and have a place to practice skills so that they can grow and develop, as well as drawing out and recognising their existing strengths. For example, one supervisee described how supervision helped them to regain confidence after a gap between training and teaching:

> It was just really helpful to regain that sort of touching base again with something, thinking, 'Yes, I can do this,' and blowing the dust off it all. I think it had sort of instilled itself so much in my mind I wasn't rusty with it, by the time we had gone over it so many times in two years training it was okay, but it gave me that confidence (Sandra, S'vee).

Supervisors and supervisees recognised the importance of learning about the scaffolding of the curricula and teaching methods (the *what*). They also acknowledged that the learning of the *how* was needed from early development, but as it may take longer to embody these ways of teaching, that are often in contrast with usual modes of operation. Therefore, the focus on the *how* of teaching tends to only happen after the supervisee had confidence in the *what* of teaching.

The *why* of teaching includes supporting supervisees to understand the rationales for particular pedagogical approaches in MBPs and linking this to underpinning theory and research. For this category, it seemed more challenging for supervisors and supervisees to find explicit examples. Supervisees spoke of how the support from the supervisor was not always about learning something new, but about feeling affirmed and more grounded in their responses in the midst of teaching by having confidence in the rationale for the teaching approach. By reflecting on the underpinning theory, rationale, and intentions in MBS, supervisees were able to feel more confident in their responses when teaching.

> So, I think for me, it's skills (.), and it's being able to exercise those skills under pressure, and when my mind is taking me, or my tendencies have taken me somewhere else. All the things you were talking about, particularly intentions, it involves returning to first base: "What's the point of this session?" (Sandra, S'vee).

Category 3: Supervision Interventions

Different mindfulness-specific methods/interventions within MBS were spoken about in the research. Some examples are the possibility of using the MBI:TAC; embodying mindfulness, guidance, and feedback; the encouragement of a self-reflective stance, and the mindful inquiry approach (expanded further in category 4). Feedback was seen as happening on a continuum from formal feedback after observation of live teaching through to more informal feedback about plans for teaching: "This is what I am planning to do, what do you think?" (Alex, S'vee). The observation of live teaching in MBS took place in a number of ways, such as the supervisee giving recordings of their teaching to the supervisor to view, the supervisee guiding live in the MBS session, and occasionally having the supervisor as a co-facilitator in the group. A self-reflective approach, which MBS was seen to encourage, was perceived as helpful:

> I hadn't really thought of it like this but having a supervisor does change …it's bound to change the nature a bit of one's practice as a teacher because it does keep you thinking about it (Alex, S'vee).

Participants highlighted two aspects which they felt could be utilised further within MBS. One supervisee, when asked if the MBI:TAC was used in their supervision, said: "No, but why not? is my short answer" (Sandra, S'vee). This suggests that the MBI:TAC is not used by all supervisors. There were also several comments about how some supervisors did not see their supervisees teaching, either within the supervision session or via recordings, instead relying on supervisees reports of their teaching:

> I think they're very competent, but I also think there are times when I don't know whether what they're doing, there'd be other things that I'd be concerned about or not. And because I don't see them teaching, that remains a bit of a question mark. So, I guess that's more of an uncomfortable feeling (Robin, S'vor).

Category 4: Relational Inquiry Within MBS

MBS is largely conducted through relational inquiry between the supervisor and supervisee. Relational inquiry is defined here as an embodied conversation grounded in open curiosity and the practice of mindfulness (e.g. connected to body sensations, slowed down with time for pausing). This relational inquiry is the primary process of what is happening within MBS (and is arguably what makes it mindful). Six subcategories under the category of relational inquiry are presented below (Fig. 3).

Subcategory 1: the Style of Talking Within Inquiry

Inquiry is the way that exchanges between the teacher and participants occur during an MBP, where the teacher listens deeply and asks questions about participant experience, and sometimes will link these to MBP teaching. The inquiry process is dynamic and moves through different layers as it unfolds. There is an emphasis on noticing direct experience (thoughts, feelings, body sensations) and moving to dialogue about these experiences to place them in a personal context of understanding and linking to a wider context. Supervisees often bring issues with inquiry from the MBP groups they are teaching to supervision, and there is also a process of relational inquiry *during* the supervision itself. Here, we focus on the inquiry process within MBS. The following quote illustrates many aspects of the relational inquiry within MBS, including the attitudinal foundations

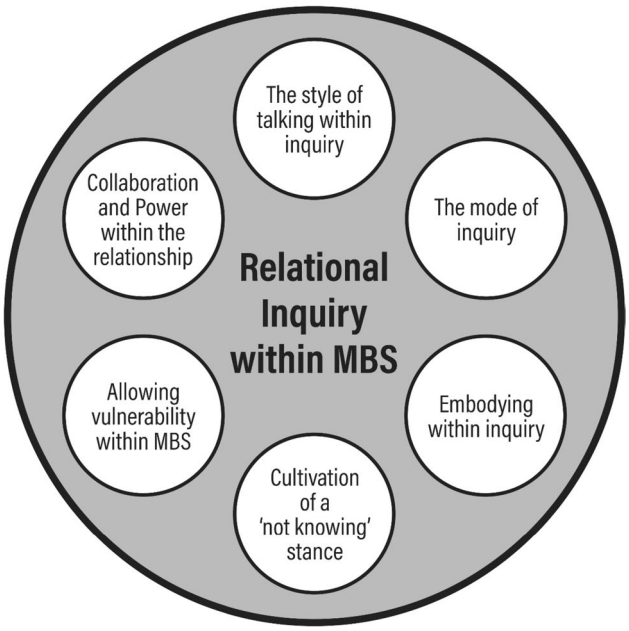

Fig. 3 The subcategories of relational inquiry within mindfulness-based supervision (RIMBS) model

of mindfulness practice and the trusting of the process, and points to a different way of knowing that includes awareness of internal processes and the changing nature of experience, compared to a more familiar cognitive knowing:

> …so, without the embodied dialogue, without the inquiry process, without that experience of someone holding the space and facilitating a process of noticing direct experience, inquiring into what's happening, what's unfolding … what it feels like to trust in that process unfolding and to see how invites arise from that rather than kind of going to a book to find out what the answer is (Dawn, S'vor).

One supervisee described the inquiry within MBS as having "more purpose and intention and action" (Sandra, S'vee) than during inquiry when they taught MBPs. Participants found it challenging to articulate in words what this embodied inquiry feels like as can be seen in the following example:

> Well, I guess it's that ((pause)) we are in the realms of the being with direct experience and it's almost like as soon as I move to try and find words I'm going into, there is a sort of doing, even though I'm having an intention for words to be arising, there is some sort of sense of doing as I try to articulate it (Dawn, S'vor).

This talk of the inquiry process has a particular style, both in the participants' descriptions of inquiry and in the way they spoke in the interviews. The character of this talk emphasises the deliberate cultivation of what was named in this research, as an open attitude. There are frequent pauses, unfinished sentences, reflecting and thinking aloud, the challenge of finding words to describe a more somatic experience, and the frequent use of open-ended questions.

> If it was a mate you'd just be saying, 'Ooh, I know, awful,' but she sort of says, 'that's interesting that you feel that, isn't it? Why do you feel that?' and pushes it back to why I feel that... It's quite helpful really if I'm being asked searching questions. I really appreciate that (Sandra, S'vee).

Subcategory 2: the Mode of Inquiry

One supervisee spoke about how MBS helped them to return to a core intention of being in the present moment when using inquiry in MBPs. The repeated exploration of this within MBS had embedded her conceptual knowing of *why* she was using inquiry in this way which she could then draw on when teaching:

> So, when, for example, the inquiry is going off on one, having the supervision I think has really reminded me to sit there and think, 'Right, how do we bring this back to the present?' (Sandra, S'vee).

> It's like the bell sounding in my head, 'The present. The present.' You know that nice feeling of, 'What will she (the supervisor) say?' I know what she'll say. She'll say, 'Keep it in the present.' (Sandra, S'vee).

Supervisors spoke of how they deliberately foregrounded the MBS process into a present moment *being* mode, rather than offer more automatic, conceptual responses. They described a pull between these two modes (being and conceptual) when supervising. The following quotes show how supervisors had to actively and deliberately curb their own tendencies towards a more conceptual mode when supervising:

> I have a tendency to go up into my head (Sally, S'vor).

> That's right, yeah. And I'm sure I do slip in more than is good for me into going a bit didactic with them (Dave, S'vor).

Participants also emphasised the importance of the relational inquiry within MBS where supervisors "inquire" of supervisees, inviting them to notice experience by bringing attention to experience within the body during inquiry. The following example shows a supervisee who talked about a "challenging" participant during MBS, focussing on what the person said in the group, and their supervisor instead asked them to notice their body, thoughts, and feelings, therefore giving the supervisee access to a wider perspective

and way of knowing. The supervisor invited the supervisee to a responsive rather than a reactive mode, where new understandings can be made, which in turn led the supervisee to a change in attitude and behaviour towards a participant in the group:

> A supervisee who brought an example of a participant that she found very challenging … and the supervisee feeling a sense of shame because she felt quite rejecting to this difficult participant. And I'm noticing just as I'm saying that kind of just breathing out a little bit more fully… Really exploring that as a body experience, locating where the heat was, the pressure was, gave the supervisee another way of being with her experience of this participant and then the extension of that was being able to allow this tricky person to be part of the group. Maybe also to sort of take a slightly wider view… And in the supervisee, allowing that difficulty to be there, like her reactivity to be there, she was more able then to allow the person to come (Dawn, S'vor).

Subcategory 3: Embodying Within Inquiry

All participants highly valued the embodying of mindfulness during MBS. It is hard to define embodying in a succinct way; it includes being aware of one's own internal experience in the present moment, acting in ways that are aligned with patience, non-striving, and trust, and being authentic to one's own way of being in the world. As one supervisee put it, "I really want a supervisor that is authentic to embodiment" (Sandra, S'vee). Supervisees perceived that supervisors demonstrated aspects of embodiment during MBS such as steady speech, steadiness in the body, not jumping in, kindness, openness, and acceptance. These embodied qualities are part of what is cultivated within the supervisor, the supervisee, their relationship in supervision, and the transfer of these qualities into how MBPs are taught:

> But more and above that, it's the modelling, the embodiment held by the supervisor that helps to support the modelling and embodiment held by the supervisee…it's that kind of cascade, if you like, if you have an embodied supervisor, you are more likely to have an embodied supervisee, which will then carry that into the group which will invariably help the participants (Peter, S'vor).

Another aspect of embodying is the relational process that happens within MBS. There are occasions when participants found this relational process difficult to describe in words. Participants offered descriptions of embodied conversations, where both parties are attempting to be open, honest, connected with the present moment, utilising an awareness of their own body sensations, and talking about this being a mindful practice.

> And there's a quality to people who practice, not just talk about it, that is very present, very solid. I'm trying to talk about things that are hard to talk about… They're very present and that's a very rich quality to the interaction between you and there's a kind of flow between you and quite a lot of pauses and a lot of reflecting back… (Sandra, S'vee).

> There is something around the way that we exchange, yes, what we have to say that is particular (Alex, S'vee).

The importance of personal mindfulness practice and living life through a mindful mode was recognised, together with how this links with being an embodied teacher. Supervisors spoke of how they wanted to support supervisees commitment to practice and unpacking the learning from it, due to its vital link with the embodied teaching of MBPs.

Subcategory 4: Cultivation of a "Not Knowing" Stance

Supervisors spoke about how they deliberately avoided portraying themselves as an "expert" with ready answers. Instead, they aimed to create a dynamic so as to have an equal, safe, and exploratory partnership with their supervisees, and created conditions where supervisees feel comfortable enough to speak about all aspects of their teaching, including feeling lost and unsure:

> To provide a safe place to say, 'I don't know.' The culture to say, 'I don't know, I'm lost, I'm confused.' there's not a lot of places that you can say that professionally (Matilda, S'vor).

> Hopefully conveying the sense that we are all in this together. I might have more experience than the supervisee but it's not me teaching new students. It's a bit different from that kind of didactic, me supervisor, you beginner mindfulness teacher, unconfident mindfulness teacher, I hope it's on a more friendly level than that (Adrian, S'vor).

The following quote from a supervisor illustrates this holding of the present moment within supervision with this stance of not knowing:

> It's a teaching process that's so much about not knowing, not knowing what's going to happen in the groups, not knowing how people are going to respond. So, there's something about the supervision process, I feel, that can hold what can often feel like really challeng-

> ing teaching experiences because of that quality of not knowing (Dawn, S'vor).

Whilst this cultivation of not knowing is part of the *how*, a balance is needed, so that concrete skills learning, and underpinning theories (the *what* and *why*), are also present in MBS. Without a clear understanding of the *what* in both MBS and teaching, it can "[g]et a bit mushy and unstructured" (Sally, S'vor). A pause and a holding back and not giving stock answers within MBS are regarded as very useful, and this needs to be balanced with cultivating teaching skills.

Subcategory 5: Allowing Vulnerability Within MBS

Supervisors and supervisees perceived vulnerability as an essential part of MBS and felt that MBS could end up being quite a superficial process without the expression of vulnerability on both sides. Participants emphasised how a trusting relationship is a core aspect of supervision that allows for inquiry at a deeper level, and this allows vulnerability and turning towards more challenging experiences.

> Oh crucial. Really, really important. Yes, because if you can't show your vulnerability then you are not going to learn, right? These are your learning edges and the places where you feel incompetent and scared and clueless (Sally, S'vor).

The supervisor aims to set up a safe space where the supervisee feels a sense of psychological safety. Psychological safety is where individuals feel able to speak about ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes without being humiliated (Edmondson, 2018). Part of how the supervisor does this is to be in touch with their own vulnerability, such as the territory of feeling 'not good enough', and thus have a willingness to acknowledge vulnerabilities with their supervisees.

> The initial part is making a container that is safe. 'I'm not going to talk about your work to anybody else, it's between you and me. I will show you my vulnerability'. But it's about creating a safe container first (Matilda, S'vor).

The wish to learn has an inevitable vulnerability, in that it implies and recognises a lack of skills or knowledge, where one does not fully understand, with a possible sense of shame and feeling exposed. For many people, the receiving of feedback is not easy and can stir up emotional reactions. This is one way in which MBS might work with a supervisees' vulnerability, to support going beyond the edge of comfort and safety:

> I think one learns to, and I certainly have learned over the last year or more, to value feedback more and to actually want some difficult feedback rather than to fear it, I feel it will do me more good and to know that one is in the relationship where the people who give it are meaning the best by it (Alex, S'vee).

A mode of moving towards challenging experience is evident in this example where the supervisor worked with a supervisee's instinctive wanting to get rid of inadequate feelings:

> Well, there is another supervisee that comes into my mind as you're asking me that, and the reason that I know that supervision makes a difference to her teaching is because she really struggles with feelings of being inadequate and having what is needed to be a mindfulness teacher, so the supervision process is a place for really meeting that part of her (Dawn, S'vor).

The supervisee was encouraged to find a way of being in a different relationship with "imperfection". This turning towards all experiences, including the difficult, is taught within MBPs, and so is helpfully mirrored within MBS. Supervisees know the territory of turning towards difficult experience themselves before asking the participants of their MBPs to do so.

Subcategory 6: Collaboration and Power Within the Relationship

Supervisors described how they aimed to draw out knowledge and experience from the supervisee, rather than transmit their own knowledge onto the supervisee. Collaborative discussions and processes were described as helpful within MBS, with an emphasis towards open discovery rather than shutting down conversations. Additionally, supervisors spoke of how learning is not one way, and were explicit about how much they had learnt from the process of supervising. There is a shared intention to work together and create the mindfulness container:

> So, there is a sense of shared process, shared endeavour…It's that quality of being alongside each other as we are looking at something (Dawn, S'vor).

Participants readily described how supervisors aim to work in a collaborative, non-hierarchical way. It was only with some more prompts from the researcher that led to participants talking about the potential imbalance in the power dynamic of the relationship. Once recognised, supervisors spoke about how they aimed to minimise any negative aspects of role power. Supervisees do want "power" there in terms of having an experienced 'expert' supervising them, especially in early developmental stages, and they also want to be treated as an equal human being.

> So, I use it, I hope, advisedly and constructively (Esther, S'vor).

> And I guess part of my intention is to move the dynamic more towards a collegial approach (Esther, S'vor).
> It doesn't feel like master and servant or tutor too much because that would in a way make it more difficult to say the vulnerable things, because one doesn't want to feel one is going to be judged... I do ultimately obviously look to him for authority in these matters, but it is very much a conversation. It feels very much a conversation of equals although it isn't, and I wouldn't want it to be (Alex, S'vee).

The power aspect of the supervisory relationship made it hard for supervisees to give feedback about their experience of MBS to their supervisors. A natural desire to please is evident, along with other pitfalls being recognised:

> So, it's hard in that space with the power difference or just the natural desire to please but it's probably particularly prevalent in this kind of world, we are all quite sensitive and tuned in with each other (Sally, S'vor).
> I wouldn't feel comfortable giving any negative feedback to a supervisor, which is probably not good. Obviously, I'm paying for it, so then you would think well that's kind of, you know, you are entitled to maybe say but I'm not the sort of person that likes to complain or speak out (Marion, S'vee).

The questions about power and feedback in the interviews led supervisors to consider inviting more feedback and how to do that with a recognition that the power might inhibit supervisees responses:

> Which is why that always needs inviting because there's a natural power dynamic because people aren't going to… a supervisee isn't going to give direct feedback without the invitation (Esther, S'vor).

Category 5: Balancing Professional and Ethical Issues and Practice

The conversations about professional and ethical issues within the interviews brought out some diverse views. This category included issues from the broader mindfulness context that affect the teaching of MBPs, so have an interface with MBS. These broader context issues include how strongly teachers need to adhere to the curricula of MBPs, adherence to good practice guidelines, codes of conduct, being part of a mindful community, and inclusion and exclusion issues. As authors, our understanding throughout this category is that in MBS, there needs to be a balance of not holding these wider context issues either too tightly (which can shut down creativity or miss the wider point of the curricula) or too loosely (which can lead to challenges with integrity and safeguarding participants).

Subcategory 1: MBP Curricula

As MBS supports the learning and application of the *what*, *how*, and *why*, a close relationship with the curricula, pedagogy, and theory of MBPs is evident. Adhering closely to the MBP curricula and not going *off piste* is one way of ensuring the integrity of MBPs. The word "embracing" of the programmes was used, suggesting a more engaged relationship with the intentions of curricula rather than simply the form. This can cause conflict; there was an example of a supervisor sticking strongly with the principles of a curricula and the supervisee not agreeing with them, eventually leading to the end of the supervisory relationship. Without flexibility, needed innovation and adaptations may be halted, but with too much flexibility, it raises the question of whether what is taught can still be regarded as an MBP.

Subcategory 2: Professional Frameworks

Both supervisors and supervisees described wanting to maintain good standards of practice and adhere to the codes of conduct of their profession. This supervisor felt there was a gap around safeguarding within the MBP field:

> And the safety of the participants as well. That's an important aspect and I think one of the things that might need to improve is, going back to the previous question I guess that was around safeguarding, and how clear we are as supervisors or indeed as teachers around safeguarding, I think there is some triviality around that given that we are working with so many vulnerable people (Peter, S'vor).

MBS can act as a checking and monitoring process for supervisees, a reminder of the core values, intentions, skills base, and mindfulness practices that need to be returned to. Within MBS, a supervisor hears the supervisee's reflections about the participants of their groups, has open dialogue about their vulnerabilities when teaching, and might view video clips of the supervisee teaching. Through this process, the supervisor is more likely to spot safeguarding issues and hold the safety of the supervisee's MBP group, and the health and well-being of the supervisee in mind. In turn, supervisors also spoke about how they appreciated having their own supervision of supervision (supra-vision) so their work as a supervisor was also monitored: "That's why I want supervision of supervision because otherwise nobody knows what I'm doing in this little room in my home" (Matilda, S'vor).

Subcategory 3: the Mindfulness Teaching Community

Both supervisors and supervisees spoke of how all-encompassing mindfulness was in their lives, and how it felt like a vocation to be an MBP teacher. They emphasised that to be an MBP teacher requires a commitment that goes beyond one's working hours and becomes an integral part of life. Others expressed some caution and to remember that mindfulness is not everything for all people. One supervisee spoke of the danger of mindfulness teachers potentially living in an echo chamber, and the importance of not getting too enclosed.

> If we are to be mindfulness teachers in a secular world then we need to have our feet firmly planted in that world and be practising mindfulness and all its pitfalls and all its falling on our faces in our own lives and we need to be having… oh sorry I'm on a box now. In my view, we need to be having a life that isn't just about teaching mindfulness in order to be doing that and in order not to get enclosed into that bubble (Esther, S'vor).
> Yes, people can get a bit evangelical… (Sandra, S'vee).

Equality, diversity, and inclusion issues were barely mentioned by participants in the first phase, other than one supervisee and supervisor who noted how the significant costs of training and supervision may exclude people. The teaching of MBPs often does not generate a substantial income, so teachers may not be able to access MBS due to cost: "I think it can be quite an expense for some people. So, I think there's a real sense that we need to make the programs available, more universally, not just for white middle-class people. Because I just want to make sure I guess that the supervision feels available…yeah" (Marion, S'vee).

Participants in the second round of interviews were asked their thoughts about why equality, diversity, and inclusion did not feature strongly in the first round of the interviews, "I think what first came into my mind was the lamentable lack of diversity overall in MBSR, MBCT. And I feel trapped some way" (Alex, S'vee). Another supervisee spoke about the perception that people might have about mindfulness and how this can exclude: "How to reach other people and how to do something about this very posh image" (Sandra, S'vee). Within MBS, the norm is to bring to supervision the participants that attend MBP courses, and there is little dialogue about those who do not come and reasons for this. A couple of supervisees felt that the boundaries around screening people for psychological distress might exclude people from certain groups; they could see why screening helped safety and ensured that it was an appropriate time for a participant to start an MBP, but felt that boundaries might be held too rigidly at times, as named in this quote: "I think sometimes with our boundaries, sometimes our boundaries get in the way, we can maybe not serve people when it would do those people good to be served" (Marion, S'vee).

Discussion

To our knowledge, this is the first data-derived research study about MBS, and it used a qualitative design to help gain a foothold of knowledge in an understudied field. The data shows there was a strong expression of MBS being a support to supervisees' learning and development. A research-based conceptual model was developed, grounded in the perspectives of both supervisors and supervisees, particularly focussing on our second research question about how MBS makes a difference to the teaching of MBPs. The key findings are that the learning within MBS is an experiential way of developing skills in the *what*, *how*, and *why* of teaching MBPs. MBS is a collaborative relational process using an inquiry-based approach, with the supervisee supported by the presence, experience, and knowledge of the supervisor. This relational process supports a mode of approaching challenges where supervisees can discuss their vulnerabilities around teaching in a non-judgemental space. This relational inquiry emphasises an implicational, intuitive way of knowing that brings in a deliberate stance of "not knowing" so curiosity can emerge. Both the supervisor and supervisee aspire to embody mindfulness within MBS. MBS is perceived to help MBP teachers to be effective professional teachers, in the service of ensuring that good practice guidelines, such as those established by BAMBA in 2015, are met, and mindfulness is taught in safe and effective ways. In this discussion, we focus on Category 2 (learning within MBS) and Category 4 (relational inquiry within MBS) because these are the categories that highlight the unique aspects of MBS that make a difference to the teaching of MBPs. We also highlight our findings in relation to our third research question about what needs to change.

Participants described how MBS supported the learning of the *what*, *how*, and *why* of teaching MBPs, which covered all competencies needed to be an MBP teacher. Our findings show that supervisees are being supported to further develop these teaching competencies. As they put these skills into practice, they can learn more about *what* they do, *how* to do this in a way that embodies mindfulness, and to develop their understanding about "the *why*" so they can convey the learning clearly.

Participants emphasised how the learning within MBS was a relational process, with the supervisee being supported by the presence, experience, and knowledge of the supervisor. MBS helped supervisees to feel more confident in their teaching, with the process being attuned to their developmental level of learning. Both supervision and learning are social and relational processes. Vygotsky (1978) saw

learning as a social process, where individual learning is shaped through mentoring by more knowledgeable members of the community. He identified that we all have unique zones of proximal development, the difference between the level of learning one can reach independently at that moment in time, compared with the level one can reach under guidance or through collaboration with capable peers. The process of offering information in a way that it can be digested was named "scaffolding" by Vygotsky, where the educator, in this case the supervisor, tailors the learning to the individual developmental level. In the findings, it was recognised that this tailoring led to MBS being more scaffolded, in a more concrete way in early stages of MBP teaching, to help supervisees understand what they do and do not know, and it gradually becomes more process orientated. For example, since 2019, when the data were collected, supervisors are more likely to request seeing the supervisee teach during early stages of teaching alongside the use of the MBI:TAC/TLC (Crane et al., 2021; Griffith et al., 2021), either via recordings or through supervisor and/or supervisee guiding live practice and inquiry during the MBS session. More training organisations are stipulating that supervisors need to have viewed live teaching of their supervisee as part of the process of MBS.

The inquiry process in MBPs where the mindfulness teacher explores the experience of the MBP participant in a particular way (Segal et al., 2013) is also a core pedagogical process in MBS. During MBS inquiry, there is a deliberate cultivation of an open stance, and the supervisor listens deeply, asks open questions, and helps the supervisee to make linkages to wider themes. This finding parallels the results from an earlier conversational analysis paper which looked at the characteristics of inquiry, although between an MBP teacher and their participants (Crane et al., 2015). They identified sequences of talk within inquiry that involved turn-taking talk, questions and reformulations, particular ways of describing experience, and talk that constructs intersubjective connection and affiliation within the group. Inquiry is a process which is both highly specific to the conditions of the moment it took place in and uses repeated and recognisable patterns of interaction. Participants in the present study described these same characteristics of talk within MBS. However, we found the reports of the turn-taking aspect within MBS appeared to be more collegial, and fluid, with less prompting from the supervisor, likely because both the supervisor and supervisee are familiar with the inquiry process. In addition, in MBS, there is a more explicit consideration of actions to take forward from the conversation. Often a supervision session will end with supervisees naming what learning they will be taking forward into their teaching, much like the final stage in the Kolb cycle of active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

The findings showed how the inquiry process supported supervisors and supervisees to return to the core intentions of teaching MBPs, such as coming back to the present moment. This supported supervisees to become familiar with the MBP curriculum not only conceptually, but also experientially. By repeatedly inviting supervisees to come to direct experience, especially the body, a wider perspective and new way of knowing/understanding are revealed. Teasdale (2017, 2022), offered a framework for understanding these two modes and ways of knowing. The conceptual knowing, which is a default way of knowing for humans, has the characteristics of being goal seeking, so it is helpful for task completion. Teasdale then described a holistic intuitive knowing (referred to as the implicational approach in earlier publications, Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2011), associated with an experiential and embodied quality where experiences are "felt", "sensed", and "known with the heart". Teasdale and Chaskalson (2011) give an illustration from Martine Batchelor, about the use of a repeated silent question such as, "what is this?", to keep this mindful mode/intuitive approach alive. Supervisors often drop in questions designed for an opening investigation, without an expectation for a conceptual answer, but as a way of coming to the "felt" sense of the question. They allow supervisees to become aware of the lens through which they are viewing the world (of their MBP teaching) and thus create new perspectives. We include this explanation as a way of further understanding of the inquiry approach, which is embodied rather than language-based and a key part of MBS.

The findings show that a key method in MBS is how supervisors embodied mindfulness through their verbal and non-verbal responses, alongside an attitude of openness and non-judgement. The participants reported that supervision conversations felt embodied and connected to the present moment, similar to a mindful practice. This ability to be embodied is regarded by pedagogical researchers as vital, and indeed is named as the second essential, or *warp* element by Crane et al. (2017). Additionally, Griffith et al. (2019) place the "inside out embodiment" (p. 1318) of the teacher at the centre of their MBP group model. They described this as the "capacity to direct the attentional system in purposeful ways, along with the attitudes of acceptance, non-striving, trust and non-fixing. Embodiment is a congruence arising from mindful connection to both these inside and out experiences" (p. 1318). It is a complex concept for supervisees to grapple with, and there can be a tendency for new teachers to try and appear to be embodied rather than embodying from the inside (Crane et al., 2021). MBS seems to support this key pedagogical learning as a place where supervisees can explore being embodied in relation to another, as well as seeing and feeling this quality of embodying modelled by their supervisor.

Supervisors were clear during the interviews that they did not want to appear as experts during MBS. Instead, supervisors spoke of how they aimed to create conditions where there is no rush to give answers, so supporting a more creative and dynamic space to open up. Adamson and Brendgen (2022) described several meta skills which they see as fundamental in mindfulness-based relational supervision which parallel this finding. One of these meta skills is being open to emergence and not knowing in the co-creation of the supervisory dialogue. In relation to MBS, this does not mean that knowledge or advice cannot be shared, but that there is a pause and a holding back, so conceptual knowledge does not close down new possibilities. This concept of resting in not knowing was used by Keats in 1817, in his theory of "negative capability" which described a deliberate cultivation of being with uncertainty. Adamson and Brendgen (2022) discussed how negative capability, "the ability to let go of the need to control, the need to find resolution or answers and to sit in silence, opening to the uncertainty inherent in the present moment" (p. 81) supports supervisor and supervisee to rest in more expansive awareness, which allows for deeper listening. Within MBS, this ability to be with uncertainty is core to the skill of working in the present moment, with what is emerging. The experience of being human, and the world we live in, the cultural importance of reason and rational thought, makes being with uncertainty a challenge, and often an area of inquiry within MBS.

The findings showed how a trusting supervisory relationship is fundamental to the success of MBS. Trust means that supervisees can be supported to turn towards and approach more challenging experiences and go beyond the edge of comfort whilst feeling safe (for example, meeting feelings of inadequacy, exploring the feeling of incompetence, or not being "good enough" to teach MBPs). Crane (2015) wrote about the experience in her teaching development of working with the mismatch between inner experience and what is presented to the outer world. She wrote candidly about her efforts to be a "good" teacher, whilst underneath feeling a fraud. MBS seems to be a key support in this area of knowing human patterns and having a safe place to explore them rather than move away. The recognition of our common humanity is also embedded in the very definition of what it is to be an MBP teacher, for example, the fourth *warp* of being an MBP teacher refers to a "participatory learning process" (p. 996) which includes a recognition of common humanity, knowing their own personal story and common pathways that lead to distress (Crane, 2017).

Participants spoke of collaborative discussions and processes within MBS. This fits with an underlying philosophy within MBP teaching of not fixing, and more a "[s]tanding with the participant in a space where meaning can unfold" (McCown et al., 2011, p. 128). However, the other side to this is the recognition that there is an inherent power differential to be recognised and worked with. For example, in this study, some participants wondered if power differentials can make it hard for supervisees to give honest feedback to their supervisor. This is also recognised by the wider literature on clinical supervision; De Stefano et al. (2017) wrote of role power, leading to an inherent imbalance within supervision. They suggested ways to help empower the supervisee, such as regularly checking in with supervisees to see if they are getting what they need and demonstrating trust in the supervisee and their abilities. This recognition of power imbalance, with an increase of processes to empower the supervisee, could usefully be incorporated further into MBS guidelines.

Of note was the participants' overwhelming positivity about MBS. Participants tended to be keen to talk about the value of MBS and less able to speak about any challenges. In the second round of interviews, the researcher worked hard to draw out the less positive aspects of MBS, still, hardly any issues were raised. It is difficult to know why this is, and it did not seem to be a reluctance to speak about challenges; rather, it seemed to be an absence of negative perceptions about MBS. Reasons for this may be that mindfulness is likely to be closely aligned with participants' value system and lifestyle choices, and they have invested a lot of time, effort, and money into the development of their mindfulness practice and teaching. Could this alignment and the associated deliberate fostering of qualities such as being considerate, compassionate, and accepting, plus the intimate and personal relationship they may have with their supervisor, mean that participants are less likely to think critically about MBS? Additionally, the mindfulness community is dominated by people who are highly educated and likely middle class. A recent study found that of 109 mindfulness teachers, 94.2% held at least a graduate degree, and 74% had a postgraduate degree, with a median income of £31,400 per annum (Burton et al., 2023). It may be that the lack of criticism is linked to ideas of professionalism, or a reluctance to speak "badly" of supervision.

Limitations and Future Directions

The participants within this research mirrored the MBP teaching community, which, as already highlighted, is a homogenous group, mainly white, middle class, and highly educated (Burton et al., 2023). This homogeneity means that it is a fairly representative sample of MBP teachers and supervisors, but the research would have benefitted from recruiting people from more diverse backgrounds. Many of the participants were known to the first author, which could have hindered their honesty or openness within the interviews. In addition, the first author's dual role as an MBS supervisor and trainer, although acknowledged and worked with, may have hindered a more objective view. Participant numbers were small, and although this is appropriate for grounded theory methodology

(Charmaz, 2014), it is something to be aware of when interpreting the data.

This study set out to generate robust theory about MBS from the perspective of supervisors and supervisees. Further research could investigate the links between MBS and the quality of teaching, including teachers who do not receive MBS. Since the data were collected in 2019, there has been more widespread critique of mindfulness (e.g. Cook & Cassaniti, 2022; Karelse, 2023); future research should ensure that it brings out critical perspectives. For example, Burton et al. (2023), found that 12% of MBP teachers did not engage with MBS for the most recent course they taught. This raises important questions for future research about why some MBP teachers do not consistently engage with MBS.

The RIMBS model from this study can be used in practice by mindfulness-based supervisors and supervisees, in supervision training and supra-vision (supervision of supervision). It provides insights into the distinctiveness of a mindfulness-based approach to supervision, especially the relational inquiry. There are some specific changes identified to carry forward to support good practice, such as the importance of viewing live teaching, the possibilities of using tools such as the MBI:TAC/TLC as part of MBS, and bringing themes and issues around bias, equality, diversity, and inclusion into MBS.

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Author Contribution AE: conceptualisation, methodology, data curation, investigation, formal analysis, visualisation, writing — original draft preparation, writing — review and editing. GMG: original draft preparation writing — review and editing. JS: research supervision, writing — review and editing.

Data Availability Not applicable.

Declarations

Ethical Approval The research was approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Committee, College of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Exeter 2017/1337 on 5/10/16.

Informed Consent Written informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Conflict of Interest The first author is the supervision lead within The Mindfulness Network — a charity which offers mindfulness-based supervision. The other authors report no conflict of interest.

Use of Artificial Intelligence The authors did not use any artificial intelligence tool to write the manuscript.

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