



**The development and feasibility assessment of a wellbeing
coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness**

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Abstract

Background: It is recommended that adults have access to proactive wellbeing interventions to protect their mental health, and the coaching industry is well-positioned to support this. The evidence suggests that socio-cognitive mindfulness (Langer, 1989) is a suitable theory from which to develop a coaching intervention due to its links with multiple wellbeing benefits, yet this has not been fully explored in the coaching literature. This thesis aimed to address this by developing a coaching intervention grounded in socio-cognitive mindfulness theory to promote wellbeing development in non-clinical adults.

Methods: The pragmatic approach used for the thesis was guided by the Medical Research Council's framework for developing and evaluating complex interventions (Craig et al., 2013), which involved conducting five studies. First, a systematic review of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions provided insights relevant to coaching and helped to develop a programme theory for the intervention. Second, a qualitative study explored the acceptability of the proposed intervention with ten coaches leading to intervention design recommendations. Third, the accumulated evidence was triangulated in an intervention development study to refine the programme theory and design a prototype. The fourth study was a quantitative assessment of the intervention's feasibility and acceptability. The fifth study qualitatively explored the experiences of the six participants who attended the coaching programme.

Results: The qualitative findings indicated that multiple processes occurred during the programme, such as the development of cognitive flexibility and wellbeing through cycles of experiential learning, self-regulation and self-efficacy. The feasibility study results demonstrated high intervention attendance, adherence and completion rates, with participant responses inferring that the coaching programme was acceptable and well-received. However, the preliminary assessment of outcomes indicated that the intervention may only be effective in some cases for improving wellbeing.

Conclusion: This thesis offers an original coaching intervention which could support wellbeing improvements in some non-clinical adults. The overall findings suggest that there are synergistic benefits available when socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies are integrated into coaching processes.

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List of Abbreviations

ALS: Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis

AMI: Achievement Motivation Inventory

BPS: British Psychological Society

EPPI: Evidence for Policy and Practice Information

GROW: Goal, Reality, Options & Will

HE: Higher Education

HR: Heart Rate

LMS: Langer Mindfulness Scale

MAPPCP: Masters in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology

MBCT: Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

MBI: Mindfulness-Based Intervention

MBSR: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

MBTI: Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

MQLI: Multicultural Quality of Life Index

MRC: Medical Research Council

NLP: Neuro-Linguistic Programming

PANAS: Positive and Negative Affect Schedule

PERMA-V: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement & Vitality

PICOS: Patient/Population, Intervention, Comparison and Outcomes

PNRQ: Positive and Negative Relationship Quality

PRISMA: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews & Meta-Analyses

RCT: Randomised Controlled Trial

ROBIS: Risk of Bias in Systematic Reviews

RPWB: Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing

SD: Standard Deviation

SDT: Self-Determination Theory

SPWB: Scales of Psychological Wellbeing

TFA: Theoretical Framework of Acceptability

TIDIER: Template for Intervention Description & Replication

UK: United Kingdom

US: United States

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List of Publications and Presentations

Publications

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This introductory chapter aims to provide the background and rationale for this thesis, which was to systematically develop a wellbeing coaching programme based on socio-cognitive mindfulness and to explore its feasibility and acceptability. First, the need for more proactive wellbeing interventions in the United Kingdom (UK) is discussed and how the coaching psychology industry could support this endeavour. Next, socio-cognitive mindfulness is introduced as a promising potential approach to developing evidence-based coaching for improving wellbeing in non-clinical adult populations. The author's professional background as a coaching psychologist is outlined to demonstrate the concept development phase of the research, as well as the author's personal and professional motivations. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the research objectives and research questions which this thesis aims to address, plus a summary of each thesis chapter.

1.2 The Need for Proactive Wellbeing Interventions

The UK's Department of Health and Social Care produced a report in 2011 declaring: "No health without mental health" and quoted the following statistics:

"Mental ill health is the single largest cause of disability in the UK, contributing up to 22.8% of the total burden, compared to 15.9% for cancer and 16.2% for cardiovascular disease. The wider economic costs of mental illness in England have been estimated at £105.2 billion each year. This includes direct costs of services, lost productivity at work and reduced quality of life." (p3).

The report advocates for interventions which promote positive health in both adults and children. Over ten years later, a follow-up report outlines that the costs of mental ill health have increased to £117.9 billion, which is approximately 5% of the UK's Gross Domestic Product in 2019 (Mcdaid et al., 2022). Once again, a call is made for more preventative measures, such as brief psychological interventions, which are short-term interventions combining education, support, skills training etc, with a proposed process or mechanism and a target outcome (Hodges et al., 2011). Interventions based on mindfulness are highlighted in the report as a cost-effective approach to preventing the deterioration of mental health.

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are described as “the systematic application of a particular type of awareness to a variety of phenomena” which can include thoughts, emotions and sensations (Cullen, 2011, p.192). MBIs are being used more within non-clinical settings to promote mental health, with multiple reviews suggesting they reduce anxiety, stress and depression whilst increasing psychological health and wellbeing (e.g., Galante et al., 2021; Lomas et al., 2019; Querstret et al., 2020).

The World Health Organisation (2021) defines wellbeing as a positive state which comprises quality of life, having a sense of purpose and the ability to overcome challenges. Keyes (2002) posits that wellbeing and mental health promotion should be a leading focus in health management and that it is an incomplete approach to only target the treatment of mental ill health and prevention of relapse. This recommendation follows on from Keyes’ characterisation of the presence of mental health and wellbeing as ‘flourishing’, with the opposite end of the Mental Health Continuum (Allport, 1937) representing the absence of mental health, or ‘languishing’. The suggestion is that it may be easier and more cost-effective when individuals are supported to maintain moderate or optimum levels of wellbeing, rather than requiring healthcare measures and treatment when suffering from mental ill health and associated conditions. As such, there appears to be a growing acceptance that it is not enough to simply treat mental ill-health, but that there needs to be more emphasis on pre-emptive measures to maintain and improve positive mental health and wellbeing. Given the economic burden of mental ill health, as well as the personal toll, it may be in the best interests of all to pursue more proactive measures to protect and maintain healthy levels of wellbeing, before they have the potential to evolve into costly mental health issues.

In 1999, a call to action was made by Martin Seligman to shift the dominant focus within psychology on pathology and dysfunction towards a resource-orientated model which explores what is “right” with people. From this appeal, the positive psychology movement was born, with a focus on research and promotion of human flourishing, including the development of evidence-based wellbeing interventions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Yet, most roles within the British Psychological Society (BPS) still predominantly focus on the knowledge and treatment of mental ill health or mental deficits, including clinical, forensic, health, counselling and educational psychologists.

1.3 The Role of Coaching Psychology in Wellbeing

Shortly after Seligman's address, the late coaching pioneer, Professor Anthony Grant (2001), advocated for more evidence-based and psychologically grounded approaches to coaching within his doctoral thesis: "Towards a Psychology of Coaching". Grant (2001) recommends investigating if effective cognitive and behavioural methods used within clinical settings could be integrated into coaching practice with non-clinical populations for enhancement purposes rather than for treatment. The thesis distinguishes coaching psychology from clinical and counselling psychology by its focus on improving the life experience and performance of well-functioning clients, rather than the amelioration of psychological dysfunction in clinical populations (Grant, 2001).

Grant's (2001) research sparked another movement where prominent coaches campaigned for a dedicated coaching psychology profession with the purpose of "enhancing wellbeing and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches" (Palmer & Whybrow, 2006, p.8). The legitimisation of the coaching psychology profession (Moin et al., 2023) was realised in 2021, with the launch of the BPS's Coaching Psychology Division. The division aims to support the regulation and advancement of the expanding coaching profession, whilst increasing knowledge of human performance, achievement and wellbeing (The British Psychological Society, n.d.). Therefore, theories focusing on human flourishing and resource-orientated approaches, such as those accruing within the positive psychology literature, have been embraced for having particular utility for coaching research (Green & Palmer, 2019). An example of this is the development of a coaching approach based on the established PERMA model of wellbeing to promote improvements in positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011).

Mindfulness is another example of an established positive psychology theory which has been discussed for its value within coaching and the beneficial impact it can have on the coach and coachee (Spence, 2018a). Mindfulness has also been linked specifically for its usefulness for health and wellness coaching since it can help to improve self-reflection, emotion regulation and self-compassion (Moore & Jackson, 2014). It has been suggested that nurse practitioners can enhance their coaching practice by integrating mindfulness techniques to

facilitate behavioural changes to improve quality of life and wellbeing (Robins et al., 2014). Despite the increasing evidence about the wellbeing benefits associated with mindfulness, there have been difficulties with defining the concept (Chiesa, 2012).

The coaching psychology literature has attempted to provide clarity by proposing the following four definitional categories of mindfulness: a philosophy, a practice, a state and a trait (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013). A philosophy of mindfulness is described as a set of beliefs about the nature and meaning of mindfulness, whereas the practice of mindfulness is characterised as a deliberate attentional process or set of mindful behaviours. State mindfulness is defined as a present-moment cognitive phenomenon, with trait mindfulness described as an attitudinal and habitual predisposition toward experiencing states of mindfulness (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013). These categories resonate with the recommendations made in a more recent paper (Daniel et al., 2022) which identified three clusters within the research on mindfulness: mindfulness processes (e.g., mindful attention), mindfulness dimensions (state and trait) and mindfulness development (e.g., metacognitive practice). The definitional categories of mindfulness are sometimes used interchangeably within the coaching psychology literature; however, the following sections will endeavour to provide clarity by using the definitions or descriptive terminology when referring to mindfulness.

1.4 Mindfulness-based Coaching

Coaching psychologists have suggested that mindfulness practices can offer empirically sound methods for facilitating development within the coaching process, the coaching relationship, as well as coach and client wellbeing (Virgili, 2013; Cavanagh & Spence, 2013). This can be achieved by integrating mindfulness practices into coaching to help clients increase clarity, self-awareness, empathy and focus (Hall, 2013). Spence (2006) investigated the integration of mindfulness training into coaching programmes across multiple studies within his doctoral thesis. The mindfulness training included teaching a range of meditative techniques, such as guided breathing and sitting meditations, as well as exercises designed to enhance attentional control and stimulate creative thought. The overall thesis findings suggested that mindfulness training helped prepare coachees to make the positive changes required in coaching leading to improvements in goal attainment and wellbeing (Spence, 2006). Other studies have explored the direct application of brief MBIs within the coaching

setting, such as inviting coachees within sessions to conduct breathing exercises and body scans to increase awareness (Passmore & Marianetti, 2007; Van Den Assem et al., 2022).

Spence (2018b) also discusses the value of mindfulness concepts in coaching using the lens of self-determination theory (SDT: Deci & Ryan, 1985), which discusses how human behaviour is influenced by intrinsic motivation. The theory posits that three innate psychological needs influence self-determined behaviour and can impact psychological wellbeing: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Spence (2018b) describes how mindfulness can support the psychological needs of clients within coaching, for example, by increasing their awareness of intrinsic motivation and aligning their goals with innate values and interests. This is a salient point given that health psychologists argue the importance of building intrinsic motivation for behaviour change for wellbeing interventions to be effective (Seifert et al., 2012; Mata et al., 2009). Therefore, the connection between mindfulness and intrinsic motivation suggests that mindfulness processes can enhance coaching since increasing client motivation is typically a key focus within the coaching process (Spence & Oades, 2011; Grant & O'Connor, 2022).

However, when considering how mindfulness processes can be applied to coaching, it is important to note that there are different concepts of mindfulness, and not all require meditation practices (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013). Nevertheless, the terms 'mindfulness' and 'meditation' are often used synonymously by scholars, which implies meditation is the predominant tool to improve mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2004; Pagnini & Langer, 2015). This is misleading since other mindfulness practices exist (Carson & Langer, 2004), such as the psychological processes within the construct advanced by social psychologist Ellen Langer (1989) which focuses on actively attending to novelty, context and different perspectives. For clarity, this thesis refers to any meditation-based forms of mindfulness as meditative mindfulness henceforth. Langer's concept goes by various names; however, it is often referred to as socio-cognitive mindfulness in the literature due to its emphasis on mental processes within social contexts (Pirson et al., 2012). The term socio-cognitive mindfulness will be used throughout this thesis.

1.5 Preliminary Review of Socio-cognitive Mindfulness for Coaching

Whilst a plethora of research exists purporting the multiple wellbeing benefits of mindfulness-based interventions and programmes, most of this research is focused on meditative mindfulness (Keng et al., 2011; Galante et al., 2021; Lomas et al., 2019; Querstret et al., 2020). This is reflected in the coaching psychology literature, which tends to discuss the benefits of mindfulness-based coaching with an emphasis on the meditative form (Van Den Assem et al., 2022; Shelly & Zaidman, 2021). Although there is nothing to stop the two approaches to mindfulness from being developed simultaneously (Djikic, 2014), there may be circumstances when a socio-cognitive approach could be preferable, and perhaps more relevant for coaching contexts. Thus, it is key to distinguish between the two approaches to understand their different perspectives, processes and associated benefits more clearly.

1.5.1 Socio-cognitive mindfulness for overcoming mindlessness

Whilst the meditative mindfulness movement instigated in the 1970s derived from Buddhist concepts and practices (Hanh, 1976; Kabat-Zinn, 1990), Langer and her colleagues were approaching mindfulness from a different perspective. Langer's early research investigated the pervasiveness of mindlessness, which was characterised as the automatic reliance on fixed and predetermined rules (Langer et al., 1978; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Langer concluded that *"virtually all of our problems – personal, interpersonal, professional, and societal – either directly or indirectly stem from mindlessness"* (1989, p.xiii). A suggested mediator of mindless behaviour is the overuse of predetermined 'scripts' rather than the consideration of new and relevant information within the present situation (Langer et al., 1978). Subsequently, a person's choices and outlooks are diminished (Langer, 1989), such as mindlessly forming inaccurate character perceptions of others (Langer & Imber, 1980).

Bargh and Chartrand (1999) have counter-argued Langer's view on mindlessness, stating that such automatic mental processes are not maladaptive since they recall past evaluations to evoke our preferences and tendencies in service of our best interests. Whilst Langer recognises that some automatic mental processes are beneficial to allow for greater concentration of thought when required, she observed that people spend most of their time in a mindless state (Chanowitz & Langer, 1981) much to the detriment of their overall competence and wellbeing (Langer, 1989; 1992). Nevertheless, numerous studies appear to support Langer's view regarding the pervasiveness of mindlessness and its related

disadvantages, such as reduced affective wellbeing and cognitive functions (Carriere et al., 2008), recurrent family conflicts (Dumas, 2005) and unfavourable organisational behaviours (Ashforth & Fried, 1988). To overcome the extensive costs associated with mindlessness, Langer and colleagues turned their attention to its prevention: mindfulness (Langer & Piper, 1987). Langer's construct describes a flexible cognitive process that actively creates new distinctions and draws attention to the present moment and context (Langer, 1989). In a mindful state, people notice that their circumstances are in a constant state of flux, and so they flex their attitude to embrace continually evolving opportunities and possibilities (Pagnini et al., 2016). The evidence suggests that this mindful state can lead to a multitude of positive health and wellbeing outcomes (Langer, 2010).

1.5.2 Socio-cognitive mindfulness for non-clinical audiences

Although meditative mindfulness and socio-cognitive mindfulness have derived from different philosophic perspectives, they share parallels, such as attending to the present moment and self-regulation of attention (Hart et al., 2013). Yet, there are also distinct differences, particularly the therapeutic nature of meditative mindfulness which is not typically characteristic of the socio-cognitive perspective (Baer et al., 2003; Hart et al., 2013). The first meditative mindfulness programme, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR: Kabat-Zinn, 1982), was developed to treat chronic pain patients and alleviate psychological symptoms, such as anxiety and depression. In contrast, socio-cognitive mindfulness was originally developed to enhance wellbeing by overcoming mindless behaviours (Langer, 2002) and may be more suitable for non-clinical audiences. It is worth noting that whilst Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes et al., 1999) is another form of mindfulness which relies less on meditation, it is nevertheless a therapeutic-based model which primarily explores difficult emotions and experiences.

Whilst meditative mindfulness may come more naturally to some, others can experience great difficulty and subsequently give up the practice, or even reject the concept outright (Altizer et al., 2020). Although it is not uncommon for inexperienced meditators to find it challenging to establish and maintain a meditative mindfulness routine, some report more serious difficulties such as the exacerbation of anxiety, self-criticism and low self-esteem (Lomas et al., 2015a). There are reports of adverse effects leading from meditation-related experiences, such as psychosis, depersonalisation, and relaxation-induced panic (Van Dam,

2018; Cohen et al., 1985; Heide & Borkovec, 1983). One study found that 58% of a sample of 96 adults had experienced meditation-related adverse effects following a Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) programme, with 6-14% reporting lasting negative effects, such as hyperarousal and disassociation (Britton et al., 2021). Practising coaches need to be aware of the potential risks of applying meditative mindfulness in their sessions and need to be suitably qualified to manage any adverse effects that may arise (Britton et al., 2021; Brazier, 2023). The advanced therapeutic skills potentially needed to be able to handle such scenarios may fall outside of a coach's capabilities and professional boundaries.

Though these concerning examples appear to be in the minority, there seem to be no such reports citing the same adverse clinical effects within socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions since the approach does not rely on therapeutic approaches or post-meditative mindfulness (Langer, 2014). Instead, the focus is on directly processing the present moment with an open mindset in everyday life settings (Langer, 1997). Overall, most forms of meditative mindfulness are typically researched within clinical contexts, although some studies also report its value within non-clinical contexts (Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012). In contrast, socio-cognitive mindfulness research is mostly conducted within non-clinical settings (Hart et al., 2013). Therefore, the intended audience for Langer's construct appears to align most with coaching audiences where the focus is on solutions and optimal functioning, and less on identifying problems and providing therapeutic care (Grant & Green, 2018).

1.5.3 Socio-cognitive mindfulness and pro-sociality

Socio-cognitive mindfulness could be a favoured route when an individual aspires to go beyond intrapersonal development by also furthering their interpersonal abilities. Whereas intrapersonal development may emphasise areas such as self-awareness and self-esteem, interpersonal development focuses on the development of social intelligence and connection with others (Singh et al., 2016). Although intrapersonal factors such as autonomy and self-acceptance are said to be fundamental to psychological wellbeing, it is also true of intrapersonal aspects such as positive relations with others (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, the field of positive psychology has received criticism for placing too much emphasis on the individual and personal development (Becker & Marecek, 2008), with less attention given to the value of social networks (Putnam, 1993). Research indicates that family, community and

work ties are strongly linked to wellbeing (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004), therefore, the development of intrapersonal skills to strengthen such ties is key to protecting mental health.

Interpersonal skills are also key for establishing effective coaching skills, as is pro-sociality, which has been defined as having positive social behaviours, often to promote the welfare of others (Pfattheicher et al., 2022). Therefore, socio-cognitive mindfulness could be beneficial for interpersonal development since its practices encourage actively paying attention to and engaging with external stimuli, often within social contexts (Baer, 2003). The findings within socio-cognitive mindfulness studies appear to offer positive prosocial effects since many experiments are directly orientated towards improving cognition within interpersonal scenarios. Examples of this are studies reporting decreased prejudice (Langer et al., 1985), reduced stereotyping (Djikic, 2008), increased marital satisfaction (Burpee & Langer, 2005), and enhanced empathy, (Trent et al., 2016) due to increased socio-cognitive mindfulness. The link has also been demonstrated from the other-person perspective, such as the ability of a child to perceive socio-cognitive mindfulness in an adult, with positive effects experienced by the child as a result (Langer et al., 2012).

In contrast, meditative mindfulness programmes tend to rely on introspective mechanisms, such as the non-judgemental noticing of inner thoughts, usually for the purpose of alleviating clinical conditions (Nyklíček et al., 2020). This approach emphasises the continual awareness of first-person experience with less attention to external phenomena and interpersonal experience (Baird et al., 2014, Bishop et al., 2004). Therefore, whilst there is some evidence to suggest there is a positive correlation between meditative mindfulness and pro-sociality (Donald et al., 2019), it has been argued that the prosocial effects of meditation are limited (Kreplin et al., 2018). Consequently, as socio-cognitive mindfulness more intentionally focuses on social factors and interpersonal scenarios (Pirson et al., 2018), it can be argued that it is more compatible with facilitating the social processes inherent in coaching (Shoukry & Cox, 2018). Coaches can cultivate effective relationships with their coachees through prosocial behaviours, whilst also supporting coachees to develop their pro-sociality and interpersonal wellbeing through the coaching process.

1.5.4 Socio-cognitive mindfulness benefits relevant to coaching

The research on socio-cognitive mindfulness has identified wellbeing benefits associated with both state and trait mindfulness. State mindfulness represents a mindful condition which is accessed momentarily, whereas trait mindfulness is described as a predisposition to being mindful on a daily basis (Warren et al., 2023). Activating a state of socio-cognitive mindfulness is specifically characterised as the shift from a mindless to a mindful mode of thinking, whereas trait socio-cognitive mindfulness represents a dispositional capacity for an active and flexible mindset (Hart et al., 2013; Pirson et al., 2018).

States of socio-cognitive mindfulness have been said to be stimulated through simple instructional and cognitive reframing exercises (Carson & Langer, 2004). This typically involves providing study participants with instructions or exercises to evoke a mindful condition which can lead to enhanced health and wellbeing outcomes, such as increased self-acceptance, improved relationships and decreased stress and burnout (Hart et al., 2013). There are numerous studies demonstrating how states of socio-cognitive mindfulness can be activated via brief interventions. Examples of brief interventions include asking orchestral musicians to 'actively create novel distinctions' whilst playing their instruments, resulting in enhanced performances (Langer et al., 2009) and instructing participants to use four different categories to sort the same set of photographs, leading to reduced stereotyping behaviours (Djikic et al., 2008). A further example involved asking housekeeping staff to reframe the context of their work as exercise leading to a range of physical health improvements (Crum & Langer, 2007). The instructions provided in the brief activities are formulated based on the psychological processes inherent in socio-cognitive mindfulness, which are discussed in the following section. Additionally, it has been suggested that repeatedly activating states of socio-cognitive mindfulness could lead to the development of trait mindfulness over time (Ivtzan & Hart, 2016), a trajectory that has been demonstrated with meditative mindfulness (Kiken et al., 2015; Warren et al., 2023).

Multiple correlational studies have established a variety of positive associations between trait socio-cognitive mindfulness and other psychological areas which appear to be relevant to coaching. The 14-item Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS-14; Pirson et al., 2012) and earlier versions of the scale (LMS-21: Bodner & Langer, 2001) was developed to offer a functional measure of trait mindfulness suitable for personal and social contexts. The scale includes 14

items to measure the demonstration of three sub-factors of socio-cognitive mindfulness: novelty producing, novelty seeking and engagement. The measure uses a seven-point Likert scale from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*” against each item, for example, “*I like to investigate things*”. The scale is considered to have reliable psychometric validity and has demonstrated criterion-related validity with categories relating to psychological, physical, social and organisational wellbeing (Pirson et al., 2018). Higher mean scores of the scale indicate higher levels of trait socio-cognitive mindfulness.

Using this scale, research has found positive relationships between trait socio-cognitive mindfulness and increased mental skills and cognitive flexibility (Kee & Wang, 2008), as well as improved self-fulfilment and resilience (Ghanizadeh et al., 2019). Positive relationships have also been evidenced between trait socio-cognitive mindfulness and wider contexts, such as enhanced strategic creativity in business (Al-Zu’bi, 2018) and sustainable consumption behaviours (Helm & Subramaniam, 2019). Hence, the benefits associated with trait socio-cognitive mindfulness appear to be manifold. However, for people to understand how to increase and develop socio-cognitive mindfulness, they first need to be aware of how to activate states of socio-cognitive mindfulness.

1.5.5 Useful socio-cognitive mindfulness processes for coaching

Langer outlines five cognitive processes that integrate and reinforce each other to form the active and solution-focused nature of socio-cognitive mindfulness (2014):

- ‘Creating new categories’: replacing outdated labels and categories by noticing details and actively making more distinctions
- ‘Welcoming new information’: attending to the novelty and variability in every moment
- ‘More than one view’: awareness of multiple perspectives and the acceptance that behaviour makes sense to the ‘actor’
- ‘Control over context’: controlling how an apparently ‘fixed’ situation is experienced by reappraising the context more positively
- ‘Process before outcome’: not over-focusing on outcomes and instead intentionally responding to choices using a step-by-step approach

These processes can help individuals to attend to items in their awareness creatively and constructively which could be useful within a coaching context (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013). As such, socio-cognitive mindfulness is differentiated from meditative mindfulness as being an active learning approach which emphasises creative and flexible thinking, problem-solving and goal-orientated cognitive tasks (Baer, 2003) which are valuable strategies for coaching. This more active approach has been linked with several areas of adult development theory which are highly relevant to coaching, such as experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and self-regulation (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).

Experiential learning is an established approach for learning through reflection on experiences (Kolb, 1984) and is said to be useful for the adult learning and development processes within coaching (Cox, 2006). Yeganeh and Kolb (2009) explored how socio-cognitive mindfulness connects with experiential learning and found that people who scored higher on the LMS-21 scale placed more emphasis on the direct experience of learning and less on reflective observation. The authors submitted that active learners were less prone to rumination and that socio-cognitive mindfulness processes could help learners attend to the phases of the experiential learning cycle by being present-focused and unbiased (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009). It has been said that the coach's role is to guide coachees through this learning process, but that it requires the coachee to take action, which can be facilitated through cycles of self-regulation (Fazel, 2013).

Self-regulation refers to an individual's capacity to adjust their responses and behaviours, often within social settings (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007), which is said to be beneficial within coaching for goal attainment, personal development and wellbeing (Barato & Rodriguez Moneo, 2022). It has been described as a core mechanism for socio-cognitive mindfulness since this form of mindfulness relies on the intentional self-regulation of attention (Hart et al., 2013). Masicampo and Baumeister (2007) suggest that self-regulation may be the mediating factor between mindfulness interventions, such as those discussed in the previous section, and their reported wellbeing benefits because of the general increase in self-regulation. It is this link that leads Hart et al. (2013) to posit that repeated and sustained activation of brief socio-cognitive mindfulness activities could lead to trait mindfulness and the longer-term benefits associated with this.

1.5.6 The challenge of applying socio-cognitive mindfulness in coaching

If a coach or coaching client is not inclined to meditate but still wishes to explore the wellbeing benefits associated with increasing mindfulness, they should be made aware of alternative approaches, preventing feelings of helplessness and could avoid the detrimental wellbeing impacts of mindlessness (Langer, 1989; 1992). Despite numerous studies demonstrating the benefits of socio-cognitive mindfulness across multiple contexts and outcomes, this knowledge has not yet been made accessible to wider populations via training or coaching programmes in the same way that meditative mindfulness has. This gap may be a result of Langer's view: "Mindfulness is not a practice; it is not something that people "do," in the same way that people don't "do" intelligence," (Pagnini & Langer, 2015, p.365). Nonetheless, it is possible to develop intelligence, although it requires guidance, effort and acquisition of useful skills.

Langer (2014) argues that mindfulness itself is energising, although it can take effort to make the shift from a mindless state into a mindful one. This shift may be challenging because it demands a level of self-awareness plus ongoing self-regulation and active learning to develop this form of mindfulness. This is where the processes within coaching could support the development of socio-cognitive mindfulness, much like how the coaching field has supported the development of meditative mindfulness with coaching clients. Hence, a coaching approach based on socio-cognitive mindfulness evidence-based strategies could be a potential solution.

1.5.7 Summary of the preliminary review

The existing literature on mindfulness highlights the differences between meditative and socio-cognitive perspectives, particularly concerning the stimuli being attended to and the attitude adopted during each approach. Meditative mindfulness typically focuses on internal stimuli and an attitude of acceptance, whilst socio-cognitive mindfulness emphasises external stimuli and creativity (Baer, 2003). Research into socio-cognitive mindfulness provides evidence of its versatile benefits, supported by theoretical frameworks that explain how these benefits are realised. Accordingly, the literature suggests that the socio-cognitive concept may be more suitable for supporting flourishing within coaching contexts. However, there is a paucity in the literature investigating mindfulness-based coaching from the socio-

cognitive perspective, despite it being recognised as a useful area for exploration (Spence & Cavanagh, 2019), and somewhat alluded to within Grant's (2001) ground-breaking thesis:

"The development of a coaching psychology would be facilitated by an understanding of how coaching interventions impact on, and are mediated by socio-cognitive factors such as psychological mindedness, self-awareness and self-regulation." p.42

Since socio-cognitive mindfulness and coaching are both intrinsically social processes which emphasise personal development (Pirson et al., 2018; Stelter, 2007; Shoukry & Cox, 2018), integrating these two fields presents a promising opportunity. The socio-cognitive mindfulness literature could support the advancement of coaching psychology by offering relevant evidence-based approaches to coaching. Equally, coaching psychology provides an applied route for socio-cognitive mindfulness to make it more accessible for people seeking wellbeing development. Consequently, there is potential for contributing to both fields by developing a coaching psychology intervention based on the evidence from socio-cognitive mindfulness theory. This thesis aims to explore this opportunity and the potential synergistic wellbeing benefits of integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness and coaching psychology. The overall aim is to develop and offer a proactive mindfulness-based wellbeing intervention, aligning with the UK Department of Health's recommendations.

1.6 A Practitioner Lens

Jackson and Cox (2020) state in their book "Doing Coaching Research" that there are at least two types of coaches who are considered to be research active: researcher-practitioners and practitioner-researchers. The former relies on evidence-based coaching psychology to inform their coaching practice, whilst the latter investigates their coaching work by researching aspects of their practice and informing others of relevant findings. As a practising coaching psychologist, the author of this thesis identifies with both types and sees the benefit of both perspectives helping to shape the other. For the purpose of this thesis, greater emphasis will be placed on the researcher-practitioner perspective. Nevertheless, it is key to situate this research by sharing the practitioner lens in which this research was conceptualised and developed. Therefore, the following sections aim to help the reader better position this research by providing an overview of the author's background and motivations for this research.

1.6.1 My journey to becoming a coaching psychologist

This summary outlines my professional journey and development as a coaching psychologist and highlights how key milestones have shaped my coaching philosophy. It explains how my professional journey merged with my research interests and led me to embark on this PhD.

I became a team manager in a large organisation in 2006 and soon realised that coaching was the most effective method for helping team members increase confidence and improve performance. I received in-house training from my employer to utilise the GROW model in coaching sessions with my team members by reflecting on their Goals, Reality, Options and Will (Whitmore, 1992). This helped me to structure coaching sessions in a way that supported team members' progression towards work-related goals. To continue my development, I enrolled on an undergraduate degree in Leadership and Management in 2009, and the following year I was internally promoted to a Learning and Development Business Partner. This provided ample opportunity to apply my formal learning within the workplace to support people's development. A key example of this was when I redesigned an employee induction programme by applying experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) to the training approach with results suggesting that experiential learning can accelerate employee development. This experience influenced the way I coached, as I encouraged team members to apply the reflective cycle and identify work-based opportunities for continuous improvement to accelerate their progression.

In 2012, my employer invested in my accreditation as a Step 1 and Step 2 Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) practitioner (Briggs & Myers, 1976). This enabled me to incorporate an evidence-based psychometric tool within coaching to explore how different personality types influence communication styles, interpersonal relationships and leadership approaches. I applied the concepts to coaching programmes with senior leadership teams and was able to witness noticeable shifts in behaviour that affected whole departments through the cultivation of a people-focused culture. Upon reflection, it was around this period that I started to take my coaching practice to a deeper level and evolve from a performance coach into a coaching psychologist.

After having two children during 2016–2018, I found that my priorities were shifting, and I was keen to work in a way that could flex around my new family. As a result, I took voluntary redundancy from my role in March 2018 to co-direct a coaching and consulting business to meet my growing need for autonomy and creativity. Our business, Lead North Limited, aligns with the principles of values-based, authentic leadership (George, 2007) and we soon attracted contracts with various organisations. I was keen to further my capabilities as a coaching psychologist to provide the best possible experience for clients. Hence, I enrolled on an MSc in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology (MAPPCP) in 2019, to embrace more coaching philosophies and models.

The overall learning experience helped me to gain the confidence to not over-rely on coaching frameworks, such as GROW and MBTI, as I came to learn the significance of the coaching relationship in producing successful outcomes. I focused on my coaching skills to deepen rapport and empathy with my clients, through empathic listening, exploratory questioning, reflecting, integrating experience and being present (Cox, 2013). I embraced a humanistic approach (Rogers, 1957) and enjoyed responding adaptively to clients as unique individuals with different strengths, experiences and needs. I became more attentive to ensuring clients were aligning goals with their core values and intrinsic motivations and had a sense of autonomy about how they would achieve their goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). I found that I was establishing more authentic connections with my clients who were achieving meaningful changes in their personal lives. This was particularly true during my experience supporting a voluntary scheme with the NHS in 2020 which involved coaching and providing wellbeing workshops to medical staff working on the frontline during the pandemic. I found that emotions ran high during the coaching sessions, and it was more important for me to provide an empathetic presence for them and a psychological space for reflection, rather than focusing on pursuing outcomes. This experience in combination with my master's inspired me to expand my coaching practice to work more with clients seeking improvements to their wellbeing.

In 2021 I took important steps to assure prospective clients that I had the necessary experience, credentials and supervision to work at the advanced level needed to support their wellbeing development. I gained accreditation as a Senior Practitioner Coach with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council to formalise my experience and demonstrate to

clients my commitment to working ethically and professionally. To continue to develop my coaching psychology knowledge and skills I completed relevant training, such as courses in Positive Mindfulness (Dr Itai Ivtzan) and Interpersonal Neurobiology (Prof Dan Siegel), as well as becoming certified as a Resilience Practitioner (Dr Michael Ungar) and a Strengths Practitioner (Prof Ilona Boniwell). By continually expanding my knowledge of coaching theories and models, I can adapt my approach to suit the client and support their development journey in a way that works best for them.

Coaching psychology has provided the evidence base that underpins the continual development of my coaching approach, knowledge and skills. It has enabled me to use evidence-based methods to support clients with their personal and professional growth, as well as effectively supervise developing coaches. I was successful in applying for chartership with the British Psychological Society (BPS) as a Coaching Psychologist and Registered Applied Psychology Practice Supervisor in 2023. More importantly, the overall professional development process helped me to become clearer about my coaching philosophy, which is built upon values, authenticity, mindfulness and lifelong learning. This helped to identify the next steps in my ongoing learning journey.

1.6.2 Embarking on a new research venture

I aspire to specialise in coaching psychology and supervision approaches that focus on personal and professional development whilst being mindful of client wellbeing. To support this dream, I enrolled on this PhD programme to research coaching psychology at the highest level, whilst benefiting from the excellent supervision of Chartered Psychologist, Dr Katherine Swainston, who has extensive experience in Health Psychology. Dr Gavin Clark, a Clinical Psychologist, and Dr Tracy Donachie, a Sport Psychologist, joined my supervision team, adding further expertise and additional perspectives to the research inquiry. Being supported by a highly experienced and knowledgeable multidisciplinary supervision team gave me the confidence to be creative and bold with my research endeavour.

Consequently, my overall aim is to provide new knowledge in the coaching psychology field by designing a novel, evidence-based coaching programme that supports personal development and wellbeing. I chose to explore this aim using the theory and evidence base of socio-cognitive mindfulness, as it intuitively seemed to be highly relevant to coaching

given its inherently social nature, links to increased wellbeing, and ability to induce an active learning state (Langer, 1989). I believe that the theory can be integrated into coaching to support positive change and wellbeing development. This belief stems from both a personal and a practitioner perspective. From a personal point of view, I have always been aware of the many wellbeing benefits available through mindfulness. Yet, I have struggled to connect with meditative mindfulness, despite exploring different approaches and styles. I particularly recall following an eight-week MBCT programme and not enjoying the experience or feeling a benefit from it. In fact, during some of the guided meditation sessions, I experienced low levels of anxiety which had not been present before I started to meditate. Around the same time as completing the MBCT programme, I attended a lecture for my MAPPCP, where Dr Rona Hart discussed the Eastern and Western perspectives of Mindfulness. The Eastern perspectives were based on Buddhist philosophy and meditative mindfulness practices, whereas the Western perspective stemmed from social psychology research, and did not require meditation to experience a state of mindfulness (Hart & Ivltzan, 2013).

I immediately started to research the Western construct as part of my master's dissertation, whilst applying some of the practices to myself. As I learned how to develop socio-cognitive mindfulness, I noticed how I was becoming more open-minded, creative and empathetic. I could see how this was having a positive impact on those around me, including my clients. From a practitioner's perspective, I was able to support those clients who were open to alternative approaches to meditative mindfulness. I have integrated much of what I have learned into my work as a coaching psychologist and supervisor, and I can see how it benefits clients' abilities to broaden their perspectives and increase their self-awareness, particularly around wellbeing. Having had both positive personal and professional experiences with socio-cognitive mindfulness, I was highly enthused to explore this within my PhD thesis. Furthermore, I was motivated to explore this to offer a practical output from my research by developing a coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness which people could benefit from. Hence, I bring a practitioner perspective to this thesis in my lifelong quest to continually learn and grow from experience and reflection to provide tangible outcomes. Pursuing this research within the PhD programme is a privilege and a recognition of my ongoing commitment to empowering others to reach their full potential.

1.7 Thesis Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

The overall purpose of this thesis is to develop a coaching intervention grounded in socio-cognitive mindfulness theory (Langer, 1989) to promote wellbeing development. The proposed coaching intervention aims to facilitate and enhance the coaching process by integrating evidence-based strategies derived from socio-cognitive mindfulness. The objective is to assist non-clinical adults in achieving sustainable improvements in their wellbeing. Thus, the research objectives are as follows:

- (1) To systematically investigate and develop an evidence-based coaching intervention to promote wellbeing development based on socio-cognitive mindfulness theory
- (2) To evaluate the acceptability and feasibility of a socio-cognitive mindfulness-based coaching intervention for non-clinical populations
- (3) To explore the user's perception and experiences of a socio-cognitive mindfulness-based coaching intervention.

Five research questions have been developed to achieve the above objectives. Table 1 summarises the studies conducted to address each research question within this thesis.

Table 1 Thesis research questions and correlating chapters and studies

Research Question	Chapter & Study
1. How is socio-cognitive mindfulness activated in non-clinical adults to promote wellbeing, and which insights are relevant to coaching?	Chapter 3: A Systematic Review of Socio-Cognitive Mindfulness Interventions and its Implications for Wellbeing Coaching
2. What are coaches' views on the acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?	Chapter 4. Acceptability of a Wellbeing Coaching Intervention Based on Socio-Cognitive Mindfulness: A Qualitative Study of Coaches' Views
3. What is the programme theory of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?	Chapter 5. Intervention Development Study
4. What is the feasibility and acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?	Chapter 6. A Quantitative Feasibility Study of a Wellbeing Coaching Programme Based on Socio-cognitive Mindfulness
5. How do coaches experience a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness from both a participant and a practitioner perspective?	Chapter 8. A Qualitative Feasibility Study of Participants' Experiences and Practitioners' Perspectives of a Socio-cognitive Mindfulness Coaching Programme

1.8 Thesis Overview

This thesis started by providing the rationale for this research project. In Chapter 1, a preliminary literature review highlighted society's need for more proactive wellbeing interventions. It further described the void in the literature pertaining to the integration of socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching. This thesis aims to address the societal need and the gap in the literature by developing a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness theory and evidence-based strategies. As the development of a new intervention requires rigour and transparency, the second chapter outlines the overall methodological approach taken throughout the research project.

The first phase of the intervention development within this thesis involves the systematic review of the evidence on socio-cognitive mindfulness to help inform the development of a wellbeing coaching intervention (Chapter 3). Recommendations for a proposed coaching intervention were developed based on the findings of the systematic review. The proposed coaching programme was shared with and reviewed by experienced coaches to gain their views on possible facilitators and barriers to the proposed intervention, as well as their recommendations for how to overcome any potential limitations (Chapter 4). The accumulated findings were then triangulated along with the author's reflections from coaching practice to produce a programme theory for how the intervention would work to promote wellbeing in non-clinical adults via integrated socio-cognitive mindfulness and coaching processes (Chapter 5). The first phase concludes with a logic model and a prototype of the coaching intervention.

The second phase of the thesis focuses on the feasibility assessment of the intervention prototype developed in the first phase. The assessment includes appraisals of the recruitment process, intervention adherence, intervention acceptability and a preliminary evaluation of the intervention's efficacy (Chapter 6). As the author of this thesis was also the coach who conducted the intervention, there is a chapter dedicated to the coach's reflections on her experiences of delivering the intervention (Chapter 7). Next, there is a further exploration of how the feasibility study participants experienced the programme and how they made sense of any impacts on their wellbeing (Chapter 8).

The thesis ends with key reflections and a discussion about how the accumulated findings could inform the ongoing refinement of the intervention, with implications for practice and recommendations for further research (Chapter 9). The thesis concludes with a commitment from the thesis author to continue this line of inquiry in a quest to provide an alternative approach to mindfulness-based coaching for clients and practitioners interested in wellbeing development.

Chapter 2. Methodology

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed throughout the research project within this thesis, including descriptions of the research philosophy, strategies and chosen methods. The strengths and limitations of the methodological approach are reviewed, as well as the associated ethical considerations. Finally, the importance of researcher reflexivity is discussed with examples of how this was approached. More details about the research designs, including participant and procedure information for each empirical study are provided in Chapters 4, 6 and 8. Details about the methods used in the systematic review are provided in Chapter 3.

2.2 Research Philosophy

A pragmatist approach to the research was chosen to enable responsiveness to the emerging nature of the development process and to select the most appropriate method at each stage to answer the evolving research inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Pragmatism recognises and embraces the subjective nature of the researcher's involvement in the research process, which befitted how the author planned to utilise her professional experience in coaching psychology to inform the ongoing design of the intervention. However, pragmatism has received criticism for placing too much emphasis on convenience and practicality, which is said to reduce the effectiveness of the research guidance (Hampson & McKinley, 2023). Hence, established research frameworks and guidance have been integrated into the pragmatic approach to increase the robustness of the research process. Furthermore, as coaching interventions are highly complex since they usually involve several interacting psychological components and flexible processes leading to a range of outcomes (Craig et al., 2013), it is essential to approach the intervention development process systematically.

2.3 Research Strategy

Coaching psychology literature appears to have a paucity of established frameworks and guidance for developing coaching interventions or programmes. Many studies investigating

coaching programmes will typically outline the programme structure within the methodology section and often lack sufficient detail about how key stakeholders have been involved in the design or how the programme theory evolved. This creates ambiguity concerning the rationale behind the selection of certain design features or mechanisms within an intervention and how they are hypothesised to lead to the theoretical outcomes pursued. Ioannidis et al. (2014) suggest that the research process can be made more transparent by fully documenting how the studies were conducted and what decisions were made by the researchers throughout. Adopting a transparent and systematic approach is said to be key in the intervention development process to strengthen the validity of the research findings, and to allow for the transferability of findings and future study replication (Bleijenberg et al., 2018).

As such the Health Psychology literature was reviewed since there are many established models and frameworks to choose from. Several potentially useful intervention frameworks were considered, such as the person-based approach (Yardley et al., 2015) and the behaviour change wheel (Michie et al., 2014). However, these models tend to focus on behaviour change to address health problems, thus implying that the interventions may be a form of treatment, which usually does not apply to coaching psychology. The Medical Research Council's (MRC) framework, on the other hand, does not have an emphasis on interventions for overcoming health issues, making it appear to be more conducive to coaching psychology. The well-established four-phased framework guides researchers with the overall development and evaluation of complex interventions (Craig et al., 2013): (1) Develop intervention; (2) Assess intervention feasibility and acceptability; (3) Evaluate intervention and (4) Implement intervention.

The MRC guidance has since been updated to include details of the following core elements to be iteratively investigated at each of the four phases outlined above (Skivington et al., 2021):

- Consider the context
- Identify key uncertainties
- Develop a programme theory
- Economic considerations

- Engage stakeholders
- Refine the programme theory
- Refine the intervention

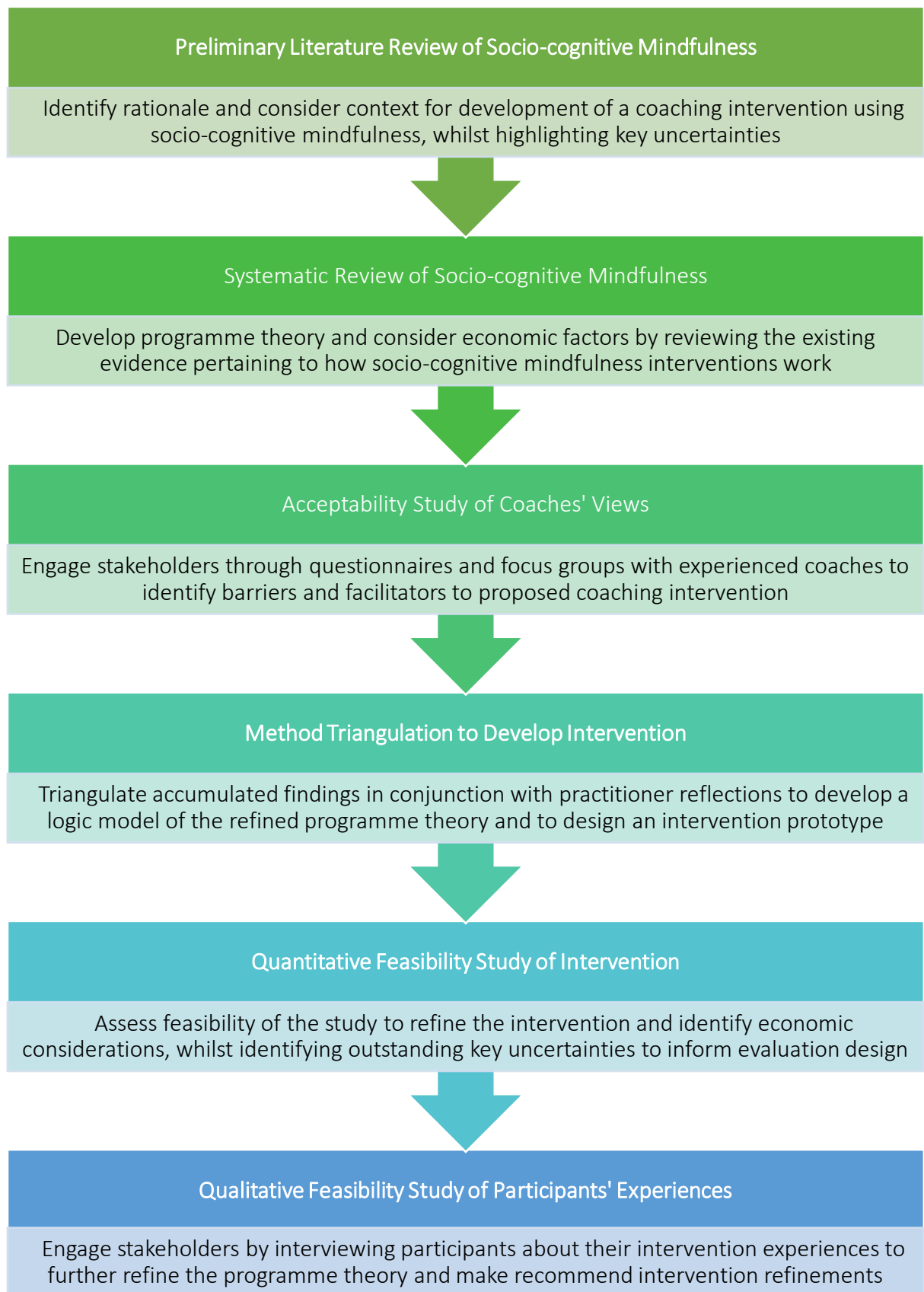
The scope of this thesis encompasses the first two stages of the MRC's framework, which includes the development and feasibility assessment of a new intervention.

Recommendations for a full evaluation of the intervention will be made, but the third and fourth stages of evaluation and implementation are out of the scope of this thesis. The MRC's framework and advice are used to guide the methods selected and to signpost useful elements to consider during the early stages of this intervention development. The MRC's guidance also aligns with the pragmatist position within this thesis as it supports a phased and iterative approach where researchers can apply the approach "flexibly depending on the problem and context" (O'Cathain et al., 2019, p. 3). Therefore, the MRC's framework provides a useful structure whilst embracing the embryonic nature of the process. Alongside this, established experiential learning and reflection models are used to guide reflective processes and to record how this shaped the ongoing design of the intervention (Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983; Cowan, 1998). The following sections will provide the rationale behind the research method selected at each stage to increase the transparency of the intervention development process.

2.4 Study Designs and Method

Figure 1 summarises the methods chosen to gather evidence at the first and second stages of the intervention development and to also ensure the core elements of the MRC framework were fully investigated (Craig et al., 2013; Skivington et al., 2021). It represents how each stage of the development was built upon the evidence gained from the previous stage to ultimately lead to a refined programme theory and a prototype of the coaching intervention which was then feasibility tested. Each stage of the research process is summarised in the following sections.

Figure 1 Intervention development and feasibility stages in scope for this thesis



2.4.1 Preliminary literature review

The socio-cognitive mindfulness literature was preliminarily reviewed to *consider the contexts* it is commonly applied to in order to establish if the evidence may be relevant to a coaching context. Additionally, the latest coaching psychology research was reviewed to highlight the potential benefits of integrating the two fields and to help *identify key uncertainties*. The findings from the literature review informed the protocol for a systematic review (provided in Appendix C: Prospero registration number: CRD42022298522), which planned to investigate the areas of uncertainty by collating and synthesising the evidence from relevant primary research studies (Boland et al., 2017). The protocol stipulated the eligibility criteria of the studies to be reviewed based on the findings from the preliminary literature review. Eligible papers needed to be peer-reviewed studies of interventions derived from Langer's construct of mindfulness (1989), involving non-clinical adults, and using validated measures of mindfulness and wellbeing.

2.4.2 Systematic review

The systematic review aimed to *develop a programme theory* for the intervention by asking: How is socio-cognitive mindfulness induced in non-clinical adults to promote wellbeing? The process began by searching nine multidisciplinary bibliographic databases based on key search terms related to socio-cognitive mindfulness. The list of search terms was developed from the preliminary literature review which revealed the wide-ranging terms and definitions used for Langer's construct of mindfulness, such as mindful learning, Langerian mindfulness and Eastern mindfulness. Therefore, the search strategy for this review was optimised for sensitivity to ensure all forms of mindfulness which have derived from Langer's theory could be located. For example, the search strategy adopted within the Cochrane database was: mindful* in Title Abstract Keyword AND Langer in All Text

The initial search yielded 2,867 papers which were screened and assessed for eligibility, with twelve studies meeting the full eligibility criteria. Key data was collected from the twelve studies relating to the study and intervention characteristics, including the psychological processes posited by the authors to be influencing the study outcomes. The data were then analysed as per Popay et al.'s Guidance on the Conduct of Narrative Synthesis in Systematic Reviews (2006) which involved developing a theory of change, developing a preliminary synthesis, exploring relationships within and between the studies, and evaluating the rigour

of the synthesis. The last stage involved appraising the quality of evidence for each study using the Weight of Evidence framework (Gough, 2007) to ensure the overall synthesis could offer transferable and trustworthy findings. A narrative synthesis of the findings led to the development of a conceptual framework for how socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions work to increase wellbeing. This was followed by a discussion on how it could be applied within a coaching context by asking: Which insights from the socio-cognitive mindfulness findings may be relevant for wellbeing coaching research? Practice-based recommendations were made based on the evidence whilst highlighting *economic considerations*.

2.4.3 Qualitative acceptability study

To explore the acceptability of the insights generated from the systematic review, it was crucial to *engage stakeholders* as early as possible in the design process to increase the potential of the intervention performing as intended. Coaches were identified as key stakeholders to engage with since they may be potential future facilitators of the proposed intervention. Accordingly, a qualitative approach was chosen to answer the question: What are coaches' views on the acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?

Ten practising coaches were recruited to complete in-depth, online questionnaires to gain their views on the planned design features of the intervention which were developed from the systematic review findings. The same coaches were then invited to attend a focus group to explore their views further, of which five attended. The responses from the online questionnaires and the transcript from the focus group were collated and amalgamated. Reflexive thematic analysis of the data was conducted to flexibly identify patterns of shared meaning from the coaches (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Themes were developed to capture the coaches' views of the proposed intervention and their recommendations for how to increase its acceptability.

2.4.4 Method triangulation

To *refine the programme theory*, the findings from the literature review, systematic review and acceptability study were collated to provide a holistic view of what the evidence is collectively suggesting. These methods were used to answer the question: What is the programme theory of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive

mindfulness? Method triangulation occurred organically as the findings and insights from each thesis chapter and study informed the next stage in the research process. Chapter 5 provides an examination of the triangulation process once all findings were converged and integrated to provide a broader perspective of the research inquiry (Johnson et al., 2007). The overall findings were then used to refine the programme theory developed within the systematic review to produce a logic model of the intervention, as recommended by the MRC (O’Cathain et al., 2019). The logic model illustrates the theory of how the intervention features and processes should interact with each other to produce its intended effects (Savaya & Waysman, 2005).

To *refine the intervention* design, practice reflections were incorporated into the logic model to translate the programme theory into a prototype of the coaching programme ready to be feasibility tested in the second phase of this thesis. Established reflective practices (Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983) were used to conceptualise how practitioner experiences of applying socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching could help to inform the programme design. The resulting prototype included a summary of the intervention features, such as its procedures, materials and modes of delivery, as well as an outline of the coaching programme structure.

2.4.5 Quantitative feasibility study

As the intervention prototype is based on programme theory and practitioner reflections from varied contexts and populations, it is important to explore whether it works in practice. It is key to address any remaining *key uncertainties* at this stage of the process which require further clarification. Therefore, the coaching programme was investigated to answer the question: What is the feasibility and acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness? This involved recruiting six participants to attend the six-week programme and to complete surveys measuring mindfulness and wellbeing at baseline, post-intervention and follow-up. The feasibility study aimed to appraise the intervention’s recruitment, adherence and acceptability, as well as preliminarily evaluate the intervention’s efficacy. The collated data was quantitatively assessed using descriptive statistics, visual analysis and content analysis. The overall findings helped to determine the feasibility and acceptability of the intervention.

2.4.6 Qualitative feasibility study

To continue to *engage stakeholders*, the participants of the feasibility study were interviewed about their experiences of attending the intervention. When it transpired that all of the participants had professional backgrounds in coaching, the research question was adapted to: How do coaches experience a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness from both a participant and a practitioner perspective? The semi-structured interviews helped to understand how they experienced attending the programme and how they made sense of any impacts on their wellbeing. They were also able to provide valuable practitioner insights about the programme and how it could be improved. The combination of the coaches' views as participants and practitioners is considered alongside the quantitative findings, whilst factoring in the author's practice reflections. The accumulated insights help to make overall recommendations to further *refine programme theory* and *refine intervention design*. The recommendations intend to inform the evaluation stage of the intervention by highlighting outstanding and new *key uncertainties*.

2.5 Summary of Study Designs and Methods

In summary, each chosen study design helped to support the overall iterative design process and the evolution of the proposed intervention. Table 2 provides an overview of the key methods used throughout the thesis. More detailed information about the methods employed within each theoretical and empirical study is provided in their associated chapters. The outcomes and findings from the feasibility studies in conjunction with practitioner reflections, will help to inform the third stage of the intervention development process which is to evaluate the intervention before the fourth stage of intervention implementation, although these stages are out of scope for this thesis.

Table 2 Overview of the studies within the thesis and key methods used

Chapter	Study design	Key methods
3	Theoretical: Systematic review of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions	Protocol informing systematic search strategy Narrative synthesis of evidence using content analysis
4	Empirical: Qualitative acceptability study	Open-ended questionnaire (Coaches: $n = 10$) Focus group (Coaches: $n = 5$) Reflexive thematic analysis
5	Theoretical: Intervention development	Method triangulation of previous studies and preliminary literature review. Incorporation of researcher-practitioner reflections. Programme theory development
6	Empirical: Quantitative longitudinal, single-arm feasibility study	Intervention assessment using questionnaires and repeated measures, with case study analysis (Coaches: $n = 6$)
8	Empirical: Qualitative feasibility study	Intervention evaluations using semi-structured interviews to explore participants' experiences. Reflexive thematic analysis (Coaches: $n = 6$)

2.6 Strengths and Limitations of Research Approach

A strength of this research strategy is its pragmatic epistemological stance since it allows a flexible approach to the unfolding design process. The different methods appear to complement and inform each other to support the conclusions which have been drawn from the overall intervention development and feasibility phases (Miles et al., 2014). It seems appropriate to adopt an integrative and dynamic approach when developing a complex and multifaceted coaching programme (Craig et al., 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Moreover, this approach recognises the researcher as a key instrument within this process which was demonstrated by merging professional insights and experiences into the development of the wellbeing intervention (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009). As a coaching psychologist, it was expected that the author would make sense of the data collected throughout this thesis according to existing awareness and experience of psychological theories related to adult learning, wellbeing and motivation (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The researcher-practitioner model is encouraged in the field of coaching psychology to develop its evidence base, whilst creating coaching interventions that “incorporates the needs of the client and intimately involves them in the process” (Cavanagh & Grant, 2006, p.157). This helps to incorporate a

practical perspective and client-centred approach into the theoretically driven design process, whilst giving the practitioner agency and choice over their research decisions and plans (Cavanagh & Grant, 2006; Jackson & Cox, 2020).

Some may argue that the fluid nature of this approach is lacking in a scientific discipline, where the researcher is over-involved and potentially invites bias into the research process (Kock et al., 1997). Even though triangulating multiple sources of data intends to increase the trustworthiness of the analysis, there is a risk that the researcher may attach more logic and meaning to events than is justified to seek confirmation and coherence of the evidence (Miles et al., 2014). To help address this, it is essential for the researcher to provide transparency and to approach the entire research process reflexively (Etherington, 2004). Furthermore, whilst the researcher-practitioner approach can help to advance the quality of wellbeing interventions, it is key to address the ethical concerns that may be associated with the researcher also being the psychologist conducting the intervention (Navab et al., 2015). The key ethical considerations for this approach are discussed next.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

It is crucial to consider the ethical impacts of employing this methodological approach, particularly at the feasibility stage when the author delivers the intervention within her capacity as an experienced coach. Navab et al. (2015) highlight the ethical considerations that must be faced when the researcher is also the psychologist conducting the intervention, including the limits of professional competence, relationship boundaries and conflicts of interests. As such, the author worked with her supervision team to make every effort to evaluate and mitigate any potential risks. For example, the author was considered to have the necessary experience and training to conduct the intervention given her accreditation as a coaching psychologist with the BPS. Nonetheless, it was made clear to all participants that if any issues should arise throughout the process that fell outside of the author's area of professional capability, they would be referred to more appropriate support. The author ensured to comply with the professional standards as outlined within the BPS's code of ethics and conduct (BPS, 2021) and committed to regular coaching supervision from a qualified supervisor to support her in her capacity as a coaching psychologist. The research supervision team provided further support by consistently reviewing the study's processes and progress to safeguard the participants' wellbeing whilst protecting the fidelity of the

data being generated. The research supervisors were regularly available for reflective discussions around decision-making and sense-making throughout the research process. Additionally, the author conducted regular reflexive activities to address any possible issues that arose during the research process.

2.8 Researcher Reflexivity

A reflexive diary was maintained throughout the research process to support sense-making and to help identify any potential conflicts of interest, particularly around relationship boundaries with participants. Guidance from Braun and Clarke (2022) was used to consider reflexivity from multiple angles, such as awareness of social positions, research philosophy and held assumptions about the research topics and participants. This was regularly reviewed with the research supervision team who were able to provide objective observations and guidance (Braun & Clark, 2019). The reflexive diary aimed to track evolving perceptions through reflective writing. It helped to examine judgements and belief systems, as well as practices throughout the research process. It included reflecting on the author's behaviour that may have been affected by emotions and personal values, including any potential biases or assumptions being made. This highlighted any conflicts between the researcher and practitioner roles, as well as useful insights which may support the research process.

Reflective writing was also used throughout the practitioner's professional work with coaching clients, where socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies had been integrated into sessions. This helped facilitate the author's experiential learning process (Kolb, 1984) by reflecting on how the integration of socio-cognitive mindfulness impacted the coaching session and what could be understood from this, plus ideas for how to continue adapting the strategies to fit the coaching context. This approach is discussed further in Chapter 5. Further reflexive activities conducted during the feasibility study are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. Key reflections made during these activities helped to inform ongoing intervention refinement and future research recommendations which are integrated into the discussion within Chapter 9.

Chapter 3. A Systematic Review of Socio-Cognitive Mindfulness Interventions and its Implications for Wellbeing Coaching

The following systematic review within this chapter has been published in the International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring. The paper has been reformatted to align with this thesis.

Crabtree, K., Papworth, J., Pennington, W., & Swainston, K. (2024). A systematic review of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions and its implications for wellbeing coaching. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 22(1), 84-108. <https://doi.org/10.24384/jek2-d087>

3.1 Chapter Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 1, there appears to be potential synergistic benefits to integrating coaching psychology and socio-cognitive mindfulness, particularly in facilitating wellbeing improvements. However, as most socio-cognitive mindfulness intervention studies tend to focus on very specific situations and outcomes it is difficult to interpret and generalise the findings for audiences outside of experimental conditions. There is also a lack of accessible guidance for practitioners hoping to help clients in developing socio-cognitive mindfulness, unlike the array of options for developing a meditative mindfulness practice. Thus, it was decided that a systematic review and synthesis of the evidence could provide a holistic view of how socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions work to increase wellbeing in non-clinical populations. This chapter outlines the research questions, methods and results before discussing how the findings may be relevant to coaching contexts, and how this shapes the next stage of the research inquiry.

3.2 Study Objective

The objective of this study was to conduct the first systematic review of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions to understand how they work to improve wellbeing and to offer insights for practitioners. This chapter aimed to answer the first research question in this thesis: How is socio-cognitive mindfulness activated in non-clinical adults to promote

wellbeing, and which insights are relevant to coaching? A synthesis of the findings could lead to implications for the application of socio-cognitive mindfulness in coaching contexts and provide evidence-based recommendations to coaches. Accordingly, this review targeted adults from non-clinical contexts to align with most coaching approaches which focus on solutions and optimal functioning, and less on identifying problems and therapeutic care (Grant & Green, 2018).

3.3 Review Questions

The primary review question for this study was: How is socio-cognitive mindfulness induced in non-clinical adult populations to promote multidimensional wellbeing? The following sub-questions helped to answer this overarching question and to provide a systematic approach:

- How are socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions implemented?
- What psychological processes are posited to influence socio-cognitive mindfulness intervention outcomes?
- What are the multidimensional wellbeing outcomes of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions?
- What are the benefits and limitations of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions in terms of generalisability, feasibility and sustainability?

The secondary review question was: Which insights from the socio-cognitive mindfulness findings may be relevant for wellbeing coaching research?

3.4 Method

A systematic review of the current literature on socio-cognitive mindfulness was carried out to narratively synthesise the findings from a collection of primary research studies (Boland et al., 2017, pp. 1-8). A protocol was devised following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA: Page et al., 2021). The review commenced as soon as it was registered and accepted by Prospero on 5th January 2022 (registration number: CRD42022298522). The published protocol is provided in Appendix C.

3.4.1 Eligibility criteria

Eligibility for included studies was influenced by the aims of the research and by PRISMA guidance (Moher et al., 2009) by selecting studies against the following PICOS criteria:

- *Population:* non-clinical adults
- *Interventions:* based on Langer's socio-cognitive concept of mindfulness (1989), which may be referred to by other names, such as 'mindful learning'.
- *Control/comparator:* could be passive, e.g., a control group, or active, such as comparing to other interventions, or a 'mindless' state, i.e., the opposite of socio-cognitive mindfulness
- *Outcomes:* validated measures of mindfulness and wellbeing following the intervention, with the PERMA-V wellbeing model (Seligman, 2011; Eacker, 2020) used as a guideline for eligible wellbeing outcomes (with the V representing Vitality).
- *Study types:* peer-reviewed quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods

Eligible papers were required to be published from 1989 to align with the publication of Ellen Langer's seminal book 'Mindfulness' which presented the accumulation of research into Langer's concept of mindfulness. Papers needed to have an abstract available in the English language to ensure the concept of wellbeing was not being interpreted differently in other languages. The reviewers referred to Table 3 which captures the inclusion and exclusion criteria to support consistency.

3.4.2 Search strategy

The search strategy for this review was optimised for sensitivity to ensure all forms of mindfulness which have derived from Langer's concept could be located. Table 4 captures the search terms which were adapted for use in combination with database-specific filters for the nine chosen bibliographic databases. Backwards and forward citation searches were conducted using Google Scholar to locate any further relevant publications. Electronic alerts were created across all databases to notify when a newly published study had met the search terms which were last checked on 30th June 2022.

Table 3 Study eligibility criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Study Publication	Peer-reviewed, published research	Grey literature
Study Year	1989 up to 2021	Pre-1989
Study Language	Papers in any language will be considered provided they offer an English title and abstract	Studies not offering an English title and abstract
Study Type	Quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method studies of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions	Correlational studies, cohort studies, diagnostic studies, literature and systematic reviews
Population	Non-clinical adults aged 18 and above (however, will accept studies which have a combination of clinical/non-clinical or adults/children, provided the accepted population sample can be separated from the excluded population)	Children under the age of 18 or participants from clinical populations
Intervention	Interventions based on Langer's socio-cognitive perspective of mindfulness (e.g., mindful learning, Langerian mindfulness, socio-cognitive mindfulness, etc). If the intervention is simply named "mindfulness", the article must reference Langer's theory as the basis of the intervention	Interventions not exclusively derived from Langer's theory of mindfulness (e.g., MBSR, MBCT, ACT, meditation-based, breathing exercises, yoga, etc), unless they are being used as a comparator
Outcomes	Studies that target and use validated measures of mindfulness and/or wellbeing as per the PERMA-V wellbeing model, such as: <i>Positive Emotions</i> , e.g., Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) <i>Engagement</i> , e.g., Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS) <i>Relationships</i> , e.g., Positive and Negative Relationship Quality Scale (PNRQ) <i>Meaning</i> , e.g., Scales of Psychological Wellbeing (SPWB) <i>Accomplishment</i> , e.g., Achievement Motivation Inventory (AMI) <i>Vitality</i> , e.g., Heart rate	Studies that do not target or use validated measures of mindfulness or wellbeing

Table 4 Search terms by database and register

Database or Register	Search Terms
Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials	mindful* in Title Abstract Keyword AND Langer in All Text
EBSCO Host, including: - APA PsychArticles - APA PsychInfo - Business Source Complete - CINAHL Complete - Education Resource Complete - MEDLINE	AB mindful* AND TX Langer*
SCOPUS	TITLE-ABS-KEY(mindful*)AND ALL(Langer*)

3.4.3 Study selection

Once all databases and registers were searched as described, the primary reviewer, Katie Crabtree (KC), used the reference management tools, Zotero and Rayyan, to administer the screening and selection processes. The retrieved papers were first screened by title and abstract against the eligibility criteria. Next, full texts were retrieved for the remaining studies and assessed for eligibility, with the final studies proceeding to the synthesis stage. The steps in the review were recorded using the PRISMA 2020 flow chart (Page et al., 2021). To mitigate bias, the second reviewer, Kate Swainston (KS), independently assessed a random 20% selection from the screening stage and the full-text stage against the eligibility criteria.

3.4.4 Data Extraction

A master data table collated descriptive content relating to the aims, methodology, population, and key findings of each study, with additional tables capturing relevant information relating to the intervention design, outcomes and the psychological processes used or discussed. To ensure the chosen categories for extraction were fit for purpose, the data tables were piloted using 25% of the final studies to ensure all relevant data had been gathered per the research aims and checked by the second reviewer (KS).

3.4.5 Synthesis approach

The review was expected to produce significant heterogeneity across the study outcomes; therefore, it was planned for the data to be synthesised narratively rather than meta-analytically. To ensure the research questions were answered methodically and

transparently, the four stages outlined in the Guidance on the Conduct of Narrative Synthesis in Systematic Reviews (Popay et al., 2006) were followed iteratively:

1. *The role of theory in evidence synthesis* supported the initial interpretation of the final studies by referring to Langer's concept of mindfulness (1989).
2. Identifying common features within the disparate array of extracted data helped to *develop preliminary synthesis* by clustering studies into groups based on these patterns.
3. To *explore relationships within and between studies*, the variability in design, outcomes and psychological processes of the interventions was thematically analysed to form categories. A concept diagram was then created based on the synthesis results.
4. To *evaluate the rigour of the synthesis*, each study was appraised for its quality of evidence to ensure that the synthesis could offer trustworthy insights on socio-cognitive mindfulness.

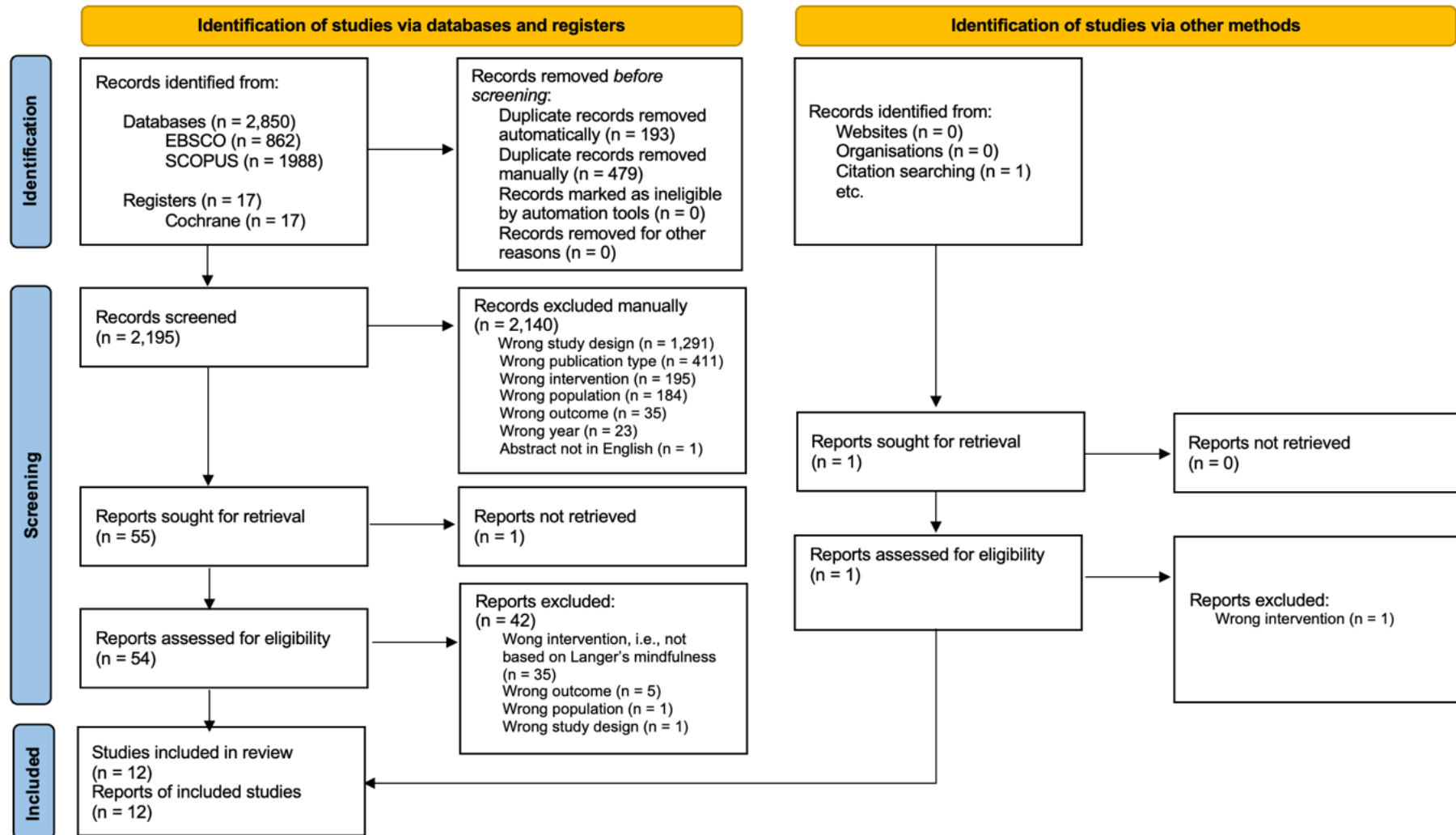
3.4.6 Quality assessment approach

The primary reviewer employed a quality assessment tool based on the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) Weight of Evidence framework (Gough, 2007) to assign low, medium or high scores against three areas: trustworthiness, appropriateness and relevance. The three scores were then used to produce an overall score for the study's quality of evidence. A spreadsheet was created to provide clarity and transparency for the quality assessment by developing signalling questions which were specific to this review. The second reviewer (KS) assessed 25% of the included studies for quality, and there were no disagreements with quality appraisals across both reviewers.

3.5 Results

The database and register search yielded 2,867 papers with 672 duplicate records removed and a further 2,140 manually excluded and recorded. Fifty-five full texts were sought for retrieval with an additional record found via citation searching. Figure 2 uses Page et al.'s (2021) recommended flow diagram to report the results of the systematic search.

Figure 2 Flow diagram of systematic review search



3.5.1 Characteristics of final studies

Table 5 presents the 12 studies which met the full eligibility criteria and were included in the synthesis stage. Although socio-cognitive mindfulness is a concept originating from the West (Hart et al., 2013), five of the studies were conducted in the East, thus offering a reasonably balanced representation of Eastern and Western cultures within the review. 1,175 adult participants were included in the overall review, with the mean ages ranging from 19.3 to 67 for the nine studies which provided demographic details. Overall, there were more women represented than men. The sample sizes ranged from 22 to 149, except for one which recruited a total of 253 participants across four sub-experiments. Every study included control groups and/or comparison groups, with the group sizes participating in the socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions ranged from eight to 122.

3.5.2 Quality of studies

The quality assessment of the final studies is provided in Appendix D and follows the guidance of Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence framework. The assessment produced mixed results, with three studies scoring low (1, 2, 5), seven studies scoring medium (3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12) and two studies scoring high (8, 9) for overall quality. Although strict selection criteria were applied and all eligible studies had employed randomised controlled trial (RCT) methodology - except for one controlled non-randomised experiment (1) - there were still quality issues amongst some studies, such as small sample sizes, and insufficient detail of the intervention design. Such quality issues were factored into the synthesis of the results by placing more credibility and emphasis on studies with a higher weight of evidence.

3.5.3 Intervention designs

The key features of the design, outcomes and processes of the interventions were captured and categorised in Table 6 and reviewed in the subsequent sections. The variability in intervention design and format was analysed to answer the first review sub-question: How are socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions implemented? The analysis identified two predominant approaches to the interventions: brief mindfulness induction and extended mindfulness programme.

Table 5 Characteristics of final studies

Study no.	Study authors	Study year	Study country	Study method	Study aims	Population demographics	Control/ comparator	Outcome measures	Key findings
1	Delizonna, Williams & Langer	2009	US	CT	To investigate whether mindful attention to changes in heart rate (HR) would result in greater control over HR.	43 hospital staff members & university students (27 female/16 male). Mean age = 31.2	1. Attention to HR Stability 2. No HR Monitoring	Heart rate	All participants' heart rates slowed during the decrease phase. Participants monitoring HR fluctuations performed better than the group monitoring HR stability on the increase phase of the HR control task.
2	Downey	1991	US	RCT	To examine the effect that process and outcome instructions have on the mindfulness levels of older women.	56 older women. Mean age = 67	1. Outcome instruction group	RSE DCM LSI	There were no statistically significant differences between the process and outcome groups. However, a significant increase was found over time for both groups on the Essay Distinction Scale.
3	Geng, Wang, Cheng, Zhang & Shen	2019	China	RCT	To assess whether mindfulness is an effective method to proactively increase the positive feelings of family caregivers.	60 caregivers of cancer patients (gender unknown). Mean age unknown	1. Mindlessness group	LMS CRA PAC	The groups differed significantly in LMS scores post-intervention suggesting the intervention to be effective. The mindfulness group reported higher levels of positive feelings.

Study no.	Study authors	Study year	Study country	Study method	Study aims	Population demographics	Control/comparator	Outcome measures	Key findings
4	Haas & Langer	2014	US	RCT	To investigate whether mindfulness can increase interpersonal synchronicity.	90 university students (49 female/41 male). Mean age = 23.0	1. Control group	LMS Heart rate	Partners in the mindfulness group showed a closer matching in their heart rates and reported higher levels of enjoyment and comfort.
5	Langer, Pirson & Delizonna	2010	US	RCT	To explore the effects of social comparisons on personal views of performance and whether mindfulness can protect against any negative impacts.	82 university students (Gender and mean age unknown)	1. No treatment & no comparisons 2. No treatment & making comparisons	LMS	The mindfulness intervention seemed to reduce the negative impacts of participants making downward comparisons but was not fully effective for upward comparisons.
6	Maymin & Langer	2021	US	RCT	To test whether mindfulness decreases cognitive biases.	109 anonymous people and former college students (Gender & mean age unknown)	1. Low mindful group 2. Mindless group	LMS14	The mindful group became more mindful, scoring higher in 11 of the 14 LMS questions and were more 'rational', showing less bias on 19 out of 22 cognitive bias questions.

Study no.	Study authors	Study year	Study country	Study method	Study aims	Population demographics	Control/comparator	Outcome measures	Key findings
7	Pagnini, Phillips, Haulman, Bankert, Simmons & Langer	2021	US	RCT	To explore the impact of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)-specific online mindfulness training on the quality of life of ALS caregivers.	22 caregivers (12 females/9 males). Mean age = 60	1. Wait-list control group	SF-36 ZBI	The mindfulness group reported lower levels of care burden, depression, anxiety and role limitations, with higher levels of energy and emotional wellbeing. Most differences remained stable one month after training.
8	Spence & Cavanagh	2019	Australia	RCT	To examine the efficacy of three different approaches to mindfulness training on mindfulness, wellbeing and goal attainment.	72 adults looking to improve self-management (54 female/18 male). Mean age = 42.47	1. Meditation training 2. Attention training 3. Control group	MAAS SPWB SWLS ABS	Mindfulness training was associated with significant increases in mindfulness and goal attainment. The socio-cognitive mindfulness group reported better quality interpersonal relationships and they maintained increases in environmental mastery 3 months post-intervention.
9	Tang, Geng, Schultz, Zhou & Xiang	2017	China	RCT	To explore the differential effects of mindful learning on pro-environmental behaviour.	253 university students (122 female/131 male). Mean age = 20.3	1. Mindlessness group	LMS CSEBQ	The mindless and mindful learning groups differed significantly on LMS suggesting the intervention to be effective. The mindful group reported significantly higher CSEBQ scores than the mindless group.

Study no.	Study authors	Study year	Study country	Study method	Study aims	Population demographics	Control/comparator	Outcome measures	Key findings
10	Wang, Geng, Zhou, Ye, Ma & Zhang	2016	China	RCT	To test whether a mindful learning intervention can lead to increased levels of connectedness to nature.	134 university students (86 females/48 males). Mean age = 19.3	1. Mindless learning	CNS LMS INS	The mindless and mindful learning groups differed significantly on the LMS, suggesting the intervention was effective. The mindful group also scored higher on the INS scale.
11	Yeh, Chang, Ting, Chen	2020	Taiwan	RCT	To examine whether smartphone-based mindful learning could improve creativity and creative self-efficacy.	149 college students (114 females/35 males). Mean age = 21.21	1. No treatment control group	ICSE	Participants in mindful learning groups improved their creativity and had more improvements in creative self-efficacy than the control group.
12	Zilcha-Mano & Langer	2016	Israel	RCT with narrative analysis	To examine the effects of both state mindfulness and trait mindfulness on expecting mothers' wellbeing.	105 women in Weeks 25–30 of their first pregnancy. Mean age = 28.71	1. No-treatment control group 2. Exposure control condition	MHI PANAS RSE SWLS LMS-14	Participants reported greater increases in positive affect and wellbeing levels, with greater decreases in negative affect and emotional distress levels post-intervention.

Note: *ABS* Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969); *CNS* Connectedness to Nature Scale (Mayer & Frantz, 2004); *CRA* Caregiver Reaction Assessment (Given et al., 1992); *CSEBQ* College Students' Environmental Behaviors Questionnaire (Kaiser et al., 2007); *DCM* Desired Control Measure (Reid & Ziegler, 1981); *ICSE* Inventory of Creativity Self-Efficacy (Yeh & Lin, 2018); *INS* Inclusion of Nature in the Self Scale (Schultz, 2001); *LMS* Langer Mindfulness/Mindlessness Scale – 21 items (Bodner & Langer, 2001); *LMS-14* Langer Mindfulness Scale – 14 items (Pirson et al., 2012); *LSI* Life Satisfaction Index (Adams, 1969); *MAAS* Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003); *MHI* Mental Health Inventory (Veit & Ware, 1983); *PAC* Positive Aspects of Caregiving scale (Tarlow, 2004); *PANAS* Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988); *RSE* Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965); *SF-36* The Medical Outcomes Study 36-Item Short-Form Health Survey (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992); *SPWB* Scales of Psychological Wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995); *SWLS* Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985); *ZBI* Zarit Burden Interview (Zarit et al., 1980).

Table 6 Key features of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions

Format	Study no.	Intervention participants	Duration	Intervention description	Processes	Wellbeing theme & outcome
Brief mindfulness induction	3	31 caregivers	30 mins per day for 4 days	Participants completed four separate written exercises based on a picture of a caregiving scenario.	-Creating new categories -Multiple perspectives -Control over context	<i>Intrapersonal</i> Positive feelings
	4	44 university students	15 mins	Participants were asked to notice ten different things about another participant during a short conversation.	-Welcoming new information	<i>Interpersonal</i> Interpersonal synchronicity
	5	33 university students	Unknown (likely <1 hour)	Participants were informed that judgments are subjective. They then wrote how 10 different negative events could be viewed as positive from another perspective.	-Control over context	<i>Intrapersonal</i> Perception of performance
	6	32 anonymous adults	Unknown (likely <1 hour)	Participants were asked to make image comparisons and then to notice three new things in their environment.	-Welcoming new information	<i>Intrapersonal</i> Mindfulness and rationality
	9	122 university students	15 mins	Participants were asked to use different criteria to categorise specified items from the following 3 areas: self, humans and the biosphere.	-Creating new categories -Multiple perspectives	<i>Environmental</i> Pro-environmental behaviour
	10	65 university students	15 mins	Participants were asked to use different criteria to categorise multiple generic items.	-Creating new categories -Multiple perspectives	<i>Environmental</i> Connectedness to nature

Format	Study no.	Intervention participants	Duration	Intervention description	Processes	Wellbeing theme & outcome
Extended mindfulness programme	1	Unknown number of hospital staff & students	1 week	Participants recorded their heart rate for 60 seconds every 3 hours during waking hours or twice per day at pre-designated times.	-Welcoming new information	Intrapersonal Heart rate regulation
	2	28 older women	6 weeks	Participants attended a weekly art course of 2-hour long instructor-led presentations. Process instructions were provided on 3 occasions.	-Process before outcome (-Welcoming new information)	Intrapersonal Self-esteem & creative performance
	7	8 caregivers	5 weeks	Participants completed an online learning programme based on key features of socio-cognitive mindfulness. This included weekly content with 2 daily exercises each taking 2-3 minutes to complete.	-Welcoming new information -Control over context -Multiple perspectives -Creating new categories	Intrapersonal Emotional wellbeing & energy levels
	8	19 adults	6 weeks	Participants attended a weekly in-person training programme to work on a creative project informed by socio-cognitive mindfulness. Sessions were instructor-led lasting 75 minutes each with 20 minutes of daily home-based practice.	-Process before outcome -Welcoming new information -Control over context -Multiple perspectives -Creating new categories	Intrapersonal & Interpersonal Environmental mastery, goal attainment & positive relations
	11	109 university students	1 week	Participants were assigned different focuses for taking 2 smartphone photos per day to then upload online with imaginative narratives.	-Welcoming new information -Multiple perspectives	Intrapersonal Creativity & creative self-efficacy

Format	Study no.	Intervention participants	Duration	Intervention description	Processes	Wellbeing theme & outcome
	12	47 pregnant women	2 weeks	Participants were instructed to notice the natural changes in their mood and sensations throughout the day and to record the variations in a diary twice a day at random times.	-Welcoming new information	<i>Intrapersonal</i> Positive affect, self-esteem & life satisfaction

Brief mindfulness induction

Half of the studies were laboratory-based experiments adopting brief mindfulness induction interventions. Four of these were written exercises involving answering open questions for 15-20 minutes (5, 6, 9, 10), and one study involved four separate written exercises over four days, thus totalling two hours for the intervention (3). The most common written exercise asked participants to categorise numerous items against differing standards. Further examples included participants writing about seemingly negative events from a positive perspective or recording the new things they noticed within their environment. The only study which did not involve writing instead instructed its paired participants to notice different things about their partner during a conversation (4).

Extended mindfulness programme

The other six studies adopted a field-based approach and were significantly longer than the brief interventions, ranging from one to six weeks. At the shorter end of the range were three studies requiring participants to maintain mindful attention to a specific area, such as heart rate variability (1), fluctuation in pregnancy sensations (12) and creative opportunities (11). The remaining studies were longer still as they involved weekly training sessions across five or six weeks. One study involved an art course (2), another taught key features of Langer's construct of mindfulness (7) and the third combined both areas by teaching and applying principles informed by socio-cognitive mindfulness to a creative project (8). All extended programmes involved participants integrating the intervention tasks into their ordinary routines, such as completing exercises at home and maintaining a record of their experiences.

3.5.4 Intervention outcomes

Due to the subjective nature of wellbeing the search strategy was intentionally broad to answer the sub-question: What are the potential multidimensional wellbeing outcomes of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions? Thus, the final twelve studies represented a variety of wellbeing outcomes and with this, a diverse array of measures. Although this made it too difficult to statistically combine or compare the study results, it was possible to identify three thematic categories relating to the study authors' findings against their targeted wellbeing focus: intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental.

Intrapersonal

Nine of the studies targeted wellbeing outcomes that related to intrapersonal development and coincided with four of the six PERMA-V wellbeing domains (Seligman, 2011; Eacker, 2020). *Positive emotions* and *engagement* were represented via increases in positive affect, life satisfaction, self-esteem and mindfulness (2, 3, 6, 7, 12). Some studies measured *accomplishment*, either through goal attainment scores (8) or by formal assessment of performance on creative projects (2, 11). There was also interest across the studies to measure participants' perception of their accomplishment (5), their self-efficacy with creativity (11) and their sense of environmental mastery (8). *Vitality* was targeted in one study by measuring participants' heart rate regulation (1), and in another by including self-reported improvements in energy levels (7).

Interpersonal

One study had a primary focus on the *relationship* domain within PERMA-V and measured participants' heart rates to gauge interpersonal synchronicity (4). Another study detected an increase in participants' positive relations within their range of wellbeing measurements (8). Additionally, the increases in intrapersonal wellbeing within the caregiver studies could lead to improved relationships with the recipients of their care, although this was not directly measured (3, 7).

Environmental

Two of the studies measured increases in mindfulness, which falls under the *engagement* domain of PERMA-V, however, their main outcomes were increases in connectedness to nature (10) and pro-environmental behaviours (9). It could be argued that the wellbeing outcomes for the two studies also represent the *meaning* domain. For example, one of the studies was based on self-expansion theory (9), whereby individuals derive meaning and increase self-efficacy through the 'inclusion-of-other-in-the-self' (Aron & Aron, 1986), which can include a sense of connection to environmental phenomena.

3.5.5 Intervention processes

The studies were next examined to answer the sub-question: What psychological processes are posited to influence socio-cognitive mindfulness intervention outcomes? This was not a straightforward procedure since different terms for the processes were sometimes used or

terms were used interchangeably. This corresponds with Langer's explanation that the five psychological processes or 'states' within her mindfulness construct are different versions of the same thing (1997, p. 23). Nevertheless, the following examination endeavours to differentiate the processes employed within the interventions based on the interpretations of the study authors.

Welcoming new information

Welcoming new information was the most common process and was activated in seven studies through various approaches, such as noticing novelty and attending to variability. Participants who noticed novelty increased their attentiveness, sensitivity and creativity toward their surroundings (11). Noticing novelty reduced cognitive biases, such as shallow thinking and leaping to conclusions, which improved rationality and decision-making (6). This was extended to improve interpersonal decisions since noticing novelty about another person can lead to more accurate perceptions (4). Participants who attended to variability in their heart rate were able to control its regulation, an ability that could potentially extend to the regulation of emotions (1). This seemed to be evident when the pregnant participants paid attention to their fluctuating pregnancy symptoms and noticed the impermanence of negative sensations, which in turn boosted positive affect and prevented decreases in wellbeing (12). Similarly, another study discussed that having an awareness of the multiple reasons behind symptom variability can result in an increased sense of control and understanding (7).

Creating new categories

The process of creating new categories was included in five interventions and involved participants using different standards to categorise given items or think of unusual uses for common objects. For example, one study asked participants to progress their art project without the use of a standard piece of equipment such as a paintbrush (8). The active creation of new categories interrupted the participants' routinised cognitive modes to induce a different consciousness which could be more open and tolerant (10), leading to more harmonious associations with others and the environment (9). When the caregiving participants developed new and more positive categories about the care process, rather than relying on previously formed illness-related categories, they were able to respond more adaptively to their existing environment and context which resulted in increased wellbeing

(3, 7). This stimulated multi-perspective thinking about their roles, which is an example of how the socio-cognitive mindfulness processes influenced and interacted with each other.

Viewing from multiple perspectives

Four of the interventions encouraged participants to look at situations from multiple perspectives. The caregiving participants viewed their role from different angles to suspend their conventional way of thinking about illness, and instead, develop more positive outlooks on their experiences and achievements (3, 7). Other participants were encouraged to adopt multiple perspectives when observing other people's seemingly negative behaviour to seek alternative justifications and positive intentions (7, 8). By removing existing mental barriers, participants could open their awareness beyond the self to recognise the needs of other people and their environment, which was believed to promote prosocial and altruistic behaviours (9).

Control over context

Control over context is described by Langer (1989) as the process of being more sensitive about the contexts of situations, and then making more mindful choices about it. However, this process is not explicitly referenced by the authors and appears to crossover with the process of viewing from multiple perspectives. For example, the participants in one study were advised that judgements are context-dependent and can be changed when viewed from alternative perspectives (5). Participants were encouraged to be more flexible with the context surrounding what may initially be perceived as a negative event, and instead reappraise situations from a more positive viewpoint (5, 8). Similarly, when caregivers were able to reframe their roles by controlling interpretations of their personal circumstances they could cope better with role-related challenges which in turn improved their positive emotions (3, 7).

Process before outcome

Process before outcome was included in two of the studies and was the primary focus of one intervention that provided process instructions during an art course. Although this resulted in increases in participants' self-esteem, the process instructions did not provide a significant enough difference from the outcome instructions in improving their understanding of art. Both groups made improvements which were posited to be due to the participants learning

about the course and being encouraged to actively make distinctions. The second study suggested that participants who focused on the process before the outcome during creative projects were more actively engaged in the present moment and more aware of context and new information (8), once again, demonstrating how the socio-cognitive mindfulness processes reinforce each other.

3.5.6 Intervention benefits and limitations

The studies were next examined to answer the final sub-question: What are the benefits and limitations of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions in terms of sustainability, feasibility and generalisability? First, the brief exercises proved to be useful for inducing mindfulness quickly, without the need to commit to long-term practices. However, it may be unrealistic to expect such short and simple interventions to achieve the full anticipated effects (4). As most of the brief interventions were only able to target one or two socio-cognitive mindfulness processes, several authors recommended addressing a full range of mindfulness techniques in future research (9, 10). Correspondingly, Langer et al. (2010) acknowledge that “Perhaps more training is necessary to fully reverse a lifetime of making evaluative judgments” (p.72). This may account for why the authors of the brief interventions did not conduct follow-up measures to track any lasting effects, which they admitted limited their studies (3, 9).

In contrast, three of the extended mindfulness programme studies did include follow-up measurements. A two-week-long intervention resulted in improvements in psychological wellbeing which were sustained one week after the intervention, but not one-month post-intervention (12). A five-week intervention maintained some of the wellbeing outcomes, such as emotional wellbeing and social functioning, at least one month after the intervention (7), while a six-week-long intervention sustained increases in environmental mastery three months post-intervention (8). The two longer studies included all five of the socio-cognitive mindfulness psychological processes within their intervention, possibly due to their increased capacity.

The extended programmes required a significant commitment from participants. This led to smaller sample sizes than the brief interventions, and some studies experienced high dropout rates impacting feasibility (1, 7). The longer training programmes demanded more

resources in terms of acquiring experienced instructors and training venues. Yet, two of the studies delivered their interventions online, with the authors suggesting this led to enhanced feasibility due to their ease of use and reduced demand on participants (7, 11).

Nevertheless, all extended interventions were conducted in everyday settings, offering greater ecological validity than the laboratory-based brief interventions.

The type of intervention material used also influenced feasibility and effectiveness. For example, intervention instructions were either generic, such as organising random words into different categories (10) or they were relevant to the study's aims, such as basing written exercises on a picture depicting a caregiver scenario (3). It was argued that although generic learning materials are more accessible and may be easier to use within interventions, they require sustained usage to achieve results. In contrast, targeted learning materials for specific groups produce results quicker, although their purpose is limited (3).

Finally, the generalisability of half of the studies may be limited due to their recruitment of young university students (1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11), whilst four studies recruited specific populations, such as older women (2), pregnant women (12), or carers (3,7). Only two studies recruited the public (6, 8). Some studies excluded data relating to the clinical proportion of the population, which further impacted generalisability (3, 7, 12).

Nevertheless, all participants from this review were non-clinical and could be potential audiences for coaching.

3.6 Discussion

This review has produced findings related to the design, process, outcomes and limitations of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions which were interpreted to answer the review's main question: How is socio-cognitive mindfulness induced in non-clinical adult populations to promote multidimensional wellbeing? In summary, socio-cognitive mindfulness can be activated via one or more psychological processes to produce a variety of wellbeing benefits. The psychological processes include welcoming new information, creating new categories, viewing from multiple perspectives, controlling the context, and attending to the process before the outcome.

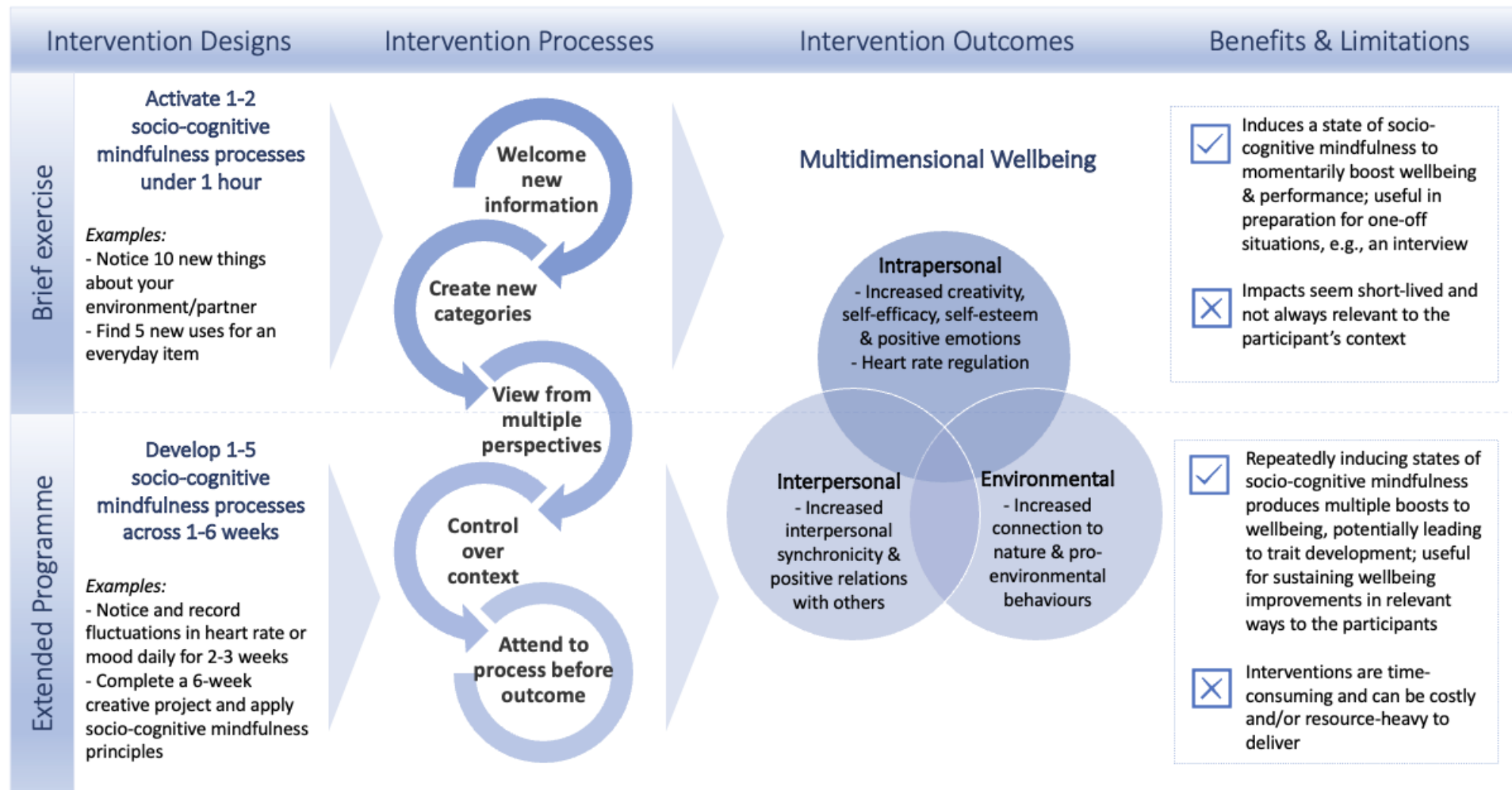
Processes can be activated during a brief exercise to quickly produce a state of socio-cognitive mindfulness to achieve temporary increases in wellbeing. Alternatively, the processes can be induced multiple times and can interact with each other throughout an extended mindfulness programme to potentially achieve prolonged wellbeing improvements. Since socio-cognitive mindfulness includes a focus on social aspects, it was not surprising that some of the interventions produced increases in interpersonal wellbeing. Yet, most of the wellbeing outcomes recorded in this review represented increases in intrapersonal wellbeing, with some demonstrating increases in environmental wellbeing. These findings are summarised within a visual framework in Figure 3 to support further research and application.

To understand how to activate socio-cognitive mindfulness to reap its associated benefits, this review has provided insights into the five psychological processes first introduced by Langer in 1989 which have been integrated into numerous experiments since. It is worth noting that some of the processes share similarities with other established theories. For example, attending to the process before the outcome echoes Dweck's (2006) concept of nurturing a growth mindset and enjoying the process of learning with less emphasis on performance outcomes. Likewise, welcoming new information is very similar to the open awareness required within meditative mindfulness, although socio-cognitive mindfulness differs by intentionally reconstructing items of awareness (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013, p. 116). Thus, in a coaching context, the socio-cognitive mindfulness approach to finding solutions may be preferable to the "placid acceptance" that can sometimes be associated with meditative mindfulness (Bachkirova & Borrington, 2020, p.20).

3.7 Implications for wellbeing coaching

The second review question asked: Which insights from the socio-cognitive mindfulness findings may be relevant for wellbeing coaching research? The synthesis from this review provides a framework for the application of socio-cognitive mindfulness theory, which could be applied to coaching to support coachees with wellbeing development. Examples are provided in the following sections to demonstrate how this integration might work in practice which would be worth researching further to understand their efficacy within coaching contexts.

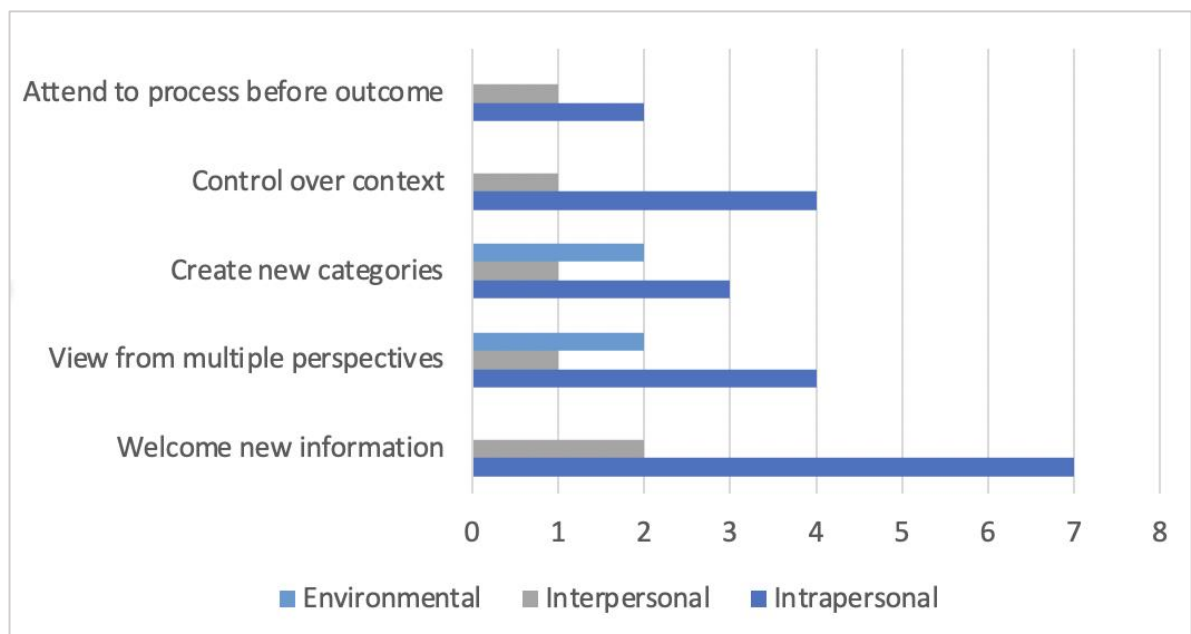
Figure 3 Synthesis of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions



3.7.1 Coaching processes and outcomes

According to the findings of this review, there is a wide range of wellbeing improvements that can be achieved via socio-cognitive mindfulness. A coach can enhance a coachee's autonomous motivation towards their personal goals by empowering them to choose which wellbeing outcomes are most relevant to them (Falecki et al., 2019). Once a wellbeing goal is selected, some coaches may find it useful to understand which processes are more likely to lead to which wellbeing improvement. Figure 4 provides an overview of how often each socio-cognitive mindfulness process led to outcomes within each wellbeing domain. For example, the two processes linked to increases in environmental wellbeing were creating new categories and viewing from multiple perspectives. A coach may prioritise integrating these processes when working with coachees who are aiming to increase their environmental wellbeing. However, the other socio-cognitive mindfulness processes may also have positive impacts on environmental wellbeing, and this may even be demonstrated in other studies that did not meet this review's criteria. Furthermore, Langer advises that each socio-cognitive mindfulness process "leads to the others and back to itself" (1997, p. 23), suggesting that the processes work interactively and congruently.

Figure 4 Frequency of intervention processes leading to wellbeing outcomes



The studies in this review demonstrated that all five processes led to a spectrum of improvements across both the intrapersonal and interpersonal domains. Likewise, several correlational studies have demonstrated positive relationships between trait socio-cognitive mindfulness and an array of wellbeing areas, such as self-fulfilment and resilience (Ghanizadeh et al., 2019), affective and cognitive empathy, (Trent et al., 2016) and marital satisfaction (Burpee & Langer, 2005). Additionally, socio-cognitive mindfulness has been linked to sustainable consumption and environmental concern (Helm & Subramaniam, 2019). Hence, there may be an opportunity for coachees to embrace a more multidimensional and holistic approach to their wellbeing (Lomas et al., 2015b) rather than targeting one specific area. Nevertheless, it is in keeping with the socio-cognitive mindfulness approach for the coach to encourage coachees to attend to the process before the outcome by pursuing wellbeing development that is enjoyable and rewarding in itself, rather than over-focusing on the end result (Gantman et al., 2014).

3.7.2 Brief coaching exercises

The two intervention designs offer both short-term and long-term options for integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into wellbeing coaching, and a coach can identify the utility of using one approach over another. For example, coaches can support coachees to induce states of socio-cognitive mindfulness via brief interventions during sessions, much like how meditative mindfulness can be stimulated during coaching via breathing techniques and body scan exercises (Virgili, 2013). A coach may feel that a coachee would benefit from activating a state of socio-cognitive mindfulness to broaden their thinking and produce more options and solutions throughout the coaching session. Therefore, there are several approaches for a coach to induce socio-cognitive mindfulness during coaching. A coach could introduce a brief exercise which can be unrelated to the coaching topic but designed to stimulate socio-cognitive mindfulness to prepare the client for more flexible thinking during the session. For example, a coach could encourage a coachee to create new categories by asking them to select an everyday item, such as a pen, and produce ten different uses for said item. Alternatively, the exercise could be related to the coaching topic, such as asking the coachee to describe their current opportunity or challenge from the viewpoints of five different people which would encourage thinking from multiple perspectives. Coaching questions can also be framed in such a manner as to stimulate socio-cognitive mindfulness, for example, a coach could encourage a coachee to control the context by asking “How could

your perceived weakness be seen as a strength in a different context?” Since the findings suggest that repeatedly activating states of socio-cognitive mindfulness may lead to more sustained wellbeing improvements and perhaps associated behaviour change, a coach may opt to integrate a variety of socio-cognitive mindfulness exercises and questions across multiple sessions.

3.7.3 Extended coaching programmes

Another option to support socio-cognitive mindfulness trait development for sustained wellbeing results is to adopt a similar approach to the extended programmes in this review. Based on the findings, an example may be a six-week programme of weekly coaching sessions which incorporate psychoeducation on how to activate socio-cognitive mindfulness and how to integrate relevant exercises into everyday routines. This method was adopted by Spence et al. (2008) who theorised that the meditative mindfulness training they integrated into their health coaching intervention helped to psychologically prepare coachees to make the required changes needed to achieve their health goals. In practice, this approach may involve the coach introducing and demonstrating each of the socio-cognitive mindfulness processes across the sessions and setting home-based assignments to help the coachees embed their learning. For instance, assignments could include maintaining a record of the variance of a particular emotion or sensation that a coachee has been experiencing, such as frustration or energy levels, to notice the fluctuation across a week. Another task might involve the coachee noticing ten new things about a person during one conversation per day. Personalisation of the coaching activities is key to ensuring coachees are engaged in the process and possess the autonomous motivation to approach their wellbeing development in a meaningful manner (Spence & Deci, 2013).

3.7.4 Coaching considerations

As highlighted in the results, an extended programme can require significant resources and commitment from both coaches and coachees. Still, the studies offered options for increasing feasibility which could apply in coaching contexts, such as conducting sessions and knowledge sharing online. This helps to reduce travel time and costs and is more manageable for people to fit into busy schedules. Some of the programmes incorporated online software, such as an ‘application’ or automated reminders to make it easier for participants to complete their assignments. To alleviate the demands on a coach’s time the

coaching sessions could be conducted in groups, rather than on an individual basis, as some of the studies did. There appears to be a logic to offering socio-cognitive mindfulness coaching in group settings since it offers opportunities for knowledge-sharing within a social context (Yeh et al., 2020) and practising interpersonal exercises in a safe psychological space.

3.7.5 Limitations of the review

The heterogeneous outcomes of the studies prevented statistical comparisons and reaffirmed the decision to synthesise the results narratively, although this can be less precise and requires a more iterative process. Additionally, the variance in populations limits the generalisability of the review's findings. The checklist from the PRISMA Statement (Page et al., 2021) was closely followed to uphold the review's rigour and enable study replication (Bleijenberg et al., 2018). The Risk of Bias in Systematic Reviews (ROBIS: Whiting et al., 2016) tool was also employed with the findings provided in Appendix E. The review process was judged to have an overall low risk of bias; however, it is noted that the final synthesis did rely on a degree of interpretation which cannot fully eliminate the risk of bias. Finally, due to the lack of qualitative data across the final studies, some of the interpretations made within this review have been based on the study authors' speculations of what was happening psychologically with their participants during the interventions.

3.7.6 Further research

During the search phase of this review, it became clear that there was a dearth of qualitative investigations into socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions, which limited the current review's ability to explore how socio-cognitive mindfulness is experienced by participants. A recent study highlighted the need to research coachees' views on how mindfulness is experienced within coaching (Van Den Assem & Passmore, 2022). Thus, examining how coaching based on socio-cognitive mindfulness is experienced by coachees first-hand would expand coaching psychology research, whilst adding a qualitative perspective to the socio-cognitive mindfulness literature. It may highlight other domains of wellbeing that have yet to be tested, since participants may offer new insights that have not been considered by researchers of this phenomenon.

3.8 Conclusion

Given the array of positive wellbeing results accumulated so far within this review and related studies, it seems appropriate to find ways to support people with how to develop socio-cognitive mindfulness to experience its benefits. Despite yielding positive results in their study, Spence and Cavanagh (2019) recommend that further research is conducted to understand whether combining socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions and developmental coaching may lead to greater outcomes. The overall purpose of this thesis aligns with Spence and Cavanagh's (2019) recommendation by investigating how to integrate socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching for the purpose of wellbeing development. The next step in this research inquiry is to share the key findings from this systematic review with experienced coaches to ascertain their views on the acceptability of integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into wellbeing coaching.

Chapter 4. Acceptability of a Wellbeing Coaching Intervention Based on Socio-Cognitive Mindfulness: A Qualitative Study of Coaches' Views

The following qualitative review has been published in the International Coaching Psychological Review. The paper has been reformatted to align with this thesis.

Crabtree, K., & Swainston, K. (2023). Acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness: A qualitative study of coaches' views. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 18(1), 21-33. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsicpr.20231.21>

4.1 Chapter Introduction

As discussed in previous chapters, socio-cognitive mindfulness has evidenced links to improvements in wellbeing and appears to be a suitable theory from which to develop a wellbeing coaching intervention. The Medical Research Council (MRC; Skivington et al., 2021) recommends approaching the development of complex interventions, such as coaching interventions, by first drawing on existing theory and reviewing the research evidence. Thus, a systematic review of the evidence pertaining to socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions was conducted and presented in the previous chapter. The synthesis of the evidence helped to understand how socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions work to promote wellbeing.

The findings from the systematic review provided insights into how a wellbeing coaching intervention could integrate evidence-based strategies from socio-cognitive mindfulness. This led to the following features being considered for inclusion in a proposed coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness:

- Six-week coaching programme of sixty-to-ninety-minute coaching sessions per week
- Programme to integrate coaching questions and coaching activities designed to stimulate socio-cognitive mindfulness
- Programme to incorporate psychoeducation on the psychological processes that induce states of socio-cognitive mindfulness

- Sessions to be conducted in groups to enable shared learning and the opportunity to practice interpersonal exercises
- Participants to agree to and complete assignments based on socio-cognitive mindfulness outside of coaching sessions, which may include maintaining a reflective diary of experiences

Another step recommended by the MRC is to engage with stakeholders to identify key uncertainties. This includes ascertaining the acceptability of a new idea by understanding to what extent it is deemed appropriate and appealing to potential deliverers or recipients of the intervention (Bowen, et al., 2009). Whilst there are multiple studies investigating the acceptability of coaching interventions (e.g., Kenyon et al., 2015; Coughlin et al., 2020; Qu et al., 2022), they predominantly include quantitative methods to test the feasibility of an intervention which has already been designed.

The study presented in this chapter intended to explore coaches' views early in the intervention development process to examine the perceived acceptability of a proposed wellbeing coaching programme based on socio-cognitive mindfulness. The methods for this acceptability study are outlined, followed by a presentation of the results and a discussion of how the study's findings inform the ongoing development of the coaching intervention.

4.2 Study Aim

This study aimed to explore coaches' views and gain feedback on the proposal of a coaching intervention to inform the ongoing design and development of an intervention prior to feasibility testing. This approach acknowledges the value of a two-way exchange between coaching researchers and practitioners to build upon programme theory by integrating professional, experience-based perspectives to enhance an intervention at the early stages of its development (Skivington, et al., 2021; Scholl et al., 2022). This study aimed to answer the research question: What are coaches' views on the acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?

4.3 Methodology

4.3.1 Study design

As this study aimed to engage key stakeholders in the intervention design process, it seemed fitting to employ a qualitative approach to explore the views of coaches on the proposed coaching programme (Gentry et al., 2013; Sime & Jacob, 2018). An in-depth questionnaire and follow-up focus group were considered to be the most appropriate methods to capture coaches' views in detail and to gain feedback and recommendations based on their knowledge and experience (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The questionnaire outlined in Table 7 collected a range of views from coaches by asking a combination of closed and open questions about the key elements of the intervention. The questionnaire provided short summaries of the planned design features which were based on research evidence in the socio-cognitive mindfulness literature, as outlined in the previous section. The focus group enabled further exploration of the coaches' views and facilitated idea generation of how to maximise potential facilitators and overcome barriers to intervention implementation.

4.3.2 Study participants

It was important for the study to recruit participants who could offer knowledgeable views developed from professional coaching practice and a comprehensive understanding of coaching theory. Therefore, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted to target the niche demographics required to provide relevant insights for this study. Following ethical approval from a Research Ethics Sub-Committee (Teesside University review reference: 2022 Jul 8811 Crabtree) the researcher posted a recruitment advert on her online professional profile page via LinkedIn which connects with other coaches. The advert provided an outline of the study and stipulated the eligibility criteria for study participation to increase the likelihood of respondents to the advert meeting the characteristics required for the study. This included participants having practised as a coaching professional for at least one year and/or having achieved a coaching qualification at Higher Education (HE) level. Further inclusion criteria stipulated participants be over 18 years old and be willing and able to give informed consent. The LinkedIn post invited the researcher's professional network to repost the advert, with some LinkedIn members voluntarily sharing or discussing the post with specific individuals who they felt met the eligibility criteria which aided a snowballing effect. The researcher ensured that the participants that were selected from the respondents to the advert met the eligibility criteria before forming the final sample.

Table 7 Acceptability questionnaire

Section 1
1. Please confirm you have read all of the above and freely and fully consent to participate in the study. Otherwise, please exit the questionnaire. 1.a. Please enter your Participant ID before continuing with the questionnaire (which can be found in the email sent to you along with the link to this questionnaire).
Section 2 – About You
The following questions are to ensure you meet the full eligibility criteria to participate in this study. 2. Are you 18 years old or over? 2.a. Are you based in the UK? 2.b. Have you practiced as a coach for at least one year, either on a paid or voluntary basis? 2.c. Have you achieved a coaching qualification at HE level? 2.d. Please summarise in your own words your experience and/or qualifications as a coach.
Section 3 – About Coaching
The design for this proposed coaching intervention has been based on the key findings from studies which have conducted interventions based on socio-cognitive mindfulness to achieve various positive wellbeing outcomes. This questionnaire will provide brief descriptions of each of the planned features of the proposed coaching intervention and ask for your views. There will be a final section if you have any general comments or feedback about the proposal overall.
The following brief written summary will be provided to participants before the coaching intervention will commence: <i>The aim of coaching is to support clients in achieving their goals to help them to become their best possible selves. Coaching can cover many different areas of a client's life, such as career, education, relationships, health and wellbeing, etc. Coaches use questioning, active listening and reflecting skills to provide a safe space for exploration, clarity and insight. Coaches work with the client's strengths, experiences and resources to help clients to identify opportunities for personal growth.</i> 3. What else do you think people need to know before participating in a coaching intervention?
Section 4 - About Socio-Cognitive Mindfulness
This intervention aims to integrate socio-cognitive mindfulness into a coaching model to help facilitate positive outcomes. Socio-cognitive mindfulness involves a range of psychological processes to help disrupt mindless and automatic thinking. These processes include: • Looking at situations and people from multiple perspectives • Noticing new information and changes in familiar situations and people • Being more sensitive to the context surrounding situations • Prioritising the process over the outcome of an activity, journey or goal

- Increasing the categories and distinctions that are made about people, objects and situations

Socio-cognitive mindfulness processes could support the coaching journey by helping clients to identify new options and possibilities when considering how they can make positive progress.

4. What do you think could be the benefits/strengths of integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching?

4.a. What do you think could be the disadvantages/problems of integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching?

4.b. What suggestions do you have, if any, for overcoming any of the disadvantages/problems of integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching?

Section 5 - Proposed Group Coaching

The current proposal is to run the intervention as a group coaching programme with up to 8 participants per group. This is to give participants opportunities to practice socio-cognitive mindfulness exercises with each other and to also open up their mind to other views.

5. What do you think the benefits/strengths could be of participating in a coaching intervention with a group?

5.a. What do you think the disadvantages/problems could be of participating in a coaching intervention with a group?

5.b. What suggestions do you have, if any, for overcoming any of the disadvantages/problems you may have just outlined for the coaching intervention being delivered in groups?

5.c. What are your thoughts on the group size being approximately 8 participants?

Section 6 - Proposed Coaching Assignments

The current proposal is to agree assignments with participants to be carried out in- between coaching sessions. This is to help embed the learning from the sessions further and encourage participants to become more mindful in their everyday life.

6. What do you think the benefits/strengths could be for carrying out assignments in-between coaching sessions?

6.a. What do you think the disadvantages/problems could be for carrying out assignments in-between coaching sessions?

6.b. What suggestions do you have, if any, for overcoming any of the disadvantage/problems you may have just outlined for participants carrying out assignments in between coaching sessions?

Section 7 - Proposed Coaching Session Structure

The current proposal is for the coaching sessions to be up to 90 minutes long. The first session will make time for introductions and setting individual and group expectations and goals before introducing some of the concepts of coaching and socio-cognitive mindfulness. However, the remaining 5 sessions will follow a general structure (which can flex as needed):

- 5 minutes to welcome back participants
- 10 minutes to review progress from previous week

- 15 minutes to introduce and explain a new socio-cognitive mindfulness process 30 minutes coaching exercise/conversation
- 15 minutes debrief of coaching exercise/conversation
- 10 minutes to agree assignment for week ahead
- 5 minutes to answer final questions before closing

7. What do you think the benefits/strengths could be for this session structure?

7.a. What do you think the disadvantages/problems could be for this coaching structure?

7.b. What suggestions do you have, if any, for overcoming any of the disadvantage/problems you may have just outlined for this coaching structure?

7.c. What are your thoughts on the sessions being 90 minutes in length?

Section 8 - Proposed Duration of Coaching Programme

The current proposal is to run the coaching programme for 6 weeks to give the best chance of participants sustaining any personal progress made.

8. What do you think the benefits/strengths could be of the coaching intervention lasting for 6 weeks?

8.a. What do you think the disadvantages/problems could be of the coaching intervention lasting for 6 weeks?

8.b. What suggestions do you have, if any, for overcoming any of the disadvantages/problems you may have just outlined for the coaching intervention lasting for 6 weeks?

Section 9 - Proposed Coaching Diary

The current proposal is for participants to maintain a diary or record of their personal reflections from the coaching sessions, assignments and any other relevant experiences for the duration of the intervention.

9. What do you think the benefits/strengths could be of participants maintaining a coaching diary?

9.a. What do you think the disadvantages/problems could be of participants maintaining a coaching diary?

9.b. What suggestions do you have, if any, for overcoming any of the disadvantages/problems you may have just outlined for participants maintaining a coaching diary?

Section 10 - Final Questions

10. Is there anything you think has been missed from this coaching approach or any other factors you think should be taken into consideration?

10.a. Do you have any final comments or suggestions about the proposal for this coaching intervention?

10.b. As a coach, would you consider exploring more about how to integrate socio-cognitive mindfulness into your coaching approach?

10.c. Finally, if there are any follow-up questions required, would you consent to receive an invite from the researcher, Katie Crabtree, via email to attend an online focus group? You can choose to decline the invite at the time, but please advise if you are happy to receive the invite to your email address.

4.3.3 Study participants

It was important for the study to recruit participants who could offer knowledgeable views developed from professional coaching practice and a comprehensive understanding of coaching theory. Therefore, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted to target the niche demographics required to provide relevant insights for this study. Following ethical approval from a Research Ethics Sub-Committee (Teesside University review reference: 2022 Jul 8811 Crabtree) the researcher posted a recruitment advert on her online professional profile page via LinkedIn which connects with other coaches. The advert provided an outline of the study and stipulated the eligibility criteria for study participation to increase the likelihood of respondents to the advert meeting the characteristics required for the study. This included participants having practised as a coaching professional for at least one year and/or having achieved a coaching qualification at Higher Education (HE) level. Further inclusion criteria stipulated participants be over 18 years old and be willing and able to give informed consent. The LinkedIn post invited the researcher's professional network to repost the advert, with some LinkedIn members voluntarily sharing or discussing the post with specific individuals who they felt met the eligibility criteria which aided a snowballing effect. The researcher ensured that the participants that were selected from the respondents to the advert met the eligibility criteria before forming the final sample.

Although there are varying views on sample sizes, Hertzog (2008) advises that if the purpose of the study is to assess the acceptability of the format of an intervention, then a sample size of ten or fewer may be adequate. This study's final sample consisted of ten coaches: eight female participants and two male participants with professional coaching experience, working as employed and self-employed coaches across various industries and private practice. The participants represented a range of coaching specialisms, including executive coaches, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) coaches, wellbeing coaches, life coaches and a lean consultant coach. All the participants had achieved HE-level qualifications or professional accreditations, such as Masters in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology and NLP certification.

When the ten participants reached the end of the questionnaire, they provided consent to receive an invite to a focus group to discuss the proposed intervention in more detail. All ten participants gave consent to be invited to the focus group stage, yet it was only possible to

find a mutually convenient time for five participants to collectively meet. This sample size aligns with Carlsen and Glenton's (2011) review of 220 papers which found that the median size of focus groups was five. Accordingly, five of the ten participants from the original sample went on to complete the focus group.

4.3.4 Study setting

The questionnaire was created using an online survey tool which the participants could access via a web link. Each participant was assigned a unique study identification number for pseudo-anonymisation. Once participants accessed the questionnaire, they were given key participant information and asked to provide consent and input their unique study identification number before starting the questionnaire. The questionnaire took between 30 and 60 minutes to complete and asked participants to provide their views and feedback on the design, features and structure of the proposed intervention. The survey was designed in such a way as to ensure that every question was answered and could not be bypassed. Consequently, all survey responses were completed, and due to the diligence of the participants, all responses were legible and could be used for data analysis.

Two weeks after the questionnaires were completed, participants were invited to attend the optional focus group and upon acceptance, were asked to return a signed consent form. Due to the geographical distribution of the participants, the focus group was held via videoconferencing on the Microsoft Teams platform. The session lasted one hour and adhered to a focus group schedule. The focus of the session was to explore in more detail the main limitations of the proposed intervention as highlighted by the coaches in the questionnaire results:

- The high levels of commitment required from participants may lead to disengagement and/or withdrawal
- The overall timeframe may not be sufficient to make real progress
- The potential negative impact of a group format on individual levels of engagement and progress
- The lack of flexibility and adaptability of coaching assignments
- Concerns whether the intervention is suitable for some individuals

The coaches were then invited to discuss potential solutions to overcoming the barriers to help increase the acceptability of the proposed intervention.

4.3.5 Data collection

The responses from the questionnaire were converted into an Excel spreadsheet, where it was possible to divide the data across multiple tabs to represent the different sections of the questionnaire. As the focus group was conducted online and all participants consented to it being recorded, it was possible to use the Microsoft Team's transcribing software. The researcher reviewed the transcription alongside the video recording to make any necessary corrections. The updated transcript was then copied across to the previous Excel spreadsheet, ensuring the division of the data across multiple tabs to represent the different sections of the focus group schedule. The overall responses from both the questionnaire and focus group were clearly sectioned within the Excel spreadsheet in preparation for data is.

4.3.6 Data analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was considered to be the most appropriate approach to analysing the data as it allows flexible integration of the data into higher-order themes to theorise on broader meanings whilst valuing the researcher's active involvement in the production of knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The analysis was conducted in a deductive manner, as it was driven by the researcher's analytic interest in the proposed intervention which was developed from the established theory of socio-cognitive mindfulness (Langer, 1989). The researcher adopted a reflexive approach by maintaining a reflective log to identify and attend to pre-existing beliefs and assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher regularly discussed her reflections throughout the analysis with her supervisor, Kate Swainston (KS) to support the sense-making process.

The researcher worked through the following six analytical stages multiple times in an iterative manner to ensure the final themes offered a coherent structure for the data: (1) dataset familiarisation, (2) data coding, (3) initial theme generation, (4) theme development and review, (5) theme refining, defining and naming, and (6) write up (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The stages were overseen periodically by the research supervisor (KS) to help minimise the potential for errors during the analysis. The results provide descriptions of the

finalised themes, which include excerpts from the questionnaire responses and focus group transcript.

4.4 Results

Three themes were developed which encapsulated the coaches' views on the acceptability of the proposed wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness, plus their recommendations on how to increase the acceptability of the intervention further. Although the coaches responded positively to the proposed coaching intervention, the core themes captured areas the coaches perceived as especially critical and requiring further consideration: 'clear contracting', 'impacts of group dynamics', and 'sustainability through autonomy and engagement'. The themes and ten subthemes are presented in Table 8 and are discussed and illustrated in the subsequent sections by incorporating direct quotations made by the participants throughout the questionnaire and focus group. The verbatim views from the coaches help to support the findings and provide clarity on their recommendations.

Table 8 Main themes and subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
Clear contracting	Setting expectations of the intervention process Defining coach's and coachee's roles and responsibilities Gaining commitment for full participation upfront
Impacts of group dynamics	Supporting shared learning and interpersonal development Awareness of impacts on individuals Ensuring psychological safety
Sustainability through engagement and autonomy	Exploring participant's readiness and purpose Integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness processes Personalising assignments to embed changes Balancing momentum and depth

4.4.1 Clear contracting

A key theme was developing a clear contract with participants before and throughout the intervention. This was regarded as especially important since the intervention integrated multiple socio-cognitive mindfulness activities, therefore, participants should understand what is involved and *"be very clear about how the intervention will support their personal goals"* (Coach 8). The following subthemes covered the most pertinent elements that should be contracted with participants.

Setting expectations of the intervention process

The coaches felt it was crucial to emphasise to participants that the intervention would not be quick or simple and would involve significant input from them.

'I think it needs to be made clear that it is not an overnight fix. It is highly unlikely that a client will instantly become more mindful and like any exercise, it will take time, practice and repetition. These expectations should be set out at the outset of a coaching relationship or prior to commencing any intervention.' Coach 10

Based on prior experiences, the coaches suggested that clarification be given on what coaching is and what it is not to ensure potential participants could assess their suitability to participate in the intervention. This included being explicit that coaching is not a *"therapeutic intervention to treat mental or physical health conditions"* (Coach 8).

'Coaching is not therapy. Coaching is not a quick fix. Coaching requires commitment, engagement and an attitude to self-reflect and be open to challenge.' Coach 7

Overall, setting clear expectations is required to dispel any misconceptions about coaching and to make participants fully aware of what the intervention would entail and the implications to them.

Defining coach and coachee roles and responsibilities

In a similar vein, the coaches emphasised the importance of defining the roles and responsibilities of the coach and the participants as coachees. The coaches reflected on how their roles are sometimes misconceived by potential clients, and so being transparent about how they support their clients is a vital part of contracting.

'I think some people go into coaching thinking that a coach will give them all the answers so it might help to explain that the coach won't do this and instead will guide and support the client to find the answers they need within.' Coach 5

The coaches identified what they felt were the key responsibilities of the coachee and the importance of ensuring participants understood what was expected of them.

'The client has the responsibility to identify and rationalise their own requirements and opportunities for improvement in order to achieve their goals and objectives.' Coach 3

The coaches defined the relationship between the coach and coachee as *"an equal partnership"* (Coach 8) which requires commitment and hard work from both parties.

Gaining commitment for full participation upfront

The coaches endorsed securing the commitment of each participant upfront to attend every coaching session and to complete all socio-cognitive mindfulness assignments. The coaches agreed that the participants be made aware they needed to *"do these integration tasks because that's actually where the magic happens"* (Coach 1).

'It's not just the contracting, but it's what you're contracting, and what they're being asked to do is to do the work outside of the sessions.' Coach 4

It was also recommended that regular contracting should happen throughout to remind participants of the ongoing commitment required to achieve the benefits of the intervention.

'I would contract it in with the clients in each session that part of their commitment to receiving the benefits of this approach is to do the integration activities.' Coach 1

As the sessions would include psychoeducational elements about socio-cognitive mindfulness, it was agreed that full participation in the intervention is mandatory to enable participants to acquire the full information and experiential practice needed to facilitate the wellbeing changes being pursued.

4.4.2 Impacts of group dynamics

There was a varied discussion about the strengths and limitations associated with the chosen design feature to conduct the proposed coaching intervention in groups. Most of the coaches were experienced in facilitating group coaching and could reflect on the benefits and challenges of managing group dynamics.

Supporting shared learning and interpersonal development

The coaches discussed the positive aspects associated with group coaching, particularly how: *“shared learning through experience embeds results well”* (Coach 6).

‘Group coaching could be very powerful with the right arrangement of clients. A group dynamic can encourage others to be more vocal about their emotions and it would not be uncommon to see participants play a role in supporting one another.’ Coach 10

Several coaches connected how the group format was compatible with the socio-cognitive mindfulness process of viewing from multiple perspectives.

‘Like with all groups, there's strength in collective thinking and working with others' perspectives.’ Coach 5

Socio-cognitive mindfulness-based coaching in groups was considered to be a particularly compatible approach for participants who are interested in interpersonal development and group support.

‘This kind of social cognitive mindfulness intervention in a group, [...] the people who go to that sort of thing are the people who want social support. They want that relationship; they want to communicate with others. They want to work as part of a group. They want to benefit from the people around them and to grow together.’ Coach 4

Despite highlighting multiple benefits to a group format for the intervention, the coaches considered the potential challenges that can arise from group dynamics.

Awareness of impacts on individuals

Coach 7 surmised that participants coming from different backgrounds *“can lead to tricky group dynamics”*. Hence, it was key for the coach to maintain awareness of any impacts the group format may be having on individuals.

‘People who struggle with this approach individually might close down completely or become antagonistic in a group.’ Coach 4

Another potential limitation was raised relating to how the group approach may impact individual progress or how *“personal coaching goals may be lost in a group coaching programme”* (Coach 6).

'In some circumstances you may get group members who take up more space and time than others - this can make others feel as though they can't share or discuss their issues.' Coach 5

Coach 5 reflected on how everyone has different ways of engaging within a group setting and that quietness during a session may not necessarily indicate a lack of engagement:

'The different types of people that you would get in a group and the different ways that people interact [...] they might not engage at all during the session. But outside, they might be doing those assignments and getting so much from it that they're almost like that silent observer who gets it, takes everything on, does all the work, but almost appear like they're not engaging.'

In response to the challenges raised, several coaches suggested: *"some kind of drop-in session in between the structured weekly group coaching sessions where additional guidance can be provided"* (Coach 10). The coaches agreed that regular check-in points would support different learning styles and enable coaches to review individual progress.

Ensuring psychological safety

The coaches concurred that *"psychological safety is key"* (Coach 4) for group dynamics to work positively within a newly designed intervention. Thus, the coach needed *"to create a safe psychological space for clients to reflect"* (Coach 1) whilst *"encouraging participants to be self-aware and mindful of their responses to the activities"* (Coach 4). They acknowledged that the creation of a safe psychological space was not just generated by the coach, but by everyone within the group.

'Make it a safe space where all are welcomed to contribute. Actively encourage those that are perceived to be quieter or weaker personalities to provide their views, as they are likely the deepest thinkers in the group. Encourage everyone in the group to listen - not just the coach.' Coach 10

Suggestions were made around how to best prepare for the challenges that may arise during a group coaching process which were mainly related to how the coach contracts with the group, both at the start of the intervention and throughout.

'Spend a lot of time on careful contracting at the beginning, so there is a clear process for handling the challenges as they arise [...] I think regular

contracting is important in groups. Perhaps a contract review should be included at the beginning of each session.’ Coach 8

Overall, the coaches felt that the most effective way to handle challenging group dynamics was to gain commitment from the group to co-create a safe environment for all involved.

4.4.3 Engagement, autonomy and sustainability

The coaches were aware that socio-cognitive mindfulness can be induced via multiple methods to improve wellbeing in different ways. They discussed how the intervention should cater to the individual needs of each participant, including empowering participants to access the potential benefits in a way that is relevant and meaningful to them. The following sub-themes capture the coaches’ recommendations for maintaining engagement levels, supporting autonomous motivation and sustaining positive changes.

Exploring participant's readiness and purpose

Most coaches agreed that there was usually an instinct when gauging an individual’s engagement levels and readiness for coaching, which could be assessed during the contracting session before coaching commences.

‘As a coach [...] there’s an element of instinct that comes into play in determining if you know somebody is going to commit themselves.’ Coach 3

It was considered key to ensure participants were motivated enough to complete all socio-cognitive mindfulness assignments throughout the intervention. Coach 4 proposed questions that should be asked of each participant to understand their intention and desired outcome for partaking in the intervention.

‘What’s your perceived outcome at the end of this process? How much are you willing to commit and engage in order to achieve that? But what’s that outcome worth to you?’

The coaches reflected on the coach’s ability to identify “*the difference between a client trying to just achieve a short-term goal or maybe the goal is disguising something else that needs to be worked on*” (Coach 3). By making this distinction, the coach could support participants in selecting meaningful wellbeing goals based on intrinsic motivations which could achieve sustainable changes.

Integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness processes

Some coaches focused on how specific psychological processes within socio-cognitive mindfulness theory could increase engagement in the coaching process, such as attending to the process over the outcome:

‘I think it should help stop the ‘I’ll be happy when’ mindset associated with goal achievement. It should help minimise perfectionism by being less outcome focussed and more journey focussed.’ Coach 1

Several coaches highlighted how the socio-cognitive mindfulness processes of viewing from multiple perspectives can help coachees broaden their minds and achieve clarity.

‘Helping clients see things from different perspectives is hugely beneficial for coaching. Some individuals almost get tunnel vision when it comes to their problems, and they can’t see past the problem. So, helping clients to be more present and take in their surroundings as well as embracing the experience of the process and the journey itself would be hugely beneficial to open the client’s mind. This could help the client have more breakthrough and ‘a-ha’ moments once they see things differently.’ Coach 5

Overall, the coaches agreed that the psychological processes involved in inducing socio-cognitive mindfulness were beneficial to the coaching process and would support coachees in achieving real and lasting change.

Personalising assignments to embed changes

The coaches agreed that the socio-cognitive mindfulness assignments in between the coaching sessions were key to sustaining any positive changes made during and beyond the intervention.

‘I do believe more of the work gets done by the individual after they leave the session. And the key piece is creating that habit, and once they’re on their own so that they can embrace the change themselves. [...] the most important thing is getting the individual to buy in and institutionalise the change as part of their own daily routine.’ Coach 3

To support participants to instil the changes needed to reap the associated benefits, the coaches felt it was essential to “give people the autonomy to choose the format” (Coach 8).

‘Allow the participant to be creative with it - in fact, actively encourage the creative aspect. Whatever the intervention is, allow some scope for the

participant to modify it - to create the sense of ownership.... It will help create a more sustainable interest in the intervention and encourage longevity of it being applied.’ Coach 10

Coach 9 agreed and offered further suggestions for how participants could personalise the activities:

‘I would spend time working through how each participant could make it happen with habit stacking or accountability partners etc.’

By having the opportunity to adapt the assignments in a way that suits their personal goals and lifestyles, the participants may achieve a sense of autonomy throughout the intervention, which again, draws on their intrinsic motivation.

Balancing momentum and depth

The coaches deliberated the balance between ensuring the sessions and overall intervention were thorough enough to provide participants with the time needed to make positive changes to their wellbeing, whilst not being too demanding and leading to withdrawals from the intervention. In relation to the session duration, there were different perspectives, but the majority concluded that *“sessions should not run for more than an hour in order to make sure you have people engaged”* (Coach 10).

‘People can take an hour off if they’ve got flexible work and they can take an hour off for lunch. It’s much easier to squeeze into a time slot.’ Coach 1

The discussion about the overall duration of the intervention was similar, where the coaches felt that participants may disengage and withdraw if it was too long, and yet, achieving real change requires time and effort. Most coaches agreed that a *“short, condensed course would maybe gain accelerated learning”* (Coach 6).

‘You can create the seeds in a short amount of time, but then to actually integrate it as a habit is what takes it a long time.’ Coach 1

There was also some debate on how frequent the coaching sessions should be. Ultimately, the majority agreed that *“meeting once a week should provide regular motivation for participants”* (Coach 10).

‘Having a weekly session enables the participants to experience a consistent approach - knowing that they have a session every week to prepare for and that will help them on their journey will be really helpful for them. It helps to keep them accountable knowing that they will be meeting with the group every week for 6 weeks.’ Coach 5

In summary, most of the coaches agreed that the optimum approach would be conducting hour-long weekly sessions for a period of six weeks.

4.5 Discussion

4.5.1 Summary of key findings

The findings suggest that multiple factors may affect the perceived acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention developed from the theory of socio-cognitive mindfulness. The coaches noted that the proposed intervention was in-depth and required significant participant input which may hinder programme completion or adherence to the coaching assignments. Yet, the coaches acknowledged that the socio-cognitive mindfulness assignments were key to achieving meaningful and sustainable wellbeing improvements. This view resonates with other mindfulness-based interventions which have produced long-term wellbeing results by integrating multiple exercises and practices over an extended period (Dundas et al., 2016).

There appears to be limited research measuring the long-term effects of health and wellbeing coaching, and therefore the involvement of target audiences, such as coaches, during the development of a coaching intervention is highly recommended (Dejonghe et al., 2017). Accordingly, this study sought the views and recommendations of coaches early in the intervention development process to maximise the acceptability of the intervention and its potential to achieve lasting results.

First, the coaches largely supported the suggested structure of a six-week programme of coaching integrated with regular socio-cognitive mindfulness activities, but they advocated for participants to personalise the exercises to maintain their engagement. This offers the opportunity for participants to adapt the assignments in an appealing and self-determined manner to support their autonomous motivation in pursuing relevant wellbeing changes (Lyubormirsky et al., 2011; Spence & Deci, 2013). Nonetheless, for participants to be able to

tailor the coaching activities, they need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge for how to do this successfully. The current proposal has adopted the approach of several socio-cognitive mindfulness intervention studies which taught participants the principles of how to apply socio-cognitive mindfulness in their everyday lives to maintain and build upon their wellbeing improvements (Spence & Cavanagh, 2019; Pagnini et al., 2021). Although most of the coaches agreed that the integration of psychoeducation on socio-cognitive mindfulness would benefit the coaching process, one coach challenged how much this approach was 'pure' coaching versus training. However, studies have suggested that teaching useful skills within wellness coaching can support continued healthy living (Clark et al., 2016) and integrating mindfulness training into health coaching may help to psychologically prepare coachees to make the positive health changes needed (Spence et al., 2008).

Another consideration was the suitability of a group coaching format versus dyadic coaching. It was noted that a group format brings additional benefits to the intervention by way of providing opportunities for participants to explore ideas and views with each other within a social context (Spence & Cavanagh, 2019) as well as practice interpersonal exercises in a safe psychological space (Kepner, 2008). This has been demonstrated in group health and wellbeing coaching studies which suggested that group support and shared learning helped to facilitate positive outcomes, such as improvements in self-efficacy, positive emotions and locus of control (Bezner et al., 2018; Nacif, 2021). Furthermore, as coaching involves interpersonal processes and can provide a reflective space for social meaning-making (Shoukry & Cox, 2018; Stelter, 2007), it seems beneficial to explore socio-cognitive mindfulness within group settings.

The coaches agreed that most of the potential barriers to the implementation of the proposed coaching intervention can be alleviated with well-defined and robust contracting with each participant and with the group as a collective (Bennett, 2008; Britton, 2013). This not only sets clear expectations from the outset and throughout but also provides participants with the knowledge needed to make an informed decision about whether they are prepared to invest significant time and effort into the intervention, and whether they are comfortable sharing this personal wellbeing journey within a group.

4.5.2 Strengths and limitations of the study

As the proposed intervention discussed within this study has yet to be investigated in the existing literature, the use of a qualitative approach was beneficial in exploring its acceptability in a naturalistic manner with practitioners who could offer professional opinions. Although the views provided by the coaches are based on relevant coaching experience, the area of socio-cognitive mindfulness is still a relatively unknown concept within the coaching industry. Therefore, the coaches were required to formulate their views on integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching based on the short summaries provided to them within the questionnaires.

Researcher interaction bias may have also affected the coaches' responses (Miyazaki & Taylor, 2008), especially since they were aware that the researcher intended to continue to develop the intervention based on their feedback. Furthermore, there are limitations to having a single coder for the themes that were developed during the analysis of this study. Although a second researcher was overseeing the stages of the thematic analysis, the primary researcher may have been inclined to validate a particular theme over another due to expectations formed from her prior research and coaching experience. The researcher was aware of such potential biases and adopted various strategies to respond reflexively throughout (Etherington, 2004). A key strategy was journaling to track thoughts, feelings and any personal assumptions which may be influencing the interpretation of the data and to interrogate the data more effectively through a critical reflexive lens. Another strategy involved regularly seeking feedback from the second researcher during the coding and theming stages to check that her interpretations were valid.

4.5.3 Implications for further research

It is essential to now make use of this research by applying the findings to enhance the design of the intervention. In this case, it would be appropriate to elaborate on the contracting element of the intervention as recommended by the coaches and to make the suggested changes to the timeframe and overall structure, including adding check-in points and options to personalise the assignments. In addition, further consideration is needed to ensure psychological safety is secured when participants are brought together as a group, which may again feed into the development of the contracting process. Once the intervention has been refined, it would be useful to conduct a feasibility study to gauge how

the intervention is experienced from the participant's perspective to address any of the uncertainties from this study as well as provide insights for further improvement of the intervention.

4.6 Conclusion

Engaging key stakeholders ensures that there is valuable input from experienced and knowledgeable practitioners at this early stage of the intervention design. The coaches' feedback and recommendations help to provide different viewpoints and ideas for how the coaching programme could work in practice, whilst broadening the author's perspective during the design process. Thus, the themes and subthemes produced from the present study encompass key design features and considerations that will be incorporated into the ongoing intervention development to improve its acceptability. The findings from this study will be used in the next chapter to inform the design and development of the intervention.

Chapter 5. Intervention Development

The intervention development study presented in this chapter has been published in The Coaching Psychologist. The paper has been reformatted to align with this thesis:

Crabtree, K., & Swainston, K. (2024). Integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness and coaching psychology: An intervention development study. *The Coaching Psychologist* 20(1), 61-81. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpstcp.2024.20.1.61>

5.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter outlines the systematic process of integrating the emerging insights and findings from the preliminary literature review (Chapter 1), the systematic review (Chapter 3) and the acceptability study (Chapter 4) to develop a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness. Synthesising the theory, evidence and stakeholder insights supports the development of an intervention that is more likely to be relevant and acceptable within coaching contexts. An overview of the methodological approach, frameworks and methods used within this thesis is provided in Chapter 2. The current chapter expands on this by discussing the triangulation approach adopted to complete the first stage of intervention development. This includes outlining how the accumulated findings from the previous studies were iteratively synthesised to refine the programme theory of the proposed intervention and to design an intervention prototype ready to be feasibility tested. This chapter will also provide an account of how the intervention development process was supplemented with the lead author's reflections from practice.

5.2 Study Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this study was to outline the process of developing a wellbeing coaching intervention grounded in the theory of socio-cognitive mindfulness. The proposed intervention aims to facilitate and enhance the coaching process by integrating evidence-based strategies from socio-cognitive mindfulness to improve wellbeing in non-clinical adults. This study intended to overcome the common issue of a lack of transparency in the intervention development stage of the research process, which often leaves practitioners

and other researchers in the dark about how interventions have been defined, designed and developed (Duncan et al., 2020).

Hence, the primary objective of this study was to describe how the MRC's established guidance for the early phases of intervention development was followed to refine the programme theory and develop a logic model for a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness (Craig et al., 2013; Skivington et al., 2021). This study aimed to answer the research question: What is the programme theory of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?

5.3 Methods

5.3.1 Research approach

The overall research approach to the thesis is provided in Chapter 2. It describes the pragmatist position of responding to the emerging nature of the research enquiry by selecting the most appropriate method at each stage of the intervention development process (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A pragmatist epistemology focuses on the practicalities of real-world issues (Patton, 2005) which this thesis aims to address by developing a coaching intervention to meet the growing wellbeing needs of UK society. Pragmatism also recognises the researcher's role in the co-production of knowledge and influence on the intervention design (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009).

To address any concerns that a pragmatist approach might prioritise convenience over robustness, this study followed the MRC's established and systematic framework for developing complex interventions (Craig et al., 2013; Skivington et al., 2021). The MRC's phased and iterative approach aligns with a pragmatist position as it supports the researcher's ability to work flexibly with the intervention development process and to have consideration of the context (O'Cathain et al., 2019). The MRC's framework consists of four stages: (1) intervention development; (2) feasibility assessment; (3) evaluation; and (4) implementation (Craig et al., 2013). It is the first phase of intervention development which is the focus of this chapter. It encompasses the extended MRC guidance relating to the core elements which should be investigated at each stage which are the context, key uncertainties, economic considerations, engaging stakeholders, programme theory and refinements, and intervention refinement (Skivington et al., 2021).

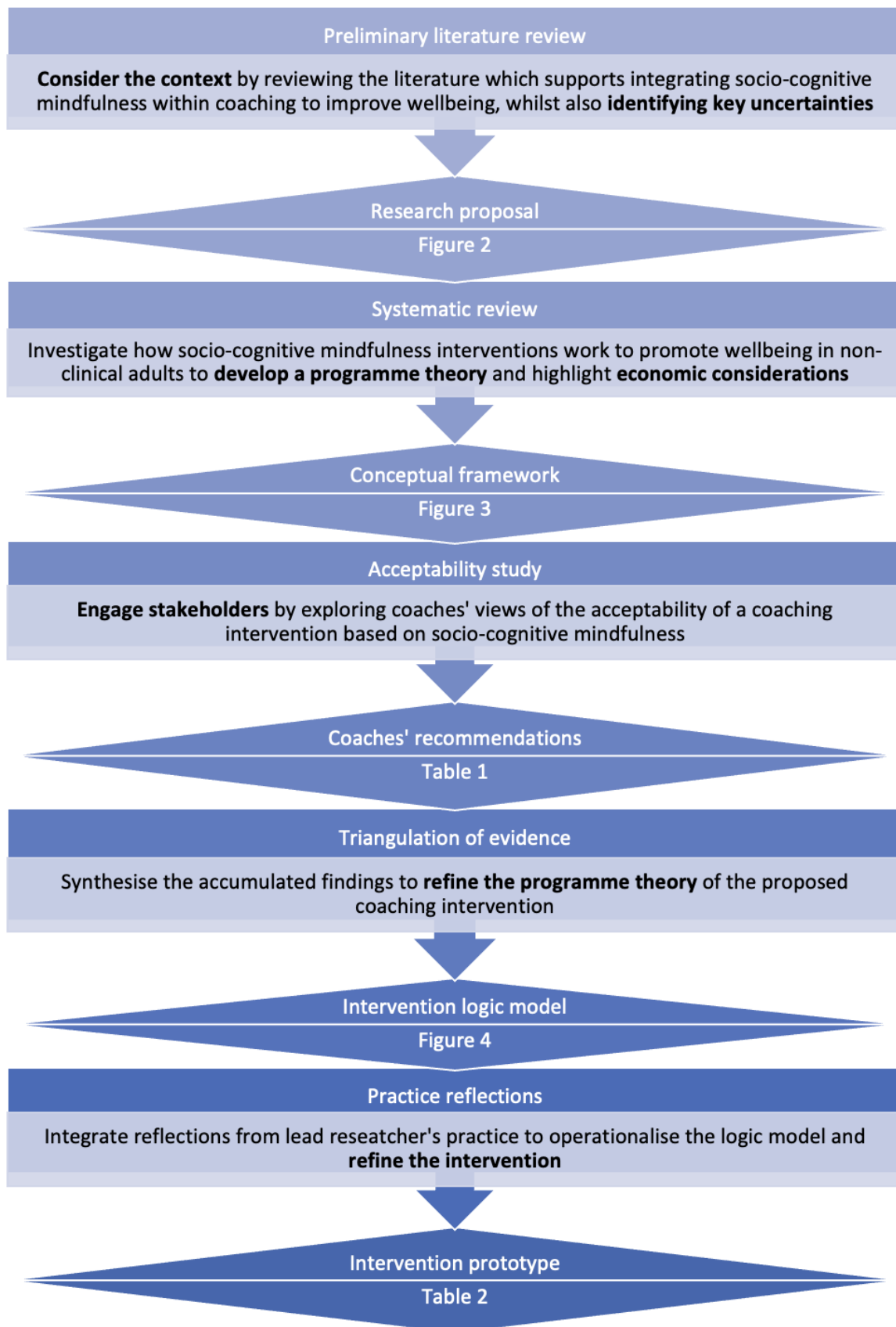
5.3.2 Research methods

To refine the programme theory of the proposed wellbeing coaching intervention, this chapter aimed to triangulate the findings accumulated from this thesis so far and to investigate each of the core elements said to be critical for robust intervention development (Skivington et al., 2021). Method triangulation was deemed a suitable approach for sequentially converging and integrating the data to provide a more comprehensive examination of the phenomena of interest (Johnson et al., 2007). Achieving corroboration from the different sources of data may help to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the overall analysis, nevertheless, the triangulation process may identify inconsistencies or conflicting findings which would need further examination (Miles et al., 2014).

The triangulation process started early in the research enquiry, as the findings and evidence collated from each thesis chapter and study helped to inform the next stage in the intervention development process. Figure 5 represents the sequential and evolving nature of the intervention development process, and how the study designs and approaches were informed by the emerging findings from the previous stage. This includes how the initial programme theory developed within the systematic review was refined further by incorporating the qualitative study findings to hypothesise the causal pathways between the key aspects of the intervention.

To illustrate the programme theory, O’Cathain et al. (2019) recommend creating a logic model of the intervention. This is especially useful when designing complex programmes which require flexibility and contain interlinking components and concepts, all of which apply to this study (Petticrew, 2011; Havsteen-Franklin et al., 2023). A logic model represents the change mechanisms within the intervention and the flow between its inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes (Savaya & Waysman, 2005). The overall triangulation process led to the development of a logic model representing the refined programme theory ready to be feasibility tested in the next stage of this thesis.

Figure 5 Intervention development process



To prepare for the feasibility stage, the logic model needed to be operationalised into a prototype of the coaching programme. Refining the intervention design was an ongoing process which involved the author repeatedly applying evidence-based exercises within her coaching psychology practice as they emerged from the research process whilst recording her reflections and ideas. This involved determining what elements of the research insights were potentially useful in coaching practice, identifying tangible ways in which the information could be applied in practice, and reflecting on the impact it had on the coaching process (Grant & O'Connor, 2019). Key practice activities that provided opportunities for application and reflection of practice included dyadic and group coaching, coaching supervision and peer-practice groups (Griffiths & Campbell, 2009).

King's (2002) integration of Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984) and reflection models (Schon, 1983; Cowan, 1998) was used to guide the reflective process and draw out key reflections-in-action, reflections-on-action and reflections-for-action. This involved recording practice reflections as follows:

- Noting reflection-in-action observations during or immediately after a concrete experience
- Journaling reflection-on-action throughout the reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation stages to make sense of experiences and generate hypotheses
- Developing reflection-for-action during the active experimentation phases to plan the application of newly generated ideas

The application of new ideas in practice provided further concrete experiences to reflect on, thus, creating continual experiential learning cycles. Repeating this approach with multiple evidence-based exercises enabled continuous reflection on how the theoretical ideas may translate into practice to help shape the design of the overall coaching programme. This made it possible to operationalise the logic model into a prototype of the intervention ready to be tested.

5.4 Findings

This section will sequentially outline the findings that emerged throughout the research process to inform the refinement of the programme theory and the intervention design. Although the intervention development process was iterative, where methods and findings overlapped, this section discusses each core element in turn for clarity.

5.4.1 Considering the context

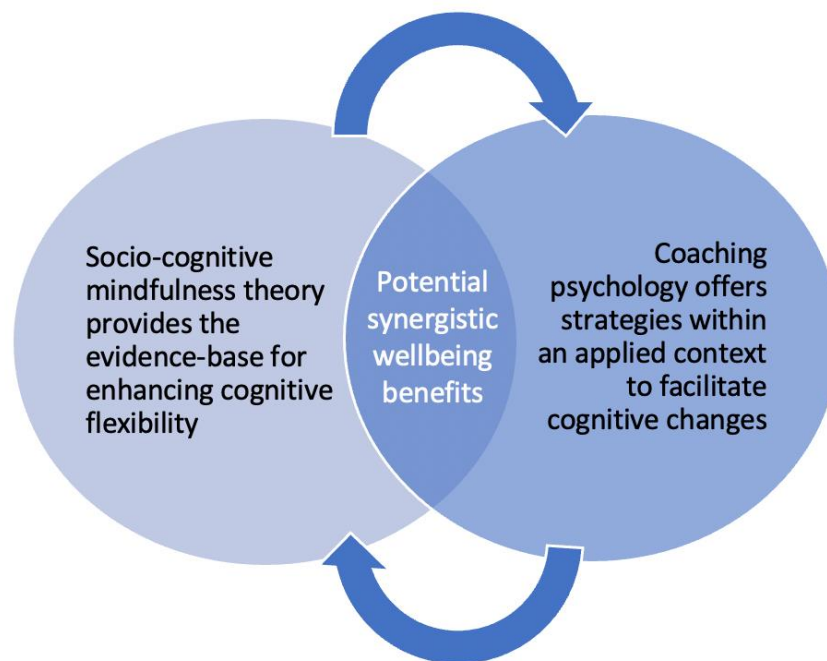
The preliminary literature review helped to clarify the rationale for integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness theory within a coaching context to achieve wellbeing benefits. As socio-cognitive mindfulness research spans multiple disciplines such as education, wellbeing and business, it tends to involve non-clinical populations, such as students, workers, leaders, etc, with less focus on clinical audiences (Hart et al., 2013). This resonates with coaching psychology, which also targets ‘healthy’ populations since the coaching psychology profession makes a distinction between coaching and therapeutic-based work (Grant & Green, 2018). Thus, it appeared likely during the early stages of the literature review that findings from socio-cognitive mindfulness studies could be useful for coaching psychology research since the target populations are similar. This form of mindfulness aims to increase cognitive flexibility, particularly within social environments (Pirson et al., 2018), which would be beneficial to a coaching context. Langer describes how this can be achieved by the activation of one or more psychological processes (2014):

- Welcoming new information
- Creating new categories
- Viewing from multiple perspectives
- Controlling the context
- Attending to the process before the outcome

Intervention studies have demonstrated that when socio-cognitive mindfulness is induced via at least one of the psychological processes, there are a range of positive performance and wellbeing outcomes available (Hart et al, 2013; Langer, 2010) which align with typical coaching psychology research outcomes. Correlational studies have also evidenced positive relationships between socio-cognitive mindfulness and an array of wellbeing benefits, such as increased positive affect (Ie et al., 2012), empathy (Trent et al., 2016) and resilience

(Ghanizadeh et al., 2019). Further studies have demonstrated positive links to areas useful to coaching, such as enhanced goal setting (Kee & Wang, 2008), goal achievement (Spence & Cavanagh, 2019) and a greater complexity in thinking style (Ie et al., 2012). As the proposed intervention aims to improve wellbeing via coaching, there appears to be potential synergistic benefits to integrating evidence-based strategies from the two fields of research as captured in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Research project proposal



5.4.2 Identifying key uncertainties

Despite the promising preliminary findings from the literature review, it was difficult to make generalisations and inferences from the varied studies available, which could then limit the ability to reliably transfer and apply findings to another context. The literature review helped to develop research questions which could address the key uncertainties found within the evidence:

- How are socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions implemented?
- What are the potential wellbeing outcomes for non-clinical adults?
- What psychological processes are posited to influence those outcomes?
- What are the benefits and limitations of the designs?

By investigating each area of uncertainty, the collective findings could lead to a more holistic view of how socio-cognitive mindfulness works.

5.4.3 Developing programme theory

The narrative synthesis of the evidence in the systematic review produced a more comprehensive understanding of how socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions work to improve wellbeing. This was the first step in developing the programme theory since it identified intervention features and processes that were posited to influence the wellbeing outcomes that were achieved in the final studies. In summary, the systematic review identified two main approaches to inducing socio-cognitive mindfulness. The first approach involved activating socio-cognitive mindfulness via brief exercises to produce temporary increases in wellbeing. The second approach involved developing socio-cognitive mindfulness throughout extended programmes, some of which led to sustained improvements. Both approaches led to a range of outcomes across intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental wellbeing domains. The interventions stimulated socio-cognitive mindfulness by activating the psychological processes which were identified in the literature review. The psychological processes appeared to interrelate and reinforce each other to support the development of socio-cognitive mindfulness. The synthesis of the systematic review results was depicted as a conceptual framework to support the application of the theory (see Figure 3 in Chapter 3).

Following this, the key findings from the studies within the systematic review helped to provide insights into how socio-cognitive mindfulness evidence-based strategies could be applied within a coaching context. For example, brief interventions can offer opportunities within coaching sessions to induce states of socio-cognitive mindfulness to improve cognitive flexibility and boost wellbeing (Maymin & Langer, 2021). This can be achieved by conducting the simple exercises used within the studies to activate socio-cognitive mindfulness processes, such as inviting coachees to notice ten different things about their environment to ‘welcome new information’. Alternatively, a coach could frame a coaching question to stimulate one of the processes, such as asking a coachee to reflect on a particular scenario by ‘viewing from multiple perspectives’.

The extended training programmes found in the review appeared to offer longer-term wellbeing benefits and the potential to develop trait socio-cognitive mindfulness over time. This approach requires an understanding of how socio-cognitive mindfulness works and how it can be applied to everyday life. Coaching programmes could adopt a similar approach to the extended programmes by including psychoeducation to help coachees learn meaningful ways of embedding the strategies into everyday routines (Spence & Cavanagh, 2019). Furthermore, as the studies demonstrated a variety of wellbeing outcomes across different domains, coaching programmes can be tailored to allow coachees to explore areas of wellbeing that are relevant to them. However, the systematic review findings highlighted the potential limitations of a programme adopting an in-depth and extended approach, which are discussed next.

5.4.4 Economic considerations

Despite the potential wellbeing benefits of an extended coaching programme based on socio-cognitive mindfulness, it would require significant time and resources from both the coach and the coachees. This may be perceived as a drawback, particularly by those who are seeking quicker results or have busy schedules which do not allow for participation in extended programmes. To address this potential limitation, the studies within the review utilised a variety of approaches to increase the feasibility of their interventions which could be considered within this proposed intervention to reduce costs and time. For example, conducting sessions in groups instead of on a dyadic basis can help to maximise the coach's time. Another example is to conduct the programme online to help reduce the costs and time associated with hiring venues and travelling to them, whilst making attendance more convenient for coachees who have busy schedules.

5.4.5 Engaging stakeholders

During the questionnaires and the focus group in the acceptability study, the coaches generated ideas for how to overcome barriers to the intervention and how to maximise any potential facilitators to implementation (Crabtree & Swainston, 2023). The study's analysis identified three themes which encapsulated areas that the coaches felt to be especially critical to the intervention's acceptability, thus requiring further consideration and clarification.

The first theme of 'clear contracting' captured the coaches' sense that effective contracting with participants was a critical element of the proposed intervention. As such they recommended:

- Setting expectations of the intervention process
- Defining coach and coachee roles and responsibilities
- Gaining commitment for full participation upfront

The second theme of 'impacts of group dynamics' encapsulated the following key considerations that the coaches highlighted if the intervention was to be delivered with groups:

- Supporting shared learning and interpersonal development
- Awareness of impacts on individuals
- Ensuring psychological safety

The third theme was 'sustainability through engagement and autonomy'. This represented the coaches' following recommendations for increasing the sustainability of any potential wellbeing benefits of the programme by emphasising participant commitment and opportunity to personalise the intervention:

- Exploring participants' readiness and purpose
- Integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness processes
- Personalising assignments to embed changes
- Balancing momentum and depth

Overall, the coaches felt strongly that the work completed by the coachees at home would be key in ensuring the learning from the programme was fully embedded, making it more likely to sustain positive changes. This view is echoed in the literature whereby other mindfulness-based interventions have produced sustained wellbeing outcomes by teaching and integrating multiple mindfulness-based exercises in session and at home over an extended period (Dundas et al., 2016). However, the coaches acknowledged the potential limitations of the significant input required from participants and how it may be too onerous for some. They considered the possible benefits and challenges which may arise from

conducting the coaching programme with groups. The coaches recommended increasing the emphasis on creating a psychologically safe space for the group to share their learning, whilst empowering them to personalise their wellbeing approach.

In summary, the findings of the acceptability study emphasised the need to further refine the intervention by ensuring participants would be provided with clear expectations about the commitment and engagement that would be required of them, and that a safe space would be created for them to explore their personal wellbeing development in a way that is meaningful to them.

5.4.6 Refining the programme theory

The accumulated evidence from the studies was sequentially triangulated, which included incorporating the coaches' recommendations into the conceptual framework to expand and apply the theory to a coaching context. This involved explaining how the users of the coaching intervention would interact with the coaching and socio-cognitive mindfulness processes to achieve the proposed wellbeing outcomes. As a result, the conceptual framework was developed into a logic model to illustrate how the coaching intervention purports to work. The components of logic models typically consist of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes and can be visually represented for how they interrelate and interact with each other to explain their relationship to the overall programme theory (Savaya & Waysman, 2005).

The inputs are represented by the coach, coachees and coaching environment. The acceptability study findings helped to shape the desired characteristics and responsibilities required of the coach and coachees in creating a safe and personalised environment to support the intervention activities. A key feature is the coach contracting clear expectations with coachees to secure their commitment to engage and contribute to a safe environment for shared learning and personal growth.

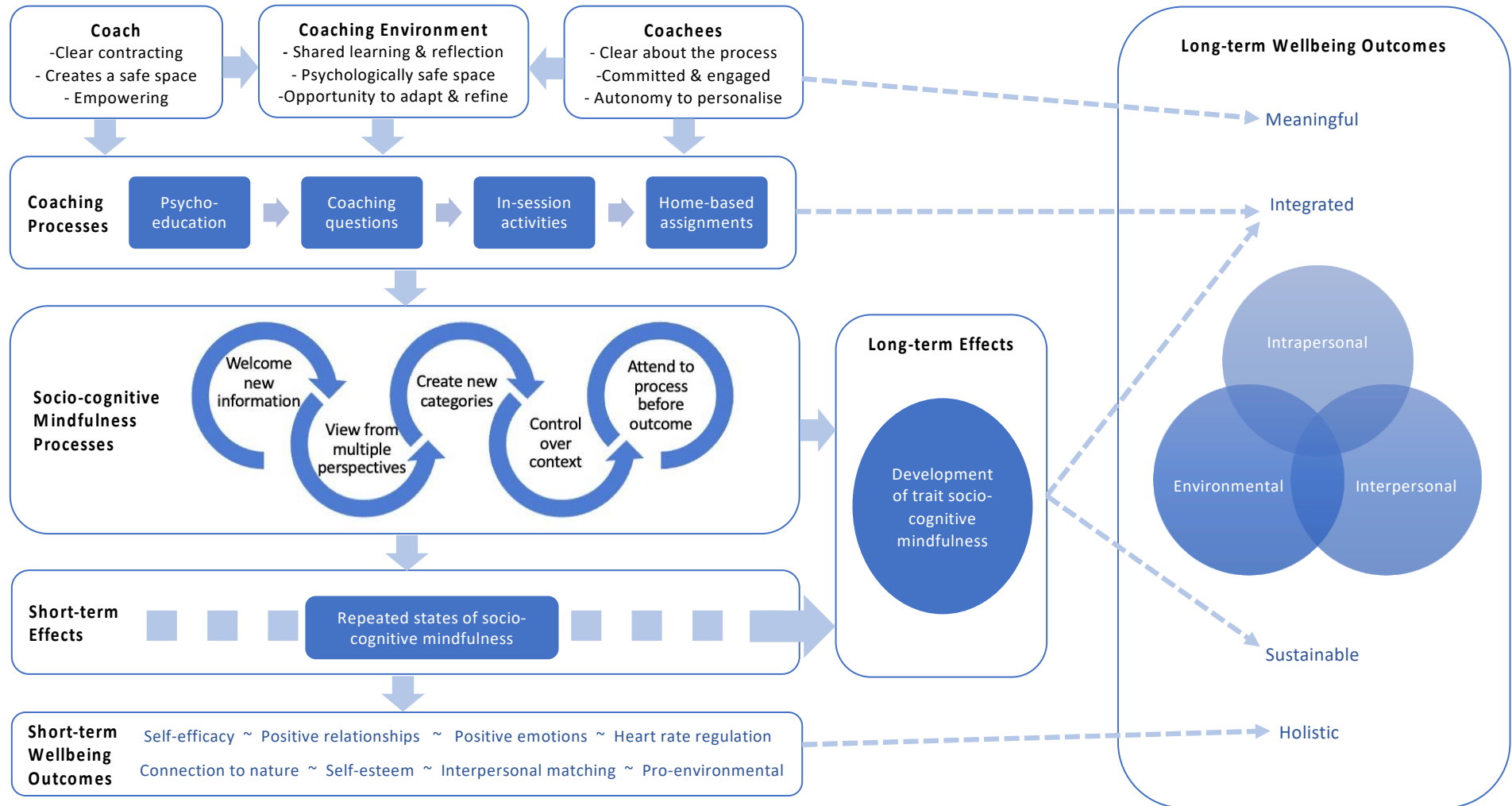
The activities are represented by the coaching processes and the five socio-cognitive mindfulness processes that were identified from the literature review and systematic review findings. The coaching processes expect to facilitate the learning and integration of each of the five socio-cognitive mindfulness processes, which over time, will overlap and reinforce

each other. The coaching processes include providing psychoeducation on the socio-cognitive mindfulness processes, conducting coaching exercises, asking coaching questions and setting home-based activities, all designed to help coachees learn how to apply socio-cognitive mindfulness into their lives.

The model theorises that the key coaching processes will facilitate the activation of the interconnecting socio-cognitive mindfulness processes to produce the outputs of the intervention. The outputs encompass both short-term and long-term effects. The short-term effects involve inducing temporary states of socio-cognitive mindfulness via the coaching activities. This echoes how meditative mindfulness is said to be stimulated during coaching via meditation-based techniques, such as ‘focusing on the breath’ and ‘body scans’ (Virgili, 2013). The programme theory here suggests that repeatedly activating and integrating states of socio-cognitive mindfulness across the duration of the programme could lead to the longer-term effect of developing a dispositional capacity for socio-cognitive mindfulness (Hart et al., 2013). This trajectory has been examined within the meditative mindfulness literature which suggests that increasing states of mindfulness via repeated practice over time may lead to trait mindfulness (Kiken et al., 2015).

The temporary states of socio-cognitive mindfulness could produce a multitude of short-term wellbeing outcomes, as found in the final studies of the systematic review. The logic model further suggests that the integration of the coaching environment, coaching activities and socio-cognitive mindfulness processes will support participants in embedding the effects in a relevant way to sustain longer-term wellbeing outcomes. Positive outcomes of this nature have already been evidenced in coaching research where psychoeducation has been incorporated with meditative mindfulness exercises and wellbeing strategies within health and wellbeing coaching (Spence et al., 2008; Clark et al., 2016). Furthermore, the variety of multidimensional wellbeing outcomes found in the literature suggests that it is possible to achieve a more holistic and well-rounded sense of wellbeing by developing socio-cognitive mindfulness. The resulting logic model in Figure 7 illustrates how the intervention’s coaching processes interact with the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies to lead to the theorised wellbeing outcomes.

Figure 7 Intervention logic model



5.4.7 Refining the intervention

To understand if the programme theory works as articulated by the logic model, it was key to develop a prototype of the intervention ready to be feasibility-tested. To refine the intervention design, practice reflections were integrated with the programme theory to operationalise the logic model. This process was an iterative and ongoing approach, which occurred across an extended period involving multiple professional activities, whilst responding to the unfolding evidence from the research inquiry. This can make it difficult to attribute each idea or key reflection to a particular activity since they developed organically. Hence, a specific example is provided in Appendix F of how the experiential learning cycle developed the reflection-in-action of an observation made during a coaching session towards reflection-on-action using a socio-cognitive mindfulness lens (King, 2002). This informed reflection-for-action, whereby a potential coaching exercise was developed based on a socio-cognitive mindfulness intervention discovered through the research process. Through further cycles of reflection, the coaching exercise was refined into a version that is now included in the prototype.

Through a process of ongoing triangulation of the evidence integrated with the reflections gained from experiential learning, the intervention design was refined to a point where it could be operationalised into a prototype. O’Cathain et al., (2019) recommend using the template for intervention description and replication (TIDieR: Hoffmann et al., 2014) to summarise the intervention design along with a document describing the intervention content. A TIDieR checklist for the intervention can be found in Table 9 followed by a full description of the final developed intervention protocol, including examples of psychoeducational explanations and activities.

Table 9 Intervention summary using TIDieR checklist (Hoffmann et al., 2014)

Items	Description
1. Brief name	An online wellbeing group coaching programme based on socio-cognitive mindfulness.
2. Why: intervention rationale	The programme aims to facilitate and enrich the coaching process by integrating evidence-based socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies to support non-clinical adults in achieving sustainable wellbeing increases. The extended coaching programme will provide opportunities for participants to embed the interpersonal aspects of socio-cognitive mindfulness within a group setting and to integrate its psychological processes into their lifestyles to pursue lasting wellbeing changes.
3. What: materials	The coaching psychologist will have access to an outline of the overall programme including a framework for each coaching session. Each participant will be asked to complete a weekly wellbeing update via a simple online form to record their progress on the home-based assignments that they will design and commit to. They will be encouraged to keep a record of their personal reflections in a way that suits them, such as maintaining a journal.
4. What: procedures	The coaching psychologist will hold individual 'contracting' video calls with each participant to clarify the process and discuss the roles and responsibilities of the coaching psychologist and participant throughout the programme. The coaching psychologist will explore with each participant an area of wellbeing that they would like to focus on during the programme. Each participant will be asked what they need from the coaching psychologist and from the other participants to feel safe within the sessions. Responses will be accumulated and captured within a group contract prior to the sessions commencing. The group coaching sessions will commence approximately one to two weeks later. The first session will start with introductions, and subsequent sessions will begin with a progress review. This will be followed by a short psycho-educational overview of one of the five psychological processes within socio-cognitive mindfulness theory: attending to the process before the outcome, welcoming new information, viewing from multiple perspectives, creating new categories, and having control over context. This will be followed by a brief activity designed to stimulate socio-cognitive mindfulness in the participants via the psychological process just discussed. The coaching psychologist will debrief the activity with coaching questions, of which some will be framed in a socio-cognitive mindfulness manner and designed to explore their wellbeing further. The coaching psychologist will support the participants in designing their home-based assignment for the upcoming week to help embed and integrate the psychological process into their daily routines. The coaching psychologist will be available for a further 15 minutes should any participants wish to ask further questions. The final coaching session will include an opportunity for the participants to discuss how they plan to continue their wellbeing development by integrating what they have learnt about socio-cognitive mindfulness into their lifestyles.

Items	Description
5. Who: profession, expertise, background, specific training	The programme will be facilitated solely by the author who is a chartered coaching psychologist with the British Psychological Society and an accredited senior practitioner coach with the European Mentoring & Coaching Council. The researcher has over 15 years of coaching experience and an MSc in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology.
6. How: modes of delivery	The individual contracting sessions and group coaching sessions will be conducted online by the coaching psychologist. The group sizes will not exceed 8 participants. Correspondence between the coaching psychologist and participants will be via email.
7. Where: infrastructure and relevant features	The individual contracting sessions and the group coaching sessions will be conducted by the coaching psychologist with the participants via Microsoft Teams. Participants need to have access to the necessary equipment to attend video conferencing software, a reliable internet connection and a private space when attending the sessions virtually.
8. When and how much: number of sessions, duration, intensity or dose	The individual contracting sessions will be one hour in length and be held one to two weeks prior to the coaching programme commencing. The group coaching sessions will be scheduled weekly for five weeks, with each session running for 60-75 minutes, with the first 60 minutes mandatory, and the remaining 15 minutes optional for those requiring additional support. The participants are also required to conduct home-based assignments daily between coaching sessions (or a minimum of 5 days in the following week) for approximately 30 minutes per day.
9. Tailoring: personalisation of intervention	In the individual contracting sessions, each participant can decide what area of wellbeing they wish to focus on throughout the programme and can choose to adapt this at any point. In each group coaching session, the participants will be able to personalise their home-based assignments to suit their wellbeing focus and personal circumstances. They can also choose to attend the sessions for either 60 minutes or 75 minutes.
10. Modifications	Not applicable for prototype
11. How well planned: adherence and procedure to maintain it	The intervention will be run by the same qualified coaching psychologist for consistency. Participant attendance at coaching sessions will be monitored, and the completion of home-based assignments will be checked by the coaching psychologist.

5.5 Intervention Outline

The following description of the intervention protocol outlines each session in turn and includes examples of the explanations, activities, coaching questions and home-based assignments planned for each session. The intervention starts with the coach meeting each participant individually in a contracting session. Once all contracting sessions are completed, the group sessions commence on a weekly basis. The five group sessions each focus on one of the five socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies, with participants completing home-based assignments between the sessions.

5.5.1 Individual contracting session

Introduction

The coach explains the purpose of the contracting session as an opportunity for the participant and coach to meet on an individual basis before the group coaching sessions start. The aim is to build trust and rapport between the participant and the coach and to contract ways of working. This includes defining roles, setting expectations for the programme, and exploring the participant's personal wellbeing goals. The coach summarises their professional experience and qualifications as a coach and asks if the participant has any questions. Next, the coach asks the participant what prompted them to apply to join the wellbeing coaching programme to understand their motivation for taking part.

Programme overview

The coach provides an overview of the programme, including the aim of the intervention, the structure of the sessions, the requirement to complete home-based assignments and a summary of the time investment required.

The coach explains that the programme aims to support non-clinical adults in achieving sustainable wellbeing improvements by integrating evidence-based socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies into coaching. The coaching programme provides opportunities for participants to embed the interpersonal aspects of socio-cognitive mindfulness within a group setting and to integrate its psychological processes into their lifestyles to pursue lasting wellbeing changes. The coach can expand on this by offering the following summary of how socio-cognitive mindfulness supports wellbeing development:

Anything you do in life; you do either mindfully or mindlessly. This programme helps you increase your self-awareness of when you may be reacting in a mindless way and learn how to intentionally switch to a mindful mode of thinking and responding. Socio-cognitive mindfulness is a flexible thinking style which actively draws your attention to the present moment and context, helping you notice that circumstances constantly change. Therefore, when you take a mindful approach to pursuing wellbeing goals, you flex your attitude to embrace continually evolving opportunities and possibilities. This approach does not require meditation to induce mindfulness, instead, it involves five psychological processes, or 'strategies', designed to stimulate a more open mindset and increase cognitive flexibility when exploring different options for moving forward. The processes overlap and reinforce each other to help develop an increased capacity for mindfulness over time.

Structure of group sessions

The coach outlines the general structure for the group sessions. The first session starts with the participants introducing themselves to each other, with subsequent sessions beginning with a progress review. This takes approximately ten minutes. Next, there is a five-minute psychoeducational overview of one of the five psychological processes within socio-cognitive mindfulness theory. Each process is covered in the following order across the five group sessions:

1. Attending to the process before the outcome: learning to not over-focus on outcomes and to intentionally respond to choices using a step-by-step approach
2. Welcoming new information: attending to the novelty and variability in every moment
3. Viewing from multiple perspectives: increasing awareness that there are numerous views of every situation and finding positive intentions for peoples' behaviours.
4. Creating new categories: replacing outdated labels and categories by noticing details and actively making more distinctions
5. Having control over context: changing how we may perceive or experience an apparently 'fixed' situation by re-evaluating the context more positively

Following the psychoeducational component, the coach facilitates a 15-minute brief coaching activity designed to stimulate socio-cognitive mindfulness in the participants via

the psychological process chosen for that session. The coach then spends approximately 15 minutes connecting the learning from the coaching activity to their wellbeing focus. This is done by asking further coaching questions, of which some are framed in a socio-cognitive mindfulness manner and designed to explore and apply the strategies further. The final 15 minutes of the session involve the coach supporting the participants with designing their home-based assignments for the upcoming week to help embed and integrate the psychological process into their daily routines. The session closes with a check in with the group, before reminding the participants that the coach will be available for an additional 15 minutes should anyone wish to stay and ask further questions or raise any concerns.

Home-based assignments

The coach explains that each participant decides what area of wellbeing they wish to focus on throughout the programme and can choose to adapt this at any point. In each group coaching session, the participants personalise their home-based assignments to suit their wellbeing focus and personal circumstances. The coach reinforces that the home-based assignments are crucial in embedding the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies from the sessions. Additionally, the participants are expected to record their wellbeing activities and key reflections in a weekly online tracker form.

Time investment required

The coach explains that the group coaching sessions are scheduled weekly for five weeks, with each session running for 60-75 minutes, with the first 60 minutes mandatory, and the remaining 15 minutes optional for those requiring additional support. The home-based assignments need to be conducted daily between coaching sessions (or a minimum of 5 days in the following week) for approximately 15 - 30 minutes per day. The weekly online tracker forms also take approximately 15 - 30 minutes to complete per week.

Roles and responsibilities

The coach describes their role and responsibilities throughout the programme, including:

- Facilitating the group process (e.g., coaching exercises, group discussions, etc)
- Establishing boundaries and ground rules to ensure mutual respect
- Providing structure whilst allowing flexibility for the group to interact

- Creating a respectful and safe environment to encourage open participation
- Listening actively and providing a space for reflection

The coach invites each participant to share what they believe their role and responsibilities to be and ensures the following points are discussed:

- Actively participating in the full programme and committing to all exercises and activities
- Engaging in regular self-reflection to better understand their development process
- Being open and honest within the safe space created collectively by the group
- Showing respect and consideration of other participants' experiences and perspectives
- Taking accountability for their personal development and applying what they learn within the programme

The coach asks each participant what they need from the coach and from the other participants to feel safe in exploring their personal wellbeing development within a group. The coach collates a list of all the participants' needs to share in the first group session.

Personal wellbeing goal

The coach explores an area of wellbeing the participant wishes to improve throughout the programme, using the self-report questionnaire results for guidance if needed. The coach can ask:

- Which areas of wellbeing did you reflect on after completing the self-report questionnaires?
- In what ways would you like to feel different or better at the end of this coaching programme?
- Which area of wellbeing would you like to focus on during this programme?

Once the participant has a clearer idea of their wellbeing focus for the programme, the coach asks if they have any final questions before closing the session.

5.5.2 Group coaching session 1: Attend to process before outcome

Introduction

The coach welcomes the participants to the first group session and asks the participants to introduce themselves and share their wellbeing focus for the programme if they are comfortable doing so. The coach revisits the needs everyone discussed in their contracting sessions and reminds the group of the commitment made by all to respect each other's needs and create a safe group space. The coach introduces the purpose of the session, which is to learn how to set process-orientated goals over result-focused goals to enhance wellbeing.

Psychoeducation

The coach offers the following summary to explain the strategy of 'attending to the process over the outcome':

Goals are useful for providing direction for personal and professional aims and can help people tap into their inner motivations. However, if we're too focused on future outcomes or pursue a particular course too rigidly and single-mindedly, we may not see the opportunities in the here and now, or we miss chances to learn and grow in the moment. By focusing more attention on the present, we are better able to respond to choices. Therefore, when setting wellbeing goals, rather than asking yourself "Can I do it?", ask yourself "How can I do it?" so that you embrace the learning journey and take a step-by-step, exploratory approach. This supports your wellbeing as you're more able to enjoy the wellbeing development process, where you find gratification in each step, rather than hinging your happiness on the end result.

Coaching exercise

The coach asks the group to revisit the wellbeing goal they discussed in their individual contracting sessions and rewrite the goal by placing the focus on the process over the outcome. This requires emphasising the actions or behaviours they need to adopt rather than the final result. This shift in focus helps to make the goal feel maintainable and more within their control. The coach can offer several examples to demonstrate this point. For example, instead of setting a goal "to become more fit", a person could consider what regular actions, habits or behaviours will help them progress towards their goal. This could

be “to exercise for 30 minutes a day three times a week” or to “walk 10,000 steps every day”. Another example could be if your goal is “to manage stress better”, to rewrite it as “to schedule self-care activities twice a week” or “to journal for 20 minutes before bed every night”.

Coaching questions

To support the participants in refining their goals, the coach can ask several coaching questions from the below list to encourage process-based thinking and to emphasise how the small steps help to lead to improvement:

- What actions, practices or behaviours will help you to make progress towards your wellbeing goal?
- How can you break down your wellbeing goal into smaller and more manageable steps or habits?
- What regular wellbeing practices or routines will help you to stay consistent in pursuing your goal?
- What can you commit to doing each day that brings you closer to your wellbeing goal?
- How can you measure your progress in terms of actions, not just results or outcomes?
- How can you make your wellbeing goal something you enjoy and look forward to?
- What is the next small action you can take today to move towards your wellbeing goal?

Home-based assignment

The coach asks the participants to use their learning and newly formed wellbeing goals to plan and commit to 15-30 minutes of wellbeing activity per day, at least five times in the next week. The coach asks the participants to share with the group what their first step will be to help strengthen their accountability. The participants are also reminded to log their wellbeing activities and reflections in the online weekly tracker. The coach checks how the participants feel and if they have any final questions before closing the session.

5.5.3 Group coaching session 2: Welcome new information

Introduction

The coach begins the session by asking the participants if they would like to share their wellbeing goal progress or any key insights they have had since the last session. The coach then introduces the aim of the session, which is to learn how to increase attentiveness towards changes and variability in our surroundings and ourselves.

Psychoeducation

The coach explains the strategy of ‘welcoming new information’ by offering the following summary:

What we have learned to look for in a situation over time determines mostly what we see. Therefore, being more mindful can be as simple as noticing new things. As you notice new things, it puts you in the present. This is because as you notice new things, you come to see that the things you thought you knew, you don't know completely, which brings your attention back to the moment. Since everything is always in flux, our approach to wellbeing goals needs to be flexible and adaptable, because, when we think we know something, we confuse the stability of what's happening in our minds with the stability of what is actually happening. And so, it's important to notice the subtle changes in familiar environments and situations, or even in ourselves. This supports our wellbeing as the continual and active search for novelty and variability helps us to be more responsive to those subtle changes and flex our responses to our ever-changing environments.

Coaching exercise

The coach asks the participants to look around and notice five new things about their environment. The coach follows up with further questions such as:

- If you look at your surroundings as if you see them for the first time, what do you notice differently?
- What do you notice about what you are noticing? For example, are you being drawn to items that bring you comfort, or to items you want to change?

The coach debriefs the activity by connecting how we can stop noticing the finer details surrounding us. However, by looking at familiar surroundings and situations with a fresh perspective and searching for novelty, we heighten our awareness and present-moment focus. This keeps our minds engaged and promotes curiosity and creativity as we expose ourselves to new information. Furthermore, we choose which lens we see ourselves, others and our environments, i.e., whether we look for problems or strengths.

Coaching questions

The coach asks further coaching questions to support the participants in noticing changes in themselves relating to their wellbeing:

- What small changes do you notice about yourself compared to last week?
- How do you normally feel after you complete your wellbeing activity compared to when you are about to start it?
- What is something new you have learned about yourself in the last week?
- How do your surroundings influence the way you approach your wellbeing activity?
- What physical sensations or emotions do you notice in your body after you engage in your wellbeing activity?

The coach concludes the group discussion by highlighting how change is gradual but noticing subtle changes in ourselves helps us to stay motivated in maintaining our wellbeing practices. Equally, noticing negative feelings or discomfort may also indicate if something is not working as intended, and we can use this information to continually fine-tune our wellbeing activities. We ultimately become more attuned with our emotions, making it easier to process and regulate them.

Home-based assignment

The coach asks the participants to continue their chosen wellbeing activities but to record any changes they notice in their sensations, emotions or thoughts after completing the activity each time. The coach also invites the participants to practice noticing new information about themselves and their environments regularly over the next week to enhance their attentiveness and sensitivity to novelty and variability. The coach checks how the group are feeling and asks if they have any final questions before ending the session.

5.5.4 Group coaching session 3: View from multiple perspectives

Introduction

The coach starts the session by asking the participants if they would like to share something new they have learned about themselves in the last week. The coach next introduces the purpose of the session, which is to learn how to view from different perspectives and to find positive intentions for peoples' behaviours.

Psychoeducation

The coach provides the following summary to explain the strategy of 'viewing from multiple perspectives':

When we recognise that there are as many perspectives as there are people, it expands our viewpoint, and we can start to see different explanations, options and ideas more clearly. So, when you find yourself thinking about people's behaviour in this negative light, instead ask yourself: what are they intending? For each negative behaviour, there's a positive version of the same thing, e.g., Impulsivity can equal spontaneity, or rigidity can equal reliability. The behaviour makes sense from the actor's perspective, so when we try to understand from the actor's perspective, we don't try to change people's behaviour or think less of them. We become less evaluative, and instead more tolerant and compassionate to those around us and even to ourselves; since in the perspective of every person lies a lens through which we may better understand ourselves. Therefore, when we pursue wellbeing development, we consider these different viewpoints and alternative ways of looking at scenarios so that we open ourselves up to more choices about how we think and act.

Coaching exercise

The coach asks the participants to reflect on the last week and consider if they have experienced an occasion when they felt other people had negatively impacted or hindered their wellbeing progress. The coach can ask the group if anyone is willing to share and reflect on their example with the group. Once a participant has shared their example, the coach invites the group to discuss how the scenario can be viewed from different perspectives to produce an alternative reason for any seemingly negative or unhelpful behaviour. The coach encourages the participants to broaden their viewpoints and increase their tolerance by asking several of the following questions:

- What might be some reasons the other person is acting this way?
- How might this situation look if you were in their shoes?
- What would be a different way to interpret their actions?
- How would someone with a completely different point of view approach this?
- What could be the positive version of the other person's outwardly negative behaviour?

The coach debriefs the activity by explaining how having a sense of connection with others is vital to our overall wellbeing, and we can strengthen our interpersonal connections and relationships by better understanding others' experiences and increasing our empathy.

Coaching questions:

The coach asks coaching questions to help the participants apply their increased empathy and tolerance to themselves:

- Think of a time in the last few weeks when you were perhaps critical of yourself; what behaviour were you critical about?
- What was the positive intention behind the behaviour you were critical about?
- From which perspective could this behaviour be viewed as a strength or positive quality?

Home-based assignment

The coach asks the participants to continue their chosen wellbeing activities over the next week, but to notice when they feel their wellbeing may be negatively impacted by someone else or by self-criticism. The participants are asked to list at least three different perspectives to view the situation from and to find the positive intentions or versions of the behaviour being criticised (whether the behaviour was noticed in themselves or someone else). The participants are encouraged to reflect on how this activity impacts their wellbeing and to record any key insights in their online weekly trackers. The coach checks how the participants are feeling and invites any final questions before closing the session.

5.5.5 Group coaching session 4: Create new categories

Introduction

The coach opens the session by asking the participants if they want to share if they have noticed a new or different perspective on their wellbeing since starting the programme. The coach then introduces the purpose of the session, which is to learn how to break down old ways of thinking by creating new and more constructive thinking patterns.

Psychoeducation

The coach can provide the following summary to explain the strategy of 'creating new categories':

We often use categories to organise our thoughts because it helps us to simplify information and identify similarities and differences faster. By grouping objects, people and ideas into categories, we don't have to analyse every single detail about every situation we encounter, which reduces the mental effort needed to understand and respond to new situations. However, mindlessness can occur when we rely too rigidly on categories created in the past. Once we create categories or labels, we can hold on tightly to them to help us make sense of the world, but the problem begins when they determine our thoughts, and we start to mindlessly accept labels as fixed truths. But when everything is always changing, how helpful are these categories which are built on outdated and perhaps irrelevant information? Without a therapeutic intervention or a personal crisis, as adults, we rarely make a conscious effort to re-categorise the past. But if we actively pay attention to new information and the different perspectives of a situation, we can update categories and labels more mindfully and constructively. Most strong opinions or views rest on global categories. But if we describe something in greater detail, we find different qualities, which opens up new possibilities and we can be more adaptive in our responses.

Coaching exercise

The coach asks the participants to pick up a nearby everyday item, such as a pen, notebook, mobile phone, etc, and to hold it up so the group can see each other's items. Next, the coach asks the group to list the features of their chosen item. The coach then asks the participants to generate alternative ways their item can be used besides its original purpose. For example, whilst a pen is commonly used for writing, it can also be used as a bookmark, as a

stylus for a touchscreen device, or as a paperweight. Alternatively, a participant could consider different intentions for the writing, so if that specific pen is usually used to write work-related notes in a notebook, the pen can instead be used to draw cartoons with their children or write out a healthy meal plan for the week ahead.

If any participants struggle to come up with alternative uses for their chosen item, the coach can ask the following questions:

- How might you use this item differently if you were in a different environment, for example, outside in nature?
- How might you use this item differently if you were using it with another person, such as a child, or a colleague?
- How might you use this item differently if you relabelled it as a “tool for creativity” or as a “tool for communication?”

The coach can debrief this activity by explaining that they have taken an everyday item and created new categories for how the item can be used. They can now consider how to create new categories with more complex concepts or situations, such as wellbeing.

Coaching questions

To transfer the learning from the coaching exercise to their wellbeing practices, the coach can help the participants to break down the broad category of wellbeing into more specific and actionable categories with some of the following coaching questions:

- What items or concepts are related to the global category of ‘wellbeing’? (For example, happiness, resilience, mental health, etc).
- What five new distinctions can you create within the global category of ‘wellbeing’? (For example, physical wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, social wellbeing, spiritual wellbeing, etc.)
- Which attributes or qualities distinguish these categories from each other?
- Are there sub-categories or more specific concepts that feel more relevant to your wellbeing focus?

The coach can highlight through this discussion that reducing the use of global categories helps to overcome the oversimplification of complex concepts and situations to develop nuanced thinking and problem-solving.

Home-based assignment

The coach asks the participants to continue their wellbeing activities but to integrate the insights they gained from the previous discussion where they developed a more refined perspective of their wellbeing focus and purpose. The coach explains that whilst routines are useful for instilling new wellbeing practices, it is important not to let the activity become stale and monotonous. Introducing distinctions to the activity helps to keep the activity fresh and can lead to more creative ideas for sustaining the wellbeing activity on a longer-term basis. To experiment with different ways to create more distinctions with their wellbeing activities, the participants can consider multiple options, such as:

- Conducting the wellbeing activity using alternative items, for example, if they use a specific notebook to journal, they could try writing their reflections as a storyboard on poster paper
- Conducting the wellbeing activity using an additional new item, for example, listening to music through headphones whilst carrying out their activity
- Conducting the activity in a different place, for example, moving from an inside space to an outside space
- Conducting the activity at a different time, for example, from morning to evening

The coach asks the group to share any initial ideas they have about experimenting with their wellbeing activities. The participants are then asked how they feel and if they have any final questions before the coach closes the session.

5.5.6 Group coaching session 5: Control over context

Introduction

The coach starts the session by asking the participants if they would like to share any reflections on the recent adaptations they have made to their wellbeing activities. The coach next introduces the purpose of the session, which is to learn how to be more sensitive to context and to reappraise situations from a more constructive viewpoint.

Psychoeducation

The following summary can be offered by the coach to explain the final strategy of 'controlling the context':

Professor Ellen Langer, who developed this construct of mindfulness, says: "Who we are at any one time depends mostly on the context in which we find ourselves. But who creates the context? The more mindful we are, the more we can create the contexts we are in. When we create the context, we are more likely to be authentic. Mindfulness lets us see things in a new light and believe in the possibility of change." In other words, judgements are context-dependent, and situations are not inherently 'good' or 'bad', but rather that we bring those evaluations to the scenario. So, instead of judging an experience as 'right' or 'wrong', or labelling scenarios as 'stressful' or 'worrying', instead, ask yourself "How might this be useful/beneficial?" or "What can I learn from this?" If we think more actively about the world, which includes noticing change, looking for the finer details, viewing from different perspectives, and creating new categories, it is possible to have more control of the context and improve many aspects of our experience. This offers the hope of change.

Coaching exercise

The coach asks the participants to consider what has been the biggest challenge or obstacle they have faced so far in pursuing their chosen wellbeing goal. The coach asks them to reflect on how they felt about the challenge at the time it arose. Questions that can be asked are:

- When you came upon this challenge, what were your initial thoughts and feelings about the challenge?
- What aspects of the context surrounding the challenge were you able to influence?
- What contextual factors were out of your control and how did you learn to accept that?
- Looking back, what are the benefits you have gained from this challenge occurring?
- If this challenge has been sent just for your learning, what have you learned?

The coach facilitates the group discussion to help highlight that even if they were initially worried or frustrated by a challenge when it first arose, they can now see the positive

aspects that the challenge provided. The coach explains that what they have learned to do within the exercise is reframing challenges as opportunities, which can be a useful strategy to help people adjust their mindsets from focusing on problems and overly high demands of themselves, towards more positive outlooks and realistic expectations.

Coaching questions

To support the participants in translating the learning they gained from the exercise into ongoing proactive strategies, the coach asks the group to anticipate what future obstacles they may face while continuing their wellbeing practices, for example, challenges with resources, relationships, time, etc. The coach follows up with several relevant coaching questions, such as:

- What expectations can you let go of now to create space for a more flexible response to challenges in the future?
- How can you proactively influence the conditions or circumstances around you so that you feel more in control when the challenge arises?
- What resources can you gather, or support systems can you develop that will help you manage the context effectively in the future?
- What small steps can you take each day to ensure you are mentally and emotionally prepared if this challenge presents itself?

Home-based assignment

The coach leads on from the previous discussion by asking the participants to create a plan for continuing their wellbeing practices now that the coaching sessions are ending. The coach encourages the participants to incorporate the ideas and insights they gained from the previous discussions into their plan to help them focus on areas within their control and reconsider potential challenges as opportunities for growth. The coach invites the participants to share one idea each for how they plan to hold themselves accountable in the absence of the weekly sessions. The coach ends the session by checking to see how the participants are feeling and asks if they have any final insights that they would like to share with the group. The coach thanks the group for their time and for committing to the programme, before wishing them luck with their continued wellbeing journeys.

5.6 Discussion

5.6.1 Strengths and limitations of the study

A strength of adopting a pragmatic methodological approach is the opportunity for a researcher to flexibly respond to the unfolding nature of the intervention development process. The emerging findings can steer the researcher in making decisions about appropriate research design for the next stage in the research process. The chosen methods seem to complement and enhance each other, to provide a well-rounded view of the research inquiry whilst recognising the limits to what each type of data can contribute (Miles et al., 2014; Hammersley, 2008). As a pragmatic researcher, the author was able to integrate her practitioner perspectives into the design process to support the practical application of the research findings (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009).

Although method triangulation can be seen to strengthen the trustworthiness of the consolidated findings, there is a risk that confirmation of predetermined assumptions is being sought within the data (Miles et al., 2014). This risk may be overcome if triangulation is not used with the intention of validation, but rather to provide a fuller picture of the phenomenon by viewing complementary data from different aspects (Hammersley, 2008). This approach reinforces the importance of adopting a reflexive stance throughout the research process, particularly when making connections between theory and practice (Watt, 2007).

5.6.2 Implications and further research

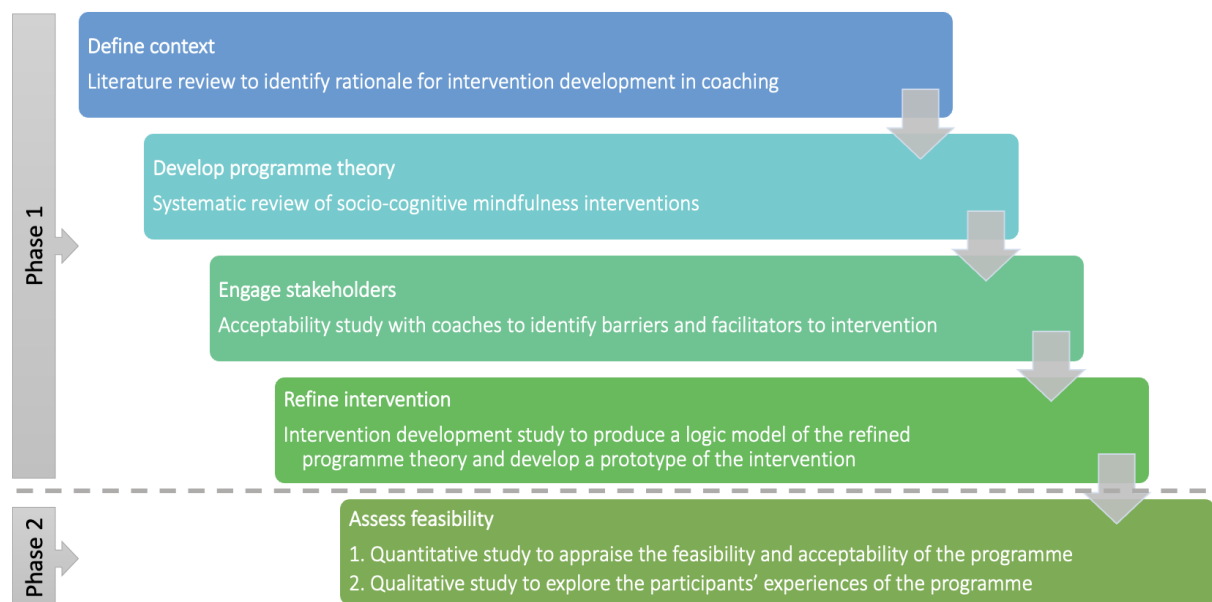
Many research avenues could be explored for the integration of socio-cognitive mindfulness and coaching psychology. For example, it would be useful to produce a version of the intervention which is aimed at dyadic coaching instead of a group format for comparison purposes. Another option is for the research to take a positivist approach by testing one process from the coaching programme within experimental conditions to test its efficacy more accurately. However, as the intervention prototype developed in this study is based on programme theory and practitioner reflections from varied contexts and populations, it is still not known whether it works in practice. There are also remaining uncertainties which require further clarification, including:

- Who does the intervention appeal to?

- Will participants find the intervention acceptable?
- Will the participants adhere to the programme as intended?
- Which wellbeing areas are most likely to improve following the intervention?

Therefore, this thesis addresses the second phase of the MRC framework for developing and evaluating complex interventions by feasibility testing the prototype to understand if it works in practice and to clarify the outstanding uncertainties (Craig et al., 2013). Figure 8 depicts how the systematic approach used to develop the intervention informs the second research phase involving the feasibility and acceptability assessment of the intervention. To continue the co-produced and mixed-method approach used within this research inquiry, the plan is to employ quantitative methods to assess how the intervention works in practice (Chapter 6), as well as use a qualitative approach to explore the participant experience of the intervention (Chapter 8).

Figure 8 Phases 1 and 2 of the intervention development process



5.7 Conclusion

Ultimately, the intervention intends to offer a way for adults to explore their wellbeing development in an integrated and sustainable manner, whilst bridging the gap between the socio-cognitive mindfulness literature and coaching psychology research. By detailing the systematic process that was adopted to develop the proposed coaching intervention, it

hopes to encourage other researchers in the coaching psychology field to share their design processes to increase transparency and share best practices. This study has investigated the core elements of the intervention development process and synthesised the findings to produce a refined programme theory of how the intervention aims to work in practice. The resulting prototype of the intervention needs to be feasibility tested to help answer the remaining key uncertainties and further refine the intervention before a full evaluation study can be conducted.

Chapter 6. Feasibility Study: A Quantitative Evaluation of a Wellbeing Coaching Programme Based on Socio-cognitive Mindfulness

The feasibility study in this chapter has been published in the International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring. The paper has been reformatted to align with this thesis.

Crabtree, K., Clark, G., Donachie., & Swainston, K. (2024). A feasibility study of a wellbeing coaching programme based on socio-cognitive mindfulness. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 134-149. <https://doi.org/10.24384/sjz9-0t62>

6.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter describes the feasibility study of the intervention developed in this research. The coaching programme assessed within this study has been developed in alignment with the MRC's guidance (Craig et al., 2013) and is outlined in the previous chapter. The resulting coaching programme has been designed to facilitate the learning and integration of each of the five socio-cognitive mindfulness processes to support adults in improving wellbeing. Since the programme design is based on theoretical assumptions, it is key to assess the feasibility of the intervention to understand if it can be implemented and whether it is deemed acceptable with target populations, before informing the study design of a full evaluation of the intervention (Bowen et al., 2009; Eldridge et al., 2016). This chapter describes the quantitative methods used to assess the feasibility of the coaching programme, before presenting the findings from the analysis.

6.2 Study Aims

The primary aim of this study was to evaluate the feasibility of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness. The study objectives were formulated using existing feasibility guidelines (Orsmond & Cohn, 2015) and included an assessment of:

- (1) recruitment procedures and resulting participant characteristics;
- (2) study and intervention procedures; and

(3) intervention acceptability to participants

A second aim of this study was to undertake a preliminary evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention. Therefore, this study aimed to answer the research question: What is the feasibility and acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?

6.3 Methods

6.3.1 Study design

The study design follows guidance provided to assist researchers with the feasibility assessment of health and wellbeing interventions (Orsmond & Cohn, 2015). An intervention-arm-only feasibility design was conducted which involved a feasibility assessment of the intervention and study procedures and a quantitative exploration of the acceptability and potential efficacy of the intervention (Bowen et al., 2009). It is common for flexible methodology, such as observational design, to be employed within feasibility studies, particularly when using small sample sizes which make inferential analyses inappropriate (Orsmond & Cohn, 2015). It is not deemed necessary to employ control groups and participant randomisation at this early stage in the intervention development, although the findings could inform a full evaluation design (Arain et al., 2010). Hence, a simple case series methodology was used to preliminarily evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention (Barlow & Hersen, 1984).

6.3.2 Participants and procedure

Recommended best practices suggest that an appropriate group coaching size for a programme of this nature is between six to eight participants (Crabtree & Swainston, 2023). The recruitment strategy in this study aimed to achieve a final sample size within this range. As the wellbeing intervention has been designed for non-clinical adults, the eligibility criteria for participating in the study included:

- being over 18 years old
- not currently being treated or awaiting treatment for a mental health condition, including any form of therapy

- being able to give informed consent
- having an interest in wellbeing development
- being available to attend the coaching programme dates

Once ethical approval was granted (Newcastle University Ethics Committee reference: 34512/2023), the recruitment commenced. The author initially explored offering the wellbeing intervention to employees within an organisation after being approached by a senior manager who had seen the author present the programme at a research conference. However, after discussions with the organisation's research and development department, several obstacles were raised which would delay the overall research process significantly. Consequently, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit professionals from the public in a more timely manner. The author has a wide-ranging network of professionals who may be interested in wellbeing development, such as those working in coaching, psychology, training, higher education, human resources and leadership roles. A recruitment advert was posted on LinkedIn, whereby snowballing naturally occurred during the sharing of the post. The recruitment advert provided a coaching programme summary and key dates for attendance, including when study surveys and interviews would need to be completed.

Despite advertising to a pool of over 1,000 people from diverse backgrounds, of the ten people who responded to the advert, only one respondent was male. Once the eligibility criteria were applied to those who responded to the advert, the final sample comprised six female participants ($M_{age} = 47.0$, $SD = 6.3$). The sample included a coach, a therapist, a coaching psychologist, an occupational psychologist and two organisational development practitioners. Although they had varied employment statuses, it came to light during the contracting sessions that they shared similar professional backgrounds and experiences of delivering wellbeing interventions and coaching.

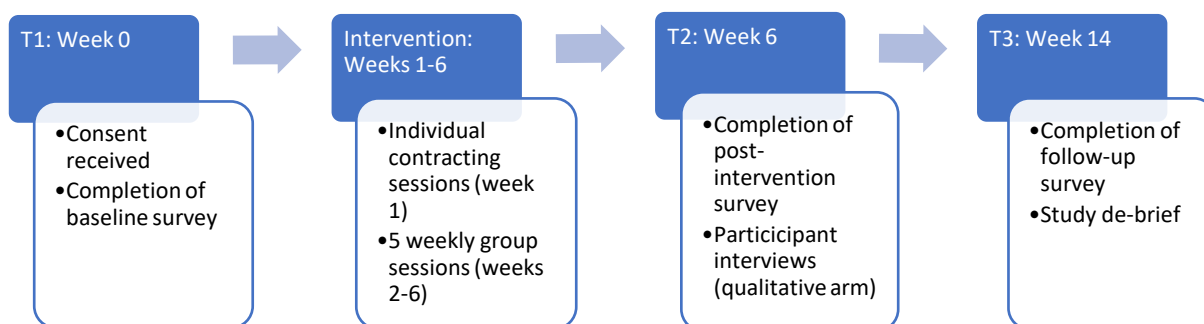
The author discussed with her supervisors the potential strengths and limitations of investigating a homogeneous sample. The initial concerns were that a homogeneous sample may not reflect real-world variability, and the lack of diversity would limit the generalisability of the results to the broader population (Bornstein et al., 2013). However, a more uniform sample may also mean that it will be easier to identify trends in the analysis, and there is an opportunity to increase the precision of the analysis pertaining to the specific sub-

population being investigated (Jager et al., 2017). For example, the results of the research could provide a clearer view of how a wellbeing intervention works with people who have professional experiences of coaching and wellbeing. As the post-intervention questionnaires include open-ended questions to gain their feedback about the programme, their insights could provide an additional perspective since they may also provide opinions based on their professional experience. The findings could contribute to the growing interest and literature in practitioner self-care and wellbeing maintenance (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016; Posluns & Gall, 2020).

To maximise this opportunity, the author included two additional questions in the follow-up questionnaire, to ascertain whether the participants would consider applying socio-cognitive mindfulness in their work with others, such as coaching clients and colleagues. However, the author also acknowledged that conducting a wellbeing intervention with professionals who are likely to be knowledgeable about the field, may lead to some unexpected impacts. For example, it is unclear whether the practitioner backgrounds of the participants would result in them wanting more information about the theoretical underpinnings of the intervention or less. On one hand, it could be possible that they would require less information if they grasped the concepts quicker. On the other hand, they may want more information if they want to deepen their professional understanding of the framework and concepts. Due to the unknown potential impacts of the homogenous sample and their professional backgrounds on the analysis of the intervention, the author committed to regular reflexive journaling throughout to increase her critical reflection on these points. This helped to raise awareness of the contextual factors that could influence the research process (Olmos-Vega et al, 2023). The journal entries from during the intervention are outlined in Chapter 7, with examples of further reflexive activities conducted during the qualitative study provided in Chapter 8.

After reading the participant information sheets (Appendix G) and signing the consent forms (Appendix H), the recruited participants were invited to complete the baseline measures via an online survey. The following week they commenced the six-week intervention and after the final coaching session, they were asked to complete the post-intervention survey. At this point, they were invited to attend interviews for the qualitative part of the research project. Two months after the intervention finished, they were asked a third time to complete the survey. The study timeline is summarised in Figure 9.

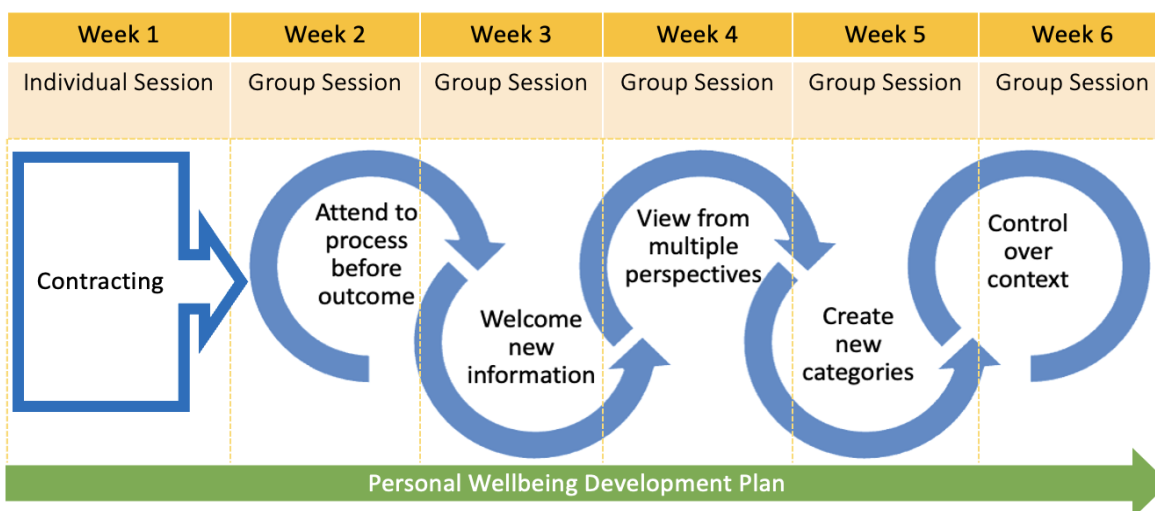
Figure 9 Timeline of the study procedure



6.3.3 Intervention overview

The intervention timeline is presented in Figure 10 and the programme is summarised below. A full description of the intervention is provided in Chapter 5 which includes examples of the coaching exercises and coaching questions.

Figure 10 Timeline of intervention



In summary, the six-week online coaching programme started with individual contracting sessions followed by five weekly group coaching sessions. The programme integrated socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies with coaching processes to improve wellbeing by promoting mindful thinking and flexibility. Over the five group sessions, participants learned and practised five psychological processes, which included activities and home-based assignments to apply the strategies to daily life.

All sessions were an hour long and facilitated by the coach, who is the lead author and an accredited coach and coaching psychologist. The sessions were conducted via Microsoft Teams videoconferencing in a true-to-life manner to strengthen the study's ecological validity since videoconferencing has become a popular method for hosting group coaching programmes.

Individual contracting session

The contracting sessions at the start of the intervention aimed to set expectations for the wellbeing coaching programme, define roles and build trust between the coach and participants. The coach described the key components of the group sessions to each participant, which include a psychoeducational component, coaching activities and coaching questions centred on socio-cognitive mindfulness and time for designing personal assignments. The coach clarified that the participants were expected to complete daily home-based wellbeing activities (15-30 minutes) to reinforce the material.

The coach shared her qualifications and asked the participants about their motivation for joining. The coach explained her role and responsibilities during the programme, including guiding the group process, establishing boundaries and creating a safe space for participation. The responsibilities of the participants were also discussed, including engaging actively, reflecting on their progress, respecting others and committing to activities in between the sessions. At the end of each contracting session, the coach helped participants to set a personal wellbeing goal for the programme, discussing areas they wished to focus on and ensuring any final questions were addressed before starting the first group session.

Group coaching session 1: Attend to process before outcome

The coach welcomed participants and explained the session's goal: learning to set process-oriented goals for improved wellbeing. The coach provided a psychoeducational explanation of the strategy of 'attending to the process over the outcome', whereby the focus is placed on actions rather than end results to enhance growth and enjoyment in the wellbeing journey.

The coaching exercise involved participants rewriting their wellbeing goals to focus on actions, for example, "to exercise 30 minutes, three times a week" instead of "to become more fit". Participants further refined their goals by considering how to break goals into

manageable steps, deciding which regular practice will help them to stay consistent and how they can make the process more enjoyable.

The home-based assignment was set for each participant to commit to 15-30 minutes of wellbeing activity per day for five days the following week and to each share their first step with the group. The coach ended the session by reminding participants to complete their weekly progress tracker and offering extra time for questions. The wellbeing tracker asked the participants to answer the following questions:

- What is your wellbeing goal or focus?
- What wellbeing activities did you complete over the last week?
- How many days were you able to complete your wellbeing activities since the last group coaching session?
- On the days you completed wellbeing activities, approximately how long did you spend on the activity each day (on average)?
- What may have helped or hindered you in completing your wellbeing activities over the last week?
- Do you have any reflections, comments or feedback from the last week that you would like to share?

Group coaching session 2: Welcome new information

The coach started the second session by inviting participants to share their wellbeing progress, before introducing the purpose of the session: increasing attentiveness to changes in ourselves and our surroundings. The coach provided a psychoeducational description of the strategy ‘welcoming new information’ and how it supports wellbeing by staying present, curious and adaptable as awareness of subtle changes in the familiar increases.

The coaching exercise tasked participants to identify five new things in their environment. The exercise encouraged paying attention to new details and increasing present-moment focus. Coaching questions prompted participants to reflect on recent changes in themselves, their feelings before and after wellbeing activities, and how their surroundings influence them.

The home-based assignment required participants to continue their wellbeing activities and record any changes in sensations, emotions, or thoughts. They were also asked to practice noticing new details in their surroundings to enhance awareness and to record key reflections in their online wellbeing tracker. The questions in the wellbeing tracker remained the same as the previous week, except for the first and last which were changed to:

- Has your wellbeing goal/focus changed since last week? If it's changed, please outline your new/different wellbeing focus.
- What are some of the new or different things that you've noticed about yourself, your environment and/or your wellbeing over the last week?

Group coaching session 3: View from multiple perspectives

The third session started with the coach inviting participants to share something new they had learned about themselves. The session's aim was then shared: how to view situations from multiple perspectives and identify positive intentions behind behaviours. The psychoeducational summary of the strategy 'viewing from multiple perspectives' highlighted how it is possible to increase empathy and tolerance by viewing behaviours from different angles, recognising that negative traits can have positive interpretations (e.g., impulsiveness as spontaneity).

The coaching exercise involved the participants reflecting on a recent situation where they felt their wellbeing progress had been hindered by others. The group discussed alternative perspectives of the scenarios that were shared and identified positive intentions behind the seemingly negative behaviours of others. Coaching questions helped the participants to reflect on times they had also been critical of themselves since starting the wellbeing programme and were encouraged to explore the positive intentions behind their own behaviours to reduce self-criticism and increase self-compassion.

Participants were once again asked to continue their wellbeing activities at home but to notice when the behaviour of others or self-criticism affected their progress. Their extended home-based assignment was to reflect on these occasions by identifying alternative perspectives and the positive intentions involved in those situations. The questions in the

wellbeing tracker remained the same as the previous week, except for the final question which was changed to:

- Did you become aware of any different perspectives this week (either about yourself or others), and if so, how did this impact your wellbeing?

Group coaching session 4: Create new categories

The fourth group session began with the coach asking participants if they had noticed any changes in their wellbeing perspectives since starting the program. The coach then shared the session's goal, which was to help participants break old thought patterns and develop new, more constructive ones. The coach provided a psychoeducational summary of the strategy 'creating new categories' by first explaining how categorising information simplifies decision-making but can lead to rigid thinking, whereas updating categories with new perspectives helps create more adaptive responses.

In the coaching exercise, the participants were asked to pick up an everyday item (e.g., pen, phone) and to brainstorm alternative uses for the item. Questions to encourage new thinking included considering how the item could be used in different environments, with different people, or relabelled for new purposes. The coach translated the learning from this exercise into a wellbeing context by breaking down the broad category of wellbeing into more specific categories (e.g., physical, emotional) and considering alternative labels or related concepts to encourage nuanced thinking.

For the home-based assignment, the participants were asked to continue their wellbeing activities, whilst applying insights from the session. They were encouraged to introduce variety into their routines by changing the items, setting, time or people involved to help keep activities fresh and more engaging over time. The questions in the wellbeing tracker remained the same as the previous week, except for the final question which was changed to:

- How did you adapt your wellbeing activity this week, and what impact did this have?

Group coaching session 5: Control over context

The final group session began with the coach inviting participants to reflect on the recent changes they had made to their wellbeing activities. The coach next introduced the session's purpose as learning how to become more sensitive to context and to view challenges constructively. The coach's psychoeducational explanation for the strategy of 'controlling the context' highlighted that we shape our experiences based on the context we create. Instead of labelling situations in fixed terms, e.g., good or bad, we can explore the opportunities for learning and personal growth in challenging scenarios, which allows for more control over our experiences.

In the coaching exercise, the participants were asked to think of a challenge they had faced since starting the wellbeing programme and asked to reflect on how they felt, what they could control, what they learned and the benefits of the challenge. The coach emphasised reframing challenges as opportunities for growth. The participants were asked coaching questions to consider how to handle any future obstacles flexibly, what resources they can develop and how to prepare mentally for the challenges ahead.

The participants are asked to create a plan for continuing their wellbeing practices after the coaching sessions end by incorporating the strategies discussed, such as reframing challenges and focusing on controllable factors. They were encouraged to share one way they will hold themselves accountable moving forward. The final session ended with a check-in on participants' feelings and any final insights, followed by thanks and well wishes for their continued wellbeing journey.

Following each individual contracting session and group coaching session, the coach recorded her reflections in a journal to capture key insights and considerations from the sessions. This was to track thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the sessions, the impact the participants' practitioner backgrounds may be having on the intervention, as well as any observations about how the author may be influencing the intervention. These reflective notes are provided in Chapter 7 with a summarised analysis of the reflections to support ongoing refinement of the intervention.

6.3.4 Data collection

To capture intervention adherence, the attendance of all sessions was automatically recorded by Microsoft Teams. The 'Forms' application within Microsoft Teams was used to provide an online wellbeing tracker for the participants to record the frequency and duration of their home-based activities and to reflect on their progress. The six questions included in the form each week are provided in the previous section.

To collate intervention outcomes, surveys were completed by participants using online software which was accessed via a web link sent by email. A unique study participant code was assigned to each participant for pseudo-anonymisation which they were asked to input at the start of each survey. The survey was designed to ensure participants completed all questions relating to outcome measures without the option to bypass any questions. Whilst some of the open-ended questions were mandated, others remained optional for participants to respond to.

The participants' self-reported responses for the outcome measures were collected at baseline, post-intervention and at follow-up. The three measures used to track changes in the participants' wellbeing and mindfulness are provided below.

Multicultural Quality of Life Index (MQLI: Mezzich et al., 2000) is a ten-item survey used to measure subjective quality of life across ten areas of wellbeing: physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, self-care, occupational functioning, interpersonal functioning, social-emotional support, community support, personal fulfilment, spiritual fulfilment and global perception of quality of life. Participants are asked to rate each area on a ten-point Likert scale from "poor" to "excellent". Mean scores can be reported for the total scale or individual items, with higher scores representing higher levels of quality of life. The scale has been validated with high reliability ($r = 0.87$) and a reported Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.92 (Mezzich et al., 2011).

Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scales (RPWB: Ryff & Keyes, 1995) is an 18-item survey used to measure psychological wellbeing (PWB), which includes six subscales: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. It uses a seven-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

agree". Mean scores can be reported for RPWB overall, or its subscales, with higher scores signifying higher levels of psychological wellbeing. Despite being a shortened version, multiple studies indicate that the 18-item scale is relatively valid and reliable in measuring Ryff's model of psychological wellbeing (Garcia et al., 2023), with a reported Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.88 (Lee et al., 2019).

Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS: Pirson et al., 2018) is a 14-item survey used to measure the socio-cognitive construct of mindfulness, which includes three subscales: novelty seeking, novelty producing and engagement. It uses a seven-point Likert scale from "*strongly disagree*" to "*strongly agree*". Mean scores can be reported for LMS overall, or its subscales, with higher scores indicating higher levels of socio-cognitive mindfulness. The scale is considered to have reliable psychometric validity, with Cronbach's Alpha scores ranging from 0.83 to 0.9 (Pirson et al., 2018).

The baseline survey also included questions to ascertain key demographic information about the participants, such as gender, age, location, employment status and job description. The post-intervention expanded on the TFA questions by asking open-ended questions to gain participant feedback on the intervention. The questions aimed to capture what they found most and least useful about the programme, potential barriers and facilitators to the intervention and who they thought the programme would be most suitable for. In the follow-up survey, further open-ended questions were asked, primarily to understand if the participants had experienced any significant life events since completing the programme. This was to identify any contextual information which may have impacted the follow-up outcome measures.

The intervention's acceptability was measured post-intervention using the Theoretical Framework of Acceptability questionnaire (TFA: Sekhon et al., 2022), which is widely employed to evaluate health-related interventions. It assesses seven emotional and cognitive components of acceptability from the user's perspective: affective attitude, burden, ethicality, intervention coherence, opportunity costs, perceived effectiveness and self-efficacy. The TFA's generic questions were adapted and increased to 25 items in this study to allow for the exploration of various components and features of the intervention. An eighth item was included to gauge the participant's view on the programme's timing. A

five-point Likert scale ranging from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*” was employed across all questions but adapted to suit the question. For example, the responses to a question assessing affective attitude towards the coaching sessions ranged from “*strongly dislike*” to “*strongly like*”.

6.3.5 Data analysis

Once all data were extracted from the survey software and Microsoft Teams, it was imported into Excel spreadsheets to support analysis. A combination of descriptive statistics and visual analysis was used to assess the data. Response frequency and percentages were calculated to describe intervention acceptability, which were then converted into mean scores to summarise each acceptability component. Percentages were calculated to assess the attendance and adherence rates of the intervention and study procedures. Participants’ scores for the outcome measures from baseline to post-intervention to follow-up were individually plotted on three graphs representing each measure. Visual assessment of the graphical display of change across the timepoints was used to identify observable effects within the single case series (Parsonson & Baer, 1992), but not to calculate statistical significance.

Directed content analysis of participants’ open-ended responses involved coding the response data based on prior research concerning the intervention’s potential strengths and weaknesses (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Crabtree & Swainston, 2023). The codes were refined and grouped into similar categories, which were then reported based on frequency with verbatim examples provided. Only codes which were represented by a minimum of two participants were included.

6.4 Results

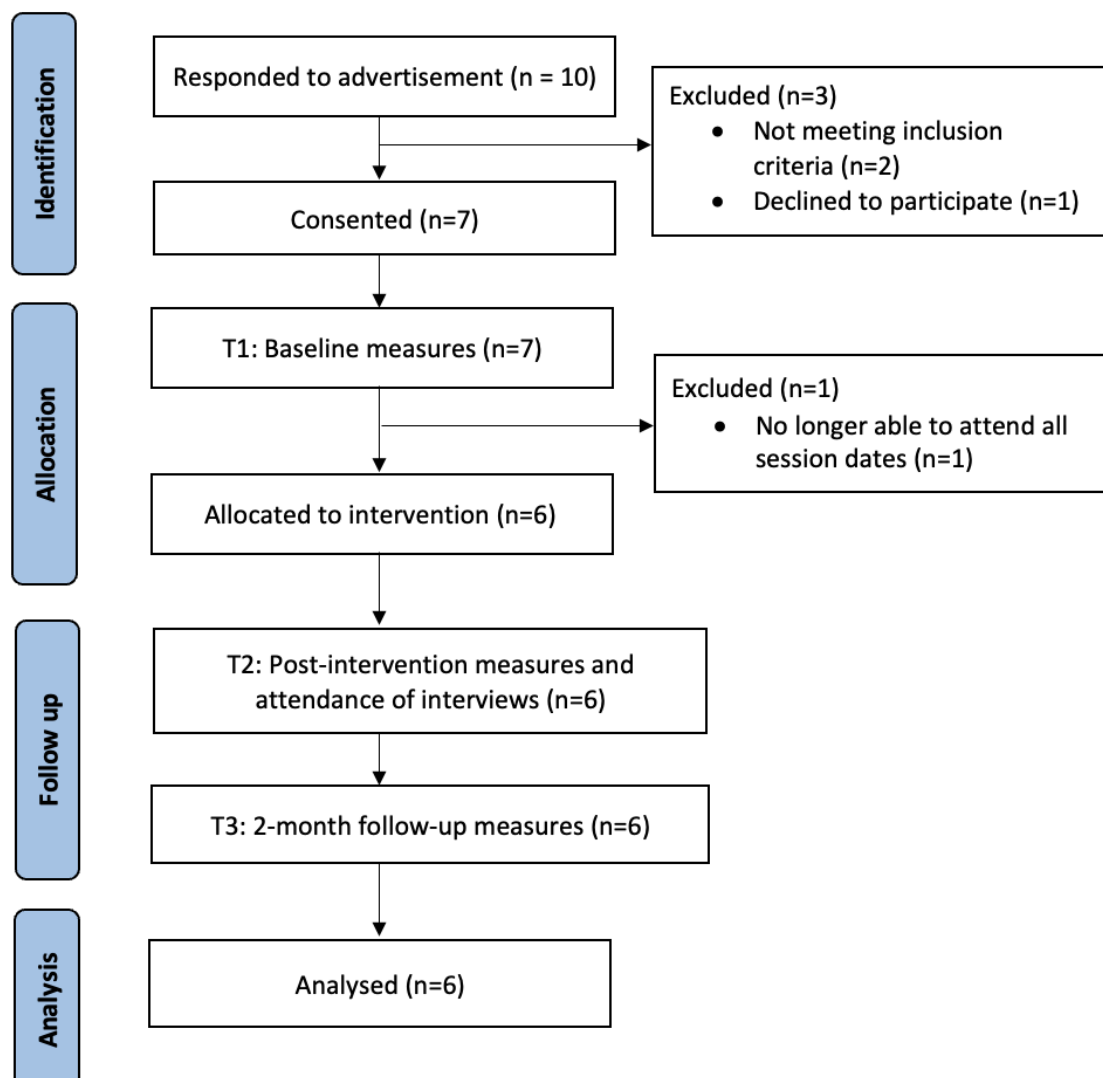
6.4.1 Feasibility of recruitment

The advertisement was posted on the 1st August 2023 with recruitment ending on 31st August 2023. During the 31 days of recruitment, ten people expressed their interest in participating in the study with a mean response rate of 16 days from the advert being posted ($SD = 10.9$). One of the ten responders forwarded the opportunity to those in her professional network who she felt would benefit from the opportunity, thus 40% of the initial interest can be attributed to the snowballing effect. Of the ten who expressed interest

during the recruitment phase, one decided not to participate due to personal circumstances, and a further two did not meet the eligibility criteria as they were unable to commit to the proposed session dates.

The remaining seven provided consent to participate and completed the baseline measures, however, due to unforeseen circumstances one person became unable to make the session dates and was no longer eligible to participate. As such, 60% of those who expressed interest during recruitment went on to fully participate in the study, with 30% not meeting the eligibility criteria and 10% declining to participate. Subsequently, the target sample of between six to eight participants for the study was met. Figure 11 provides a summary of the participant flow throughout the study procedure.

Figure 11 Study participant flow diagram



6.4.2 Feasibility of study and intervention procedures

The resulting attendance and adherence rates to the intervention and study procedures are captured in Table 10 and discussed in the following sections.

Table 10 Study and intervention adherence rates

Intervention or study element	Planned activity length	Frequency	Average time overall per participant	Attendance/ adherence
Online coaching sessions	1 hour per session	Weekly across 6 weeks	5 hours 53 minutes	97.2%
Home-based activities	15-30 mins* per activity	4-5 days per week across 4 weeks	7 hours 38 minutes	87.5%
Online wellbeing updates	5-10 mins per update	Weekly across 4 weeks	31 minutes	100%
Online study surveys	Up to 30 mins each	3 times (pre-, post- & follow-up)	57 minutes	100%
Online study interviews	Up to 60 mins	Once (post-intervention)	39 minutes	100%

**The original consent form stated 30 minutes of activity but was amended to 15-30 minutes at the start of the programme.*

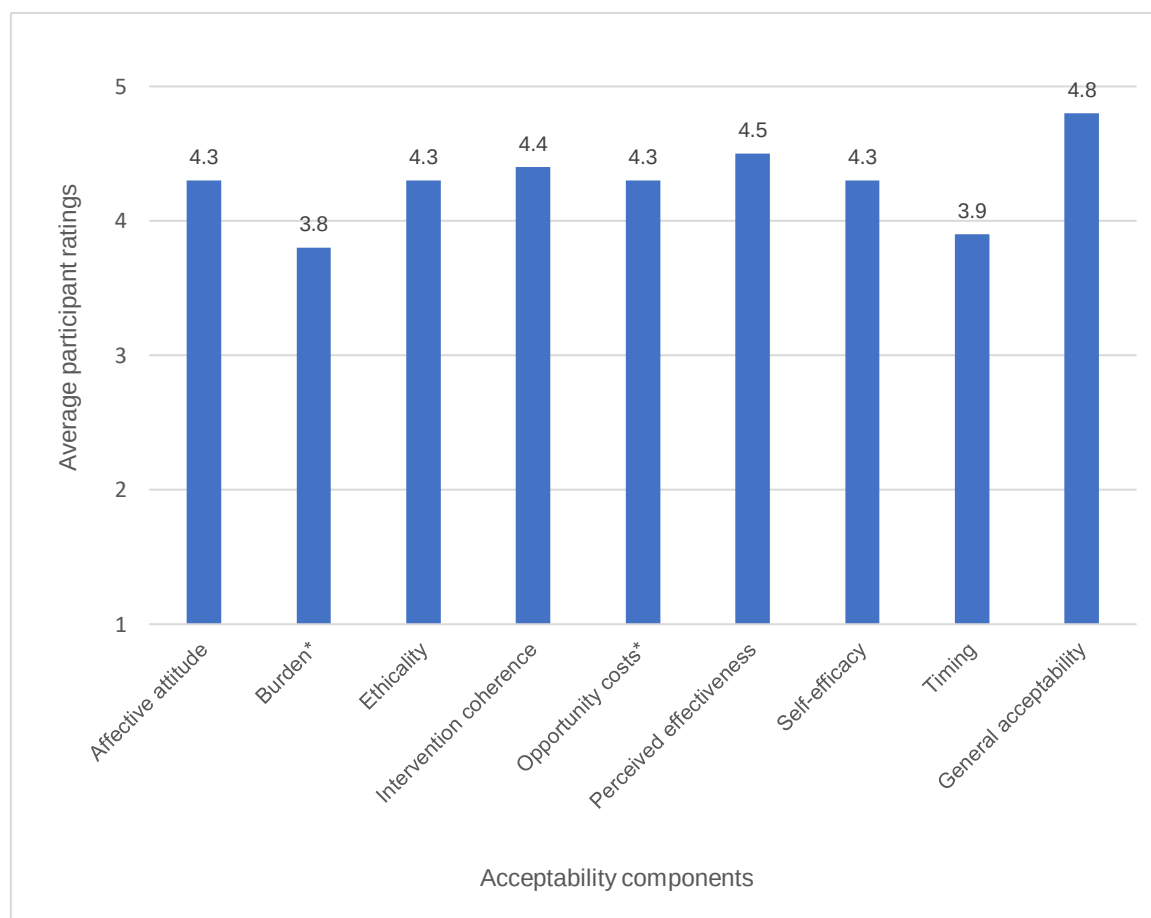
The participants fully attended the intervention sessions, except for one participant who was unable to attend the last session. This resulted in a 97.3% intervention attendance rate. The participants were also expected to complete self-selected home-based assignments and report on duration and frequency in weekly online forms. The weekly updates achieved an overall adherence rate of 100%. There were three occasions where a participant reported not completing the minimum threshold of home-based activities, resulting in an assignment adherence rate of 87.5%. Nevertheless, the participants invested significant amounts of time in the home-based wellbeing activities over four weeks. Examples of the activities selected by the participants were journaling, Tai Chi and physical activity.

The overall study retention rate was 100% since the six participants fulfilled all study requirements. This included 100% completion of the surveys at the three timepoints, with all questions answered fully and appropriately. The participants attended semi-structured interviews post-intervention for the qualitative arm of the study which is presented in Chapter 8.

6.4.3 Intervention acceptability

The results for the 25 acceptability questions are provided in Appendix I, with the mean participant ratings for each acceptability component represented in Figure 12. The results indicate that the participants found most of the components to be acceptable or completely acceptable, such as the intervention's ethicality, coherence and perceived effectiveness. Scores for burden and timing were slightly lower, which suggests that participants may have found the intervention to require a fair amount of effort and that the intervention timings were not ideal. Despite these concerns, when participants were asked more generally: "How acceptable was the programme to you?", one responded "acceptable" whilst five responded "completely acceptable".

Figure 12 Average participant ratings of intervention acceptability components



**Reverse scored*

The content analysis of the participant responses to the open-ended questions exploring intervention acceptability resulted in four categories as summarised in the following section. The categories, subcategories and examples of feedback quotes are provided in Table 11.

Table 11 Categories and feedback examples of content analysis

Category	Subcategory	Feedback example	No. of occasions	No. of participants
Intervention qualities	Worthwhile and beneficial	“Found the programme very helpful and extremely worthwhile [...] It has also improved my quality of life.” “It was great to hear how we had all developed more mindfulness attitudes, kindness to self, self-compassion, curiosity, increased choice, flexibility, acceptance and awareness.” “I found it to be useful, worth my time.”	10	6
	Well-structured	“It was clear and well structured.” “I felt it had been very well considered and structured so as to get the most benefit for all participants.”	6	4
	Welcoming environment	“The group environment felt safe and welcoming.” “Very respectful, yet relaxed and welcoming sessions.”	4	3
	Applied	“I could apply the learning of all the sessions.” “There are things that I have taken away that I will continue to use in various contexts.”	3	3
	Enjoyable	“I enjoyed this programme.” “I looked forward to it each week.”	6	2
Useful features	Home-based assignments	“The weekly tasks focused on the week’s session saw a great stepping stone way of developing” “Liked the mini goal setting each week”	5	4
	Shared learning	“I enjoyed coming together with others as it enabled learning from what other people had experienced.” “Learnt from others sharing too. “	4	3
	Accessible	“Easy to access- online and an hour each week.” “It felt accessible to anyone without any formal training in this area.”	3	2

Category	Subcategory	Feedback example	No. of occasions	No. of participants
	Weekly wellbeing updates	"Having homework and reporting in on it - made me realise what I'd done"	2	2
	An alternative approach to mindfulness	"I gained insight into a new way of building mindfulness into my life."	2	2
Areas for improvement	Requires more detailed explanations and instructions	"Bit more time explaining the concepts with some more examples." "Maybe some written instructions to go with the tasks each week via email to remind us why and how we should approach them."	5	4
	More resources and further learning wanted	"I like to know lots of details about things so I feel like there maybe could have been some sharing of resources/reading list, etc." "The ability to do more reading around the concepts as they were introduced each week."	5	3
	Unsure of some of the concepts or processes	"Sometimes I felt unsure of the concepts/changes/adaptations we had to try out." "I sometimes felt confused/ disconnected with my wellbeing focus"	3	3
	Make benefits clear to participants	"Ensuring they [participants] understand the potential benefits from immersing in the process." "Perhaps some further resonance work on the individual's wellbeing focus at the beginning of the process and again throughout the programme."	2	2
	Need longer timeframes	"Maybe increase sessions by 15 mins." "I would maybe spread the sessions out a bit more."	2	2
Intervention-person fit	Committed and self-motivated participants	"Someone who is committed to putting the work in or they won't see the results." "Have to [...] be self-motivated and driven."	5	3

Category	Subcategory	Feedback example	No. of occasions	No. of participants
	Some existing awareness of psychology and/or coaching	"I felt that many of us are already in a wellbeing/ supportive/ coaching role, and this was helpful as we had some insight and awareness." "Lack of psychological knowledge" [as a barrier].	4	3
	Open-minded attitude	"Someone open to developing their understanding of the concepts and different ways of looking at things, so an open-minded growth mindset!" "Anyone wanting to get out of a mindset rut."	4	3
	Time constraints hinder progress	"If I could have carved out more time that would have been great and annoyingly, I've been in physical pain this last week which hindered my progress." "Time demands" [as a barrier].	3	3

The first category identified within the content analysis was 'intervention qualities'. All participants commented that they found the programme to be worthwhile and of benefit ($n=6$). Four participants described the programme as well-structured and focused, whilst some noted how welcoming they found the coaching environment to be ($n=3$). Half the participants discussed how they could apply their learning from the programme in the real world ($n=3$) and others described the overall experience as being enjoyable ($n=2$).

The second category was 'useful features' which included participants' views on which elements of the intervention they found to be most useful, with the most common answer relating to the home-based wellbeing activities ($n=4$). Half of the participants ($n=3$) said that they had benefited from sharing learning with other participants in the group sessions. Other features mentioned were related to the ease of accessing the programme ($n=2$), the usefulness of completing weekly updates ($n=2$) and the benefit of learning about an alternative approach to mindfulness.

The third category was 'areas for improvement' which encompassed participants' comments on areas of the intervention that they felt were least useful or could be improved further. Half of the participants ($n=3$) described feeling unsure at times of concepts or processes used within the intervention. Similarly, four of the participants mentioned that the intervention could have provided clearer explanations and instructions, whilst three participants advised that they would have liked further resources so that they could understand socio-cognitive mindfulness in more depth. Some participants suggested that the session or overall programme length could be extended slightly ($n=2$), and the programme benefits could be made clearer ($n=2$).

The fourth category was 'intervention-person fit' which included suggestions made by the participants for who they felt would be most suitable for this type of intervention, including key participant attributes for gaining the most benefit from the programme. Four subcategories were identified, with each represented by half of the participants. These included participants needing to be open-minded ($n=3$), committed ($n=3$), with some prior knowledge of psychology or coaching ($n=3$), whilst being aware that any time constraints can hinder personal progress ($n=3$).

6.4.4 Preliminary evaluation of participant outcomes

The means and standard deviations for the participants' responses to the outcome measures are captured for the overall measure as well as the sub-scales for RPWB and LMS, and the individual items for MQLI. This information is presented in Table 12.

Table 12 Outcome measures at baseline, post-programme and follow-up

Outcome measures	Baseline (T1)	Post (T2)	Follow-up (T3)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Multicultural Quality of Life Index*	8.1 (1.1)	8.4 (1.2)	8.2 (1.1)
Physical wellbeing	6.8 (1.5)	7.3 (1.1)	6.8 (1.2)
Psychological /emotional wellbeing	7.2 (0.9)	7.7 (1.3)	7.3 (0.9)
Self-care and Independent Functioning	9.0 (0.8)	9.0 (1.2)	9.0 (0.8)
Occupational Functioning	8.7 (0.9)	9.0 (1.0)	8.8 (1.1)
Interpersonal Functioning	8.3 (1.4)	9.0 (1.4)	8.0 (1.3)
Social-Emotional Support	9.2 (0.9)	9.0 (1.0)	9.3 (0.9)
Community & Services Support	9.0 (0.8)	9.2 (0.7)	9.3 (0.8)
Personal Fulfilment	7.5 (1.0)	8.2 (1.6)	8.0 (1.2)
Spiritual Fulfilment	7.5 (1.3)	7.7 (1.5)	7.7 (1.5)
Global Perception of Quality of Life	7.3 (1.4)	7.8 (1.5)	7.8 (1.1)
Ryff Psychological Wellbeing Scale-18**	5.4 (1.2)	5.8 (1.0)	5.6 (1.1)
Autonomy subscale	4.9 (1.8)	4.9 (1.2)	5.0 (1.1)
Environmental mastery subscale	4.7 (1.6)	5.6 (1.0)	4.7 (1.3)
Personal growth subscale	6.2 (0.9)	6.2 (0.8)	6.4 (0.8)
Positive relations with others subscale	6.3 (1.0)	6.7 (0.4)	6.6 (0.7)
Purpose in life subscale	5.4 (1.2)	5.2 (1.2)	5.5 (1.6)
Self-acceptance subscale	5.1 (0.9)	6.0 (1.0)	5.6 (1.1)
Langer Mindfulness Scale-14**	5.6 (1.1)	5.4 (1.2)	5.6 (1.2)
Novelty seeking subscale	5.8 (1.0)	5.9 (1.1)	5.8 (1.2)
Novelty producing subscale	4.9 (1.5)	4.7 (1.5)	5.0 (1.5)
Engagement subscale	6.0 (0.7)	5.8 (1.1)	5.9 (0.9)

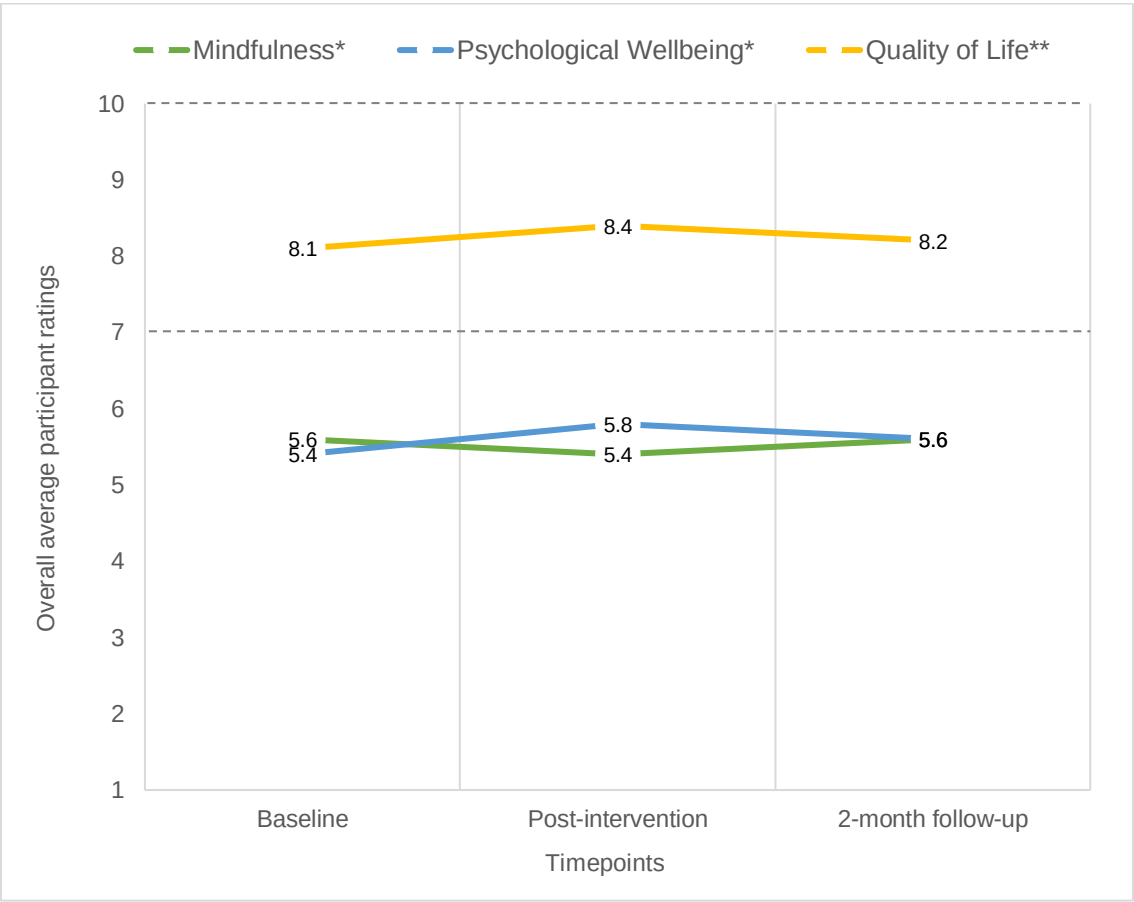
*Measure using a Likert scale of 1-10

**Measure using a Likert scale of 1-7

The individual items and sub-scales highlighted in blue text appear to be the closest matches to the wellbeing components of the PERMA-V flourishing model which consists of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, achievement and vitality (Seligman, 2011; Eacker, 2020). This aligns with the participants' high average rating for the perceived effectiveness of the intervention (Figure 12) since the primary aim of the intervention is to support adults in improving their wellbeing.

The overall average ratings of the scales have been plotted in Figure 13 to present an overview of the changes in outcome measures. Whilst the psychological wellbeing and quality of life overall ratings show a slight increase from baseline to post-programme, they do decrease at follow-up almost back to baseline levels. Meanwhile, the mindfulness levels move in the opposite direction with a slight reduction from baseline to post-intervention, before reverting to baseline levels at follow-up.

Figure 13 Changes in the average scores of LMS-14, RPWB-18 and MQLI



To provide a more detailed visual analysis of the changes for each participant, the participants' scores at baseline, post-intervention and follow-up are illustrated graphically for the three outcome measures in Figures 14, 15 and 16.

Figure 14 Multicultural Quality of Life Index (Mezzich et al., 2000) participant scores

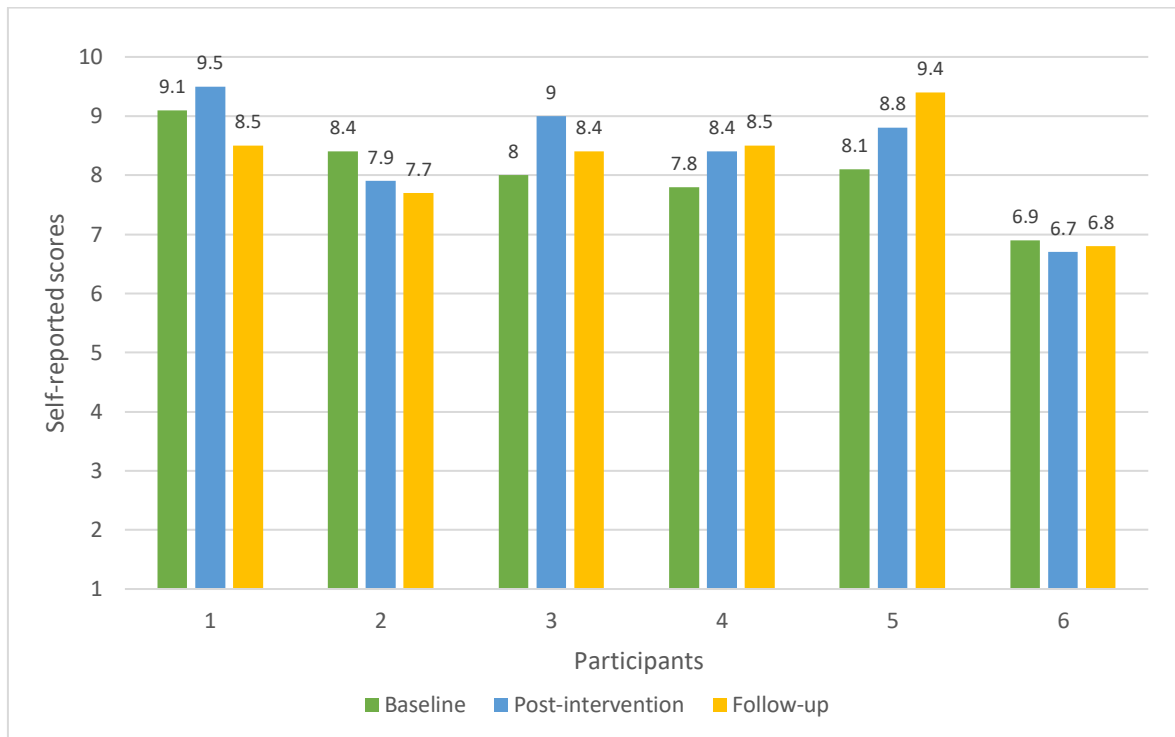


Figure 15 Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scales (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) participant scores

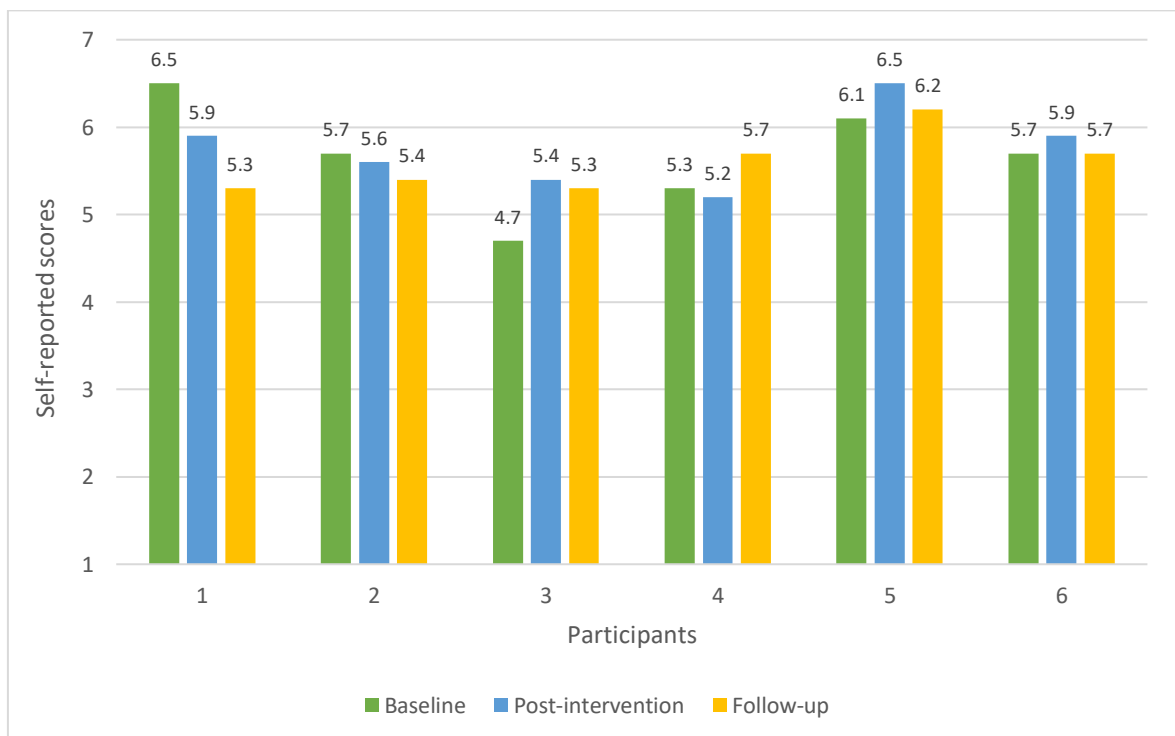
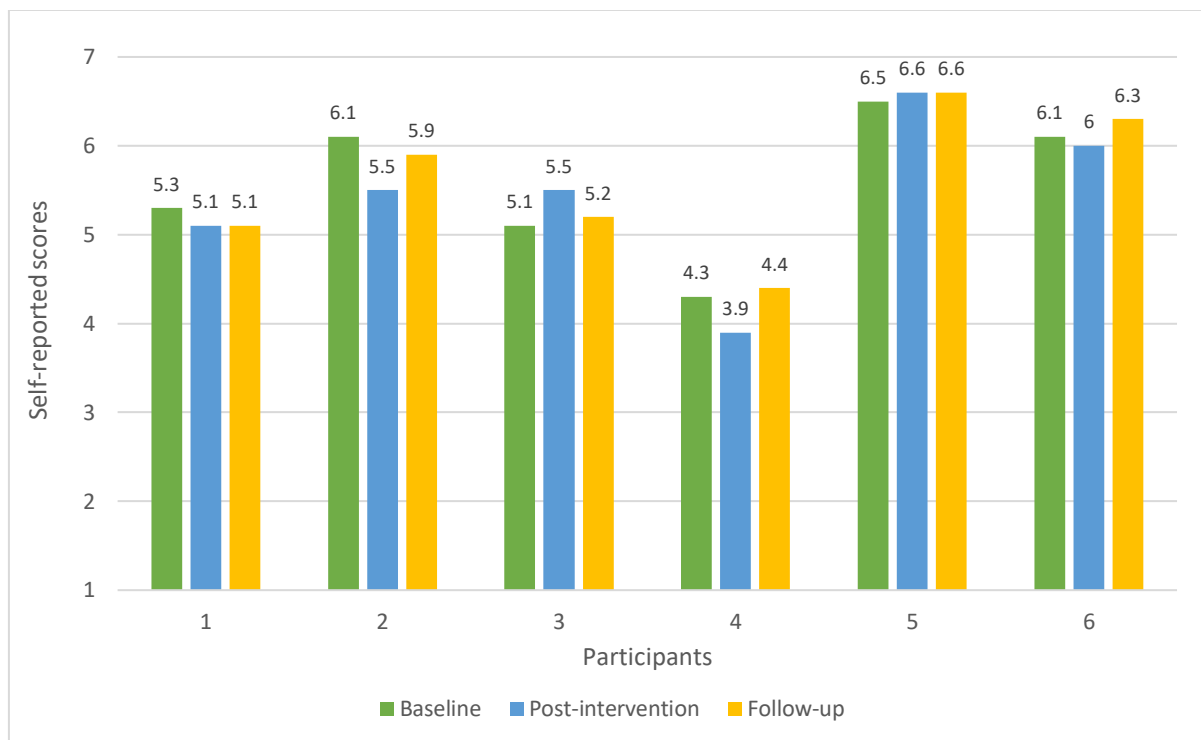


Figure 16 Langer Mindfulness Scale (Pirson et al., 2018) participant scores



Four out of the six participants (P1, P3, P4, P5) showed a pattern of increasing MQLI scores post-intervention, of which two improved upon their gains at follow-up (P4, P5) with another maintaining a higher score at follow-up compared to baseline (P3). The remaining participants showed either a pattern of decreasing scores at post-programme and at follow-up (P2), or less clear trends with marginal changes (P6). Similarly, half of the participants reported increases in their psychological wellbeing at post-programme (P3, P5, P6) and maintained either slightly higher follow-up scores compared to baseline (P3, P5), or reverted to their baseline score at follow-up (P6). Two participants show an overall downward trend in scores from baseline to post-programme to follow-up (P1, P2), with the remaining participant showing a decrease at post-programme, but interestingly, a higher score at follow-up compared to baseline (P4). Only two of the participants showed increases in mindfulness scores at post-programme (P3, P5), with four showing a pattern of decreasing scores (P1, P2, P4, P6). However, four participants reported slightly higher levels of mindfulness at follow-up compared to baseline (P3, P4, P5, P6).

To provide possible context for any impacts to the outcome measures, participants were asked at follow-up if they had experienced any significant life events since completing the

programme. Four were comfortable disclosing that they had (P1, P2, P5, P6), with examples including challenging health issues ($n=2$), a bereavement in the immediate family ($n=1$) and a cancer diagnosis in the immediate family ($n=1$).

6.5 Discussion

6.5.1 Summary of findings

The recruitment strategy appeared to be feasible for achieving the number of participants required for this study. However, due to the advertisement being posted on the author's professional networking profile, this likely influenced the final sample. For example, four of the ten people who expressed interest in participating had met the author previously during professional development and networking events and activities. The same four people went on to participate in the programme. Still, it is common for coaches to acquire clients by raising their profiles during such networking and peer collaboration events, which may strengthen the ecological validity of this study since the recruitment method reflects recruitment approaches used in real-world settings. Nevertheless, if future studies require multiple groups to run concurrently, it is unlikely that this strategy would be effective in recruiting larger numbers.

Although the author had access to a wide-ranging professional network, those who expressed interest in participating, including the final sample, all had professional experience in coaching. To establish whether this is due to the influence of the author's practitioner background it would be useful to explore alternative recruitment strategies to understand if the intervention appeals to wider demographics. Equally, it may be worthwhile refining the intervention based on coaches as the targeted demographic. For instance, at the end of the follow-up survey, participants in this study were asked if they would be interested in learning more about integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into their coaching, with five out of six coaches confirming they would. All coaches provided their contact details to be notified of further development opportunities relating to socio-cognitive mindfulness. Therefore, there could be an appetite in the wider coaching community to access this content in the form of a continuing professional development opportunity.

The intervention adherence results indicate that the intervention procedures and commitment requirements are mostly feasible. The high attendance levels suggest that

weekly one-hour coaching sessions were sustainable for participants to commit to. Furthermore, the programme theory underpinning the intervention suggests that home-based assignments are key to its effectiveness, and so the high assignment adherence rate is a promising sign (Crabtree & Swainston, 2024). However, it is worth noting that there was a large range in the time committed to the home-based activities across the participants; from four hours 30 minutes to twelve hours ten minutes. Whilst it is appropriate to set a minimum time commitment, the intervention procedure should allow for flexibility to suit individual circumstances and preferences.

The 100% adherence to the surveys and interviews implies that the study procedures were feasible. The very high adherence rates across all intervention and study processes may be because they were all conducted online which can be time and resource-efficient for most people. Since there was a moderate level of administration required for the coach running the programme (such as scheduling sessions, emailing updates and reminders, session preparation, etc) it was considered a significant advantage to be able to work online to eliminate commuting time, whilst having access to a wider audience (Passmore et al., 2021). The acceptability ratings overall indicate that the participants found the intervention to be generally satisfactory across a range of factors, such as likeability, coherence and effectiveness. The categories generated from the participants' responses to the open-ended questions provide an overview of the intervention's main strengths and weaknesses. Overall, the comments were mostly positive and described multiple qualities of the programme, such as being worthwhile and well-structured. Their views also aligned with the intervention's programme theory that the home-based assignments were a useful intervention feature. The weaknesses discussed by the participants will be key to ensuring that appropriate refinements are made to the programme to enhance its acceptability further, such as providing more explanation, instructions, resources and clarity on intervention benefits.

The preliminary evaluation of the changes in outcome measures suggests that the intervention had the intended effects on quality of life and psychological wellbeing for at least half of the participants. For others, the change was less pronounced or moved in the opposite direction. Furthermore, only two participants appear to have sustained increases in both their quality of life and psychological wellbeing (P3 & P4) at follow-up, who were also the only participants who did not report experiencing any significant life events since

completing the programme. When factoring in that the remaining four of the six participants had experienced significant negative life events since completing the programme, the results may be viewed in a more encouraging light, since two of those participants did not report their wellbeing or quality of life dropping below baseline levels.

This finding resonates with a recent study of a ‘mindful learning coaching’ programme for postgraduate students which included socio-cognitive and meditative mindfulness principles (Wang et al., 2023). The authors found that the development of mindfulness strategies through coaching may provide a protective factor in wellbeing for those experiencing highly stressful events, such as postgraduates facing exams and assignment deadlines.

Interestingly, the mindfulness scores demonstrated more improvement at follow-up than at post-programme. In the current study, participants may have become more aware of when they were not being mindful since the sessions were designed to challenge participants to recognise when they were thinking inflexibly. They may have grown in confidence with embedding mindfulness strategies into their lives in the months after the programme finished.

The overall assessment of the intervention procedures and acceptability indicate that a wellbeing group coaching programme centred on socio-cognitive mindfulness is mostly feasible, although there are key refinements to be made based on the participants’ feedback. The preliminary evaluation indicates that the intervention only shows the potential to be effective for increasing wellbeing and quality of life for some people. Furthermore, the findings suggest that whilst some of the study procedures have been feasible for determining whether the intervention demonstrates the potential for positive results, it is important to redesign study procedures where needed to meet the advanced requirements of a full-scale evaluation.

6.5.2 Limitations of study

The small homogeneous sample limits the ability to interpret the quantitative data with confidence or accuracy (Hertzog, 2008). Instead, the study findings must be used to tentatively inform recommendations for ongoing refinement and further evaluation of the intervention to address remaining uncertainties (Skivington et al., 2021; Orsmond & Cohn, 2015). To overcome the limitations posed by this study, the overall research project includes

an in-depth qualitative evaluation of the participants' experiences of the intervention (Bowen et al., 2009). The findings from the qualitative study can supplement this quantitative analysis by providing possible explanations for some of the preliminary results.

Another limitation of the study is the author's involvement with the intervention as the coach. To address this, steps were taken by the research team to mitigate potential risks by regularly reviewing the study's processes to safeguard the participants' wellbeing whilst protecting the fidelity of the study's data (Navab et al., 2015).

6.5.3 Further research

The findings from this study have helped to identify key refinements that should be made to strengthen the intervention's acceptability and feasibility prior to the evaluation stage. Before making any changes to the intervention, this data will be considered alongside the findings from the qualitative arm of the overall research project. This also applies to any recommendations made for the evaluation design. For example, the findings within this study may suggest that an important next step would be to accurately measure the intervention's efficacy, whereas the qualitative findings may point towards conducting a process evaluation to further investigate hypothesised causal pathways and change mechanisms within the intervention (Moore et al., 2015). Furthermore, it may be deemed useful to either increase the diversity of the participant demographics or to further explore the impact that the intervention has on coach populations.

6.6 Conclusion

The wellbeing programme tested within this study appears to be feasible and has been deemed largely acceptable by the coaches who participated. Coaches may be drawn to a programme of this nature due to having a greater appreciation for the importance of wellbeing, particularly in ensuring they are resourced to support others and are protecting themselves against burnout and compassion fatigue (Rosefield, 2023). Mindfulness has been recognised within the coaching community as a highly useful quality for a coach to have (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013; Hall, 2013) since mindful coaches are better able to provide an empathetic and reflective space for their clients. Consequently, there may be further merit in targeting coaches and similar professionals by tailoring the programme to meet their personal and professional needs more specifically (Brazier, 2023). This could involve

expanding the programme to teach coaches how to effectively apply the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies within their coaching practice so that their clients can more directly benefit. However, for the ongoing intervention refinement within this thesis, the next chapter will explore in more depth how the coaches experienced this programme and gain their views on how it can be improved.

Chapter 7. Practitioner Reflections

7.1 Chapter Introduction

In the previous chapter, a study assessing the feasibility of the intervention is described. The study's findings indicate that the intervention is feasible based on the high attendance, adherence and participant acceptability rates. A comprehensive description of the intervention design is provided in Chapter 5 with a summarised version in Chapter 6 outlining how the intervention was delivered during the feasibility study. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a reflective account of the author's experience in conducting the intervention during the feasibility study. The aim is to gather key insights and learnings to evaluate the intervention's strengths and limitations. These reflections will contribute to the overall research findings and inform the intervention's ongoing refinement.

7.2 Practitioner's Reflections on Intervention

The author completed reflexive journaling immediately after the contracting sessions and each group session. The primary purpose of recording reflections was to support the author's reflexivity throughout the delivery of the intervention and her coaching engagement with the participants (Elliott et al., 1999). Reflective practices, such as journaling, have been discussed in the literature as important for enabling practitioners to critically explore their actions and refine their practice in response to emerging insights (Schon, 1983). This reflection also allowed the author to examine her dual role as both researcher and practitioner, increasing awareness of ethical considerations such as potential conflicts of interest and maintaining relationship boundaries (Navab et al., 2015). This was also helpful when the author transitioned from delivering the intervention to conducting the semi-structured interviews for the qualitative arm of the feasibility study.

Journaling also guided the author in reflecting on her professional competence, particularly since this was her first time running the intervention. It was also a valuable strategy for identifying emergent issues and adjusting the intervention in real-time, as well as informing recommended changes to the intervention for future cohorts (Pihkala & Karasti, 2016). The author's post-session reflections are presented in order, and are written less formally and in the first person, given the personal nature of this chapter's content.

7.2.1 Reflections on the contracting sessions

Observation: I tailored the contracting sessions to discuss the parts of socio-cognitive mindfulness that would work for them. For example, when a participant discussed holding onto outcomes too tightly, I referred to the strategy of ‘attending to the process’. Another participant labelled one of the teams she works with as “challenging” so I mentioned how the creation of new categories could help improve her work relationships.

Reflection: I reflected on the appropriateness of discussing socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies on these occasions. However, in real coaching environment, a contracting session would be tailored to the participant, with the personalisation of the content being key to creating an authentic working relationship as well as gaining the participant’s engagement with the process.

Observation: A participant started with a relatively abstract goal about needing clarity and direction in life. Another participant wanted to learn to let things go and not hold on to things too tightly. With these participants, we explored the types of activity that would help them to action this, such as journaling, and how to approach and behave in meetings.

Reflection: I encouraged both participants to narrow their focus down to a specific wellbeing activity whilst keeping in mind their wider (abstract) psychological goal which they can progress towards with their chosen wellbeing activities. I was open with the participants about my view that the programme would be more effective with more tangible goals that they could apply the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies to. However, in a typical coaching conversation, I would have spent more time reflecting on a coachee’s needs. Perhaps more individual work needs to be done upfront before starting the group sessions. Also, there needs to be further reflection on whether the programme can support more abstract goals like “learning to let things go”. For the purpose of the feasibility study, the coach agreed with the participants to choose their initial abstract goals but to also select wellbeing activities that support their development towards their goal. For example, the goal of “achieving clarity of future direction” can be supported by the wellbeing activity of journaling.

Observation: As all participants had coaching backgrounds, they were already knowledgeable about wellbeing and had self-awareness around their wellbeing levels and where they could focus their attention.

Reflection: I do believe that if the participants hadn't come from coaching backgrounds, they would have needed longer to establish their wellbeing focus. However, every participant appeared to have high levels of self-awareness and had already taken time to reflect on wellbeing areas that they felt needed further attention and were knowledgeable on the subject. One participant summed it up well: "I have the information, now I need the integration". All participants knew of the importance of looking after their own wellbeing before being able to adequately support others, and how wellbeing is the foundation for "capability and capacity" as one participant said. However, non-coach participants may need more support with understanding these concepts.

Observation: When participants started identifying their wellbeing activities, I found myself considering that some activities would possibly work better within the programme than others, such as journaling, exercise routines, starting new hobbies, etc.

Reflection: I found myself bringing some judgement around what I felt was realistic for making progress in the relatively short window of time and perhaps was inadvertently more encouraging of some ideas over others. However, as a coach, I was picking up on their energy levels and body language when they were discussing several options and reflecting to the participants when they seemed more drawn to one idea over another. This is a technique I use regularly in coaching and so it felt authentic and not detrimental to the sessions.

Observation: When discussing the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies, participants were able to compare certain elements with other areas in positive psychology that it aligned to, such as growth mindset, cognitive reframing, solution-focused approaches, etc.

Reflection: It is not possible to completely isolate socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies as they do align with other positive psychology theories which are commonly used within coaching. Also, to provide a well-rounded coaching programme, it would still need to include fundamental coaching activities, such as goal setting and progress reviews. However, I was clear with the participants that the predominant focus within the programme would be on socio-cognitive mindfulness theory and strategies.

Observation: All participants talked about wanting to use some of their learning from the programme in their own practice at work, such as helping colleagues or coaching clients to increase their self-awareness or improve their wellbeing levels.

Reflection: I discussed openly with every participant that their focus within this research study is as a coachee focusing on their personal wellbeing development, whilst also acknowledging it would be natural for them to reflect on how it may impact their coaching work. I had discussed this with my supervisor in a recent meeting and we agreed that perhaps the fact that coaches have been drawn to this programme was worth exploring further. Therefore, we could include questions within the questionnaire and interviews about their views of the programme from a practitioner's perspective, which could add an extra layer of depth and analysis.

Observation: I made an effort to refer to the programme within the contracting sessions as an experiment and discussed how this was the first time this programme had been tested.

Reflection: I felt it was an important part of the process for the participants to feel that they were able to give feedback in the moment to help continually evolve the programme. I also often talk to coachees about seeing their personal growth as a continual learning opportunity and discuss experimenting with new ideas to see what does and doesn't work best for them. Therefore, even though there was an overlap here, the sentiment of participants trying new ideas and strategies out is an approach I would discuss with participants outside of a research setting anyway.

Observation: A participant revealed she was suffering from post-covid syndrome which was motivating her to explore ways of improving her wellbeing. Another participant revealed her son had recently been diagnosed with a medical condition which had impacted her wellbeing.

Reflection: I explored with both participants, as I would in my coaching practice, their current levels of wellbeing, to understand if their mental health may be at a point where they may need medical or therapeutic intervention. Both participants were clear that they wanted to be proactive about their wellbeing before it came to that point. Whilst they were both technically eligible to participate based on the inclusion criteria, I reflected after these sessions with my primary supervisor to ensure I felt comfortable that the programme was

right for them, and they were right for the programme, before proceeding with the coaching sessions with them.

Summary of reflections from the contracting sessions

Based on my observations and reflections, the key strengths of the contracting sessions appear to be the personalised and participant-centred approach where the participants were able to align their wellbeing goals in meaningful ways and with tangible actions. However, this focus on personalisation may have compromised consistency across the sessions. Another limitation is the potential bias I may have created by guiding the participants with their goal selection. I also became aware that whilst the current sample of participants had high levels of self-awareness and were familiar with goal development (which was beneficial to the current sessions), this may be more of a challenge with participants coming from different professional backgrounds. Moving forward, more support may be needed for non-coaching participants, and the intervention may be improved by refining the balance between personalisation and consistency.

7.2.2 Reflections on the first group session

Observation: A participant advised on the morning of the session that she'd had a power cut and it might affect her ability to fully join in the session.

Reflection: I felt a little distracted by this before the session started since technical issues were something I was nervous about. However, I reminded myself of the benefits of running the programme online, and that everyone is now much more familiar with virtual sessions. Therefore, they have likely experienced technical glitches before so hopefully they wouldn't be too distracted if this were to happen. There was a moment when the participant lost her connection and had to dial back in, and then another time when her audio was delayed, but these were minor moments. The session didn't seem to be too disrupted by these occasions and the other participants appeared to take the technical glitches in their stride. This may be a result of people becoming more used to using videoconferencing in both a personal and professional capacity since the pandemic and being unfazed by the technical issues this can sometimes bring.

Observation: I recapped the collective needs of the group (which were compiled from the contracting sessions) at the start of the session. Everyone appeared to be comfortable with the collated list and had nothing further to add.

Reflection: It was fortunate that everyone seemed comfortable with the list; however, if this hadn't been the case and time was needed for further discussion, this would have impacted the overall timing of the session. Perhaps the first session needs to be extended to allow for more discussion. Alternatively, there may need to be an additional session at the start of the programme which focuses on group contracting and introductions with ways of working agreed upon as a group rather than collated by the coach beforehand.

Observation: It came to light in the session that three of the participants knew each other from work, and another two participants had met each previously too.

Reflection: I'm not sure how the group dynamics will work given the existing relationships. I will explore how this impacted each participant when I conduct the interviews. However, I do believe that the first session may need to be extended to allow for members to get to know each other a little if there aren't already existing relationships.

Observation: During the debrief of the exercise to rewrite the goal and integrate enjoyment, two participants described having a lightbulb moment.

Reflection: It seemed that some participants had not considered approaching goals as an experience to be enjoyed which I found a little surprising. One participant realised she could draw upon the qualities from activities that she already enjoys which helped her in deciding her next wellbeing activity. The other participant realised she didn't need to commit huge chunks of time or schedule specific times, but instead use the enjoyable moments in her day to reflect on as and when they occur.

Observation: A participant demonstrated a noticeable uplift in energy when she shared her rewritten goal which had integrated her love of storytelling.

Reflection: The participant's goal was about being more open-minded in meetings, but she reframed it using her love of storytelling, which sparked an excitement in her that was noticeable to us all. This ties in with the above; making the process enjoyable helps us to feel more excited and motivated about the goals we're pursuing.

Observation: When reflecting on intrinsically enjoyable activities, all participants discussed how they drew upon qualities from the activities they naturally enjoy, with music and reading being popular activities.

Reflection: This ties into the previous observation, but also how some of the participants initially overlooked these types of activities because they didn't recognise them as being wellbeing activities since they were naturally enjoyable and required little effort. Perhaps when we integrate aspects we enjoy, we don't see the activity as requiring as much effort, which may increase motivation towards pursuing the goal.

Observation: Some participants chose to commit their first step to an activity which would help them set up their wellbeing practice, such as sourcing the equipment they may need.

Reflection: By taking a step-by-step approach and considering what first activity would get them excited about starting, most of the participants discussed how they would select their "tools for the job". It will be interesting to revisit this in the fourth session to experiment with changing or replacing these selected tools.

Observation: Some of the participants came to the realisation that they could allow themselves time to focus on their wellbeing for the enjoyment of it rather than maximising their time to increase efficiency.

Reflection: By considering the enjoyment they would gain from the process, they acknowledged how they often didn't prioritise enjoyment or pleasure in what they did day-to-day, instead feeling obligated to maximise their time. However, this is not always conducive to improving wellbeing. By refocusing on enjoyment, the participants noticed their existing mindsets around what they "should" be doing. I will look to revisit this in future sessions, to explore their feelings of guilt over prioritising their wellbeing activities.

Observation: There was minimal group discussion during the session, although participants acknowledged each other politely throughout.

Reflection: As this is the first session, I did find myself spending more time explaining the structure and setting up the session. Therefore, I hope that my input will gradually reduce as the sessions continue to ensure there is enough group discussion and sharing of ideas.

Observation: I shared my personal example of a wellbeing goal to demonstrate how I rewrote my goal and integrated enjoyable activities.

Reflection: I reflected on whether to do this before the session and felt that I do use “self” in coaching when it feels appropriate, so it could also work in this setting. Given that this is a completely new approach to coaching, there aren’t many real-world examples to draw upon. Therefore, to be able to use an example, I was limited in options, and I decided that making up a fictional example would feel inauthentic. Additionally, the feedback from the participants up until that point was recognising that as practitioners we should “practice what we preach”. I felt it would be beneficial to demonstrate that I’d been prepared to experiment with the strategies myself and had found ways to make it work and to benefit my wellbeing, which is in line with socio-cognitive learning theory.

Summary of reflections from the first group session

In summary, the strengths of the session appear to be the presence of a collective commitment to creating a safe space, the personalised approach used for the goal-setting activity, and the positive shifts in participants’ mindsets by integrating intrinsically enjoyable activities. A possible limitation of running a coaching programme online is the potential for technical issues to disrupt the flow of a session which happened momentarily during this session. However, this did not appear to have much of a negative impact but is something to be aware of moving forward. Further limitations included challenges in balancing my role as a coach and a facilitator, with perhaps too much time spent providing explanations which limited the group discussion. There is also uncertainty about how the presence of pre-existing relationships between participants may impact the group dynamics. To address these limitations, it would be better to shift the balance towards fostering more group interaction by allocating more time for key discussions.

7.2.3 Reflections on the second group session

Observation: A participant contacted me before the session to say she may miss the start of the session.

Reflection: The participant was only seven minutes late to the session due to a personal issue. I asked the group if they would be comfortable if the participant joined late and they said they were. However, upon reflection I wondered whether they may have felt pressured to say yes. Perhaps it is better to discuss this in advance of the group sessions commencing.

This could form part of the contracting for the group's needs to establish everyone's stance on this scenario when it's a hypothetical situation. On this occasion, the participant being late to the session didn't appear to affect the session as she was still able to join in with the updates and reflections from the past week and was present when I introduced the new strategy.

Observation: We spent almost half the session time reflecting on progress since the last week.

Reflection: I wondered whether I had left enough time to fully explore the new strategy. It seemed to work well in this session as the strategy of noticing new things was relatively straightforward. However, I will consider a shorter way to review progress and learnings from the previous week within the next session. For example, I could ask them to share just one key learning from the past week to create a more focused and concise progress review.

Observation: A participant shared that she had conflicting feelings about the weekly wellbeing tracker. On one hand, she said it helped her to reflect on how her "storytelling" approach had integrated into other aspects of her life, but on the other hand, she found it difficult to "quantify" how she had been changing her mindset.

Reflection: The wellbeing tracker was originally implemented to track the participants' adherence to their wellbeing activities to collate data for the feasibility analysis. However, based on the participant's feedback, I wondered whether the tracker may have interfered with the coaching process. However, most participants felt the wellbeing tracker was useful for their reflection. In a real coaching environment, asking coachees to capture their key reflections at the end of the week is usually seen as beneficial for tracking progress. However, the multiple option questions which ask for them to say how many days and for how long they completed their activities may not align well with some people's wellbeing focuses, especially if they have not selected tangible goals. It may cause some to overthink and question whether they are "doing it right/enough". Therefore, it may be worth reviewing the questions in the tracker for future studies.

Observation: Most of the participants reshaped their wellbeing goal or focus throughout the week by discovering what they enjoyed, being open to other opportunities and realising what they were really trying to achieve.

Reflection: I believe that being faced with starting their new wellbeing activities, the participants started to appreciate what does and doesn't work for them and what they wanted from the programme. Although the contracting sessions start the conversation about goals, the main reflection can happen afterwards. The process-focused strategy in the first group session helped the participants to consider the steps to take and how to integrate enjoyment into the process.

Observation: The 'welcoming new information' exercise involved the participants noticing new things in their surroundings. As they were all joining the session remotely, they were looking at different environments to each other and I had been unsure before the session how this would work in practice and whether this would make the participants feel disconnected from each other. In practice, participants looking at different environments to each other did not appear to have any negative impact on the session. However, what I did notice was quite a few of the participants were noticing items in their environments that were reminding them of jobs they needed to do, like seeing dust on a window ledge, or noticing items in their room that they no longer liked.

Reflection: The purpose of the exercise is to draw the participants' attention to novelty, and whilst this happened, some did appear to look for novelty using a slightly negative lens. At the time, I didn't explore this further, but upon reflection, I think it would be useful in future programmes for the coach to explore this if this was to reoccur. Perhaps the written guidance for this session could be expanded to introduce the concept of negative bias, and how this can shape how we view things. Also, additional coaching questions could be introduced to explore the participants' tendencies to notice positive or negative stimuli.

Observation: Two participants mentioned that they felt a level of accountability to me.

Reflection: Despite discussing in the contracting sessions that the participants would be accountable to themselves, I wondered why two participants were still seeing me or the programme as holding them accountable. This will be a topic that can be revisited in the last session when exploring challenges around continuing with their wellbeing activities post-intervention, and how they can continue to hold themselves accountable once the programme has finished.

Observation: I've noticed I'm talking more than I usually would during group coaching.

Reflection: With it still being early in the group dynamic process, I am feeling a responsibility to keep the conversation flowing, but it is not enabling as much group work as intended, although the participants do acknowledge each other and expand on each other's ideas and reflections. However, I think to move away from facilitation and giving direction, I will focus the exercise during the next session to allow for the group to interact with each other more.

Summary of reflections from the second group session

Key strengths of the session included how the participants engaged with the material and reflected on their goals and strategies. Group interaction is starting to develop with participants willing to engage with each other's reflections and build on each other's ideas. The wellbeing tracker appeared to help most of the participants to reflect on their progress, and many noticed changes in how they integrated their goals into daily life. A key limitation of this session was the imbalance of time spent reflecting on the previous week's progress, which could constrain the time needed for deeper exploration of new strategies. I'm also aware that I may still be over-facilitating and limiting the available time for group discussion. There may be a potential disconnect between the messaging around participant accountability and the perceived role of the coach. Moving forward, I will reiterate the participants' ownership of their wellbeing development, and support this by empowering them more during the session. Finally, the written guidance for this session could be updated to expand the coaching exercises further.

7.2.4 Reflections on the third group session

Observation: A participant mentioned at the start of the session that she'd had an accident recently which meant she had to change her wellbeing focus.

Reflection: It was interesting to see how the participant had used her change in circumstances, and what she might have seen as a setback previously, as an opportunity to be kinder to herself instead. She used the first session's strategy of attending to the process over outcome to not push on for the sake of achieving an outcome focused on increasing physical activity, and instead realised she needed to "meet herself where she was" and to prioritise rest and sleep hygiene. She said that by adjusting her plan, she felt as though she'd gained more energy as the week progressed.

Observation: We still spent quite a bit of the session reviewing progress since last week, despite my previous week's consideration to shorten this element.

Reflection: The sharing of reflections appeared to be useful for the participants as it seemed to consolidate their learning from the previous two weeks. Participants highlighted the different elements of the strategies that they were finding useful and gave examples of how they were doing this in practice which contributed to shared learning.

Observation: A participant shared how her storytelling strategy is starting to have an impact on other areas of her life beyond work.

Reflection: It seems that some participants are already transferring the strategies and activities to different domains of their life. The participant discussed how she had started using a strategy with her son at a recent family outing and noticed how much less stressed she felt and how she was enjoying her time with her family more as a result.

Observation: There was much more group discussion in this session when I invited the group to help each other look at the positive intention behind others' actions.

Reflection: There seemed to be a development of group connection, rapport and trust in this session, especially as quite a few emotional issues were being shared (e.g., a participant experiencing a difficult friendship issue, and another participant dealing with family health issues). The members were very supportive and encouraging of each other, perhaps in part due to their coaching backgrounds. It might be that people who want to work on their wellbeing are people who have higher levels of self-awareness and compassion. It also seemed particularly relevant to have more group discussion in this session since the strategy this week was viewing from multiple perspectives. I was aware that they were each contributing different perspectives to the same scenarios, such as one participant saying how "brave" another participant had been to confront the situation with her friend. Another example was when a participant described themselves as a "wellbeing fraud" as she felt she wasn't "practising what she preaches", which led to another participant advising that she would prefer to be supported by someone who didn't have it all worked out, so they were walking along the journey together and not feel intimidated by the appearance of perfection.

Observation: A participant brought an example of a friend who had sent her a “passive-aggressive” text message, which opened up a group discussion about viewing from the friend’s perspective. However, the participant started to become self-critical of her own behaviour within the situation and became worried that she had been too judgemental of her friend’s actions. Even though I had not planned to explore self-criticism until later in the session, this was a time when it was important to flex the plan to follow the thread of the session in a relevant way for the group members. Therefore, I asked the members to now start considering what the participant’s positive intentions were within the scenario.

Reflection: It was a difficult balance to strike in the session since asking participants to open up their perspectives to be more tolerant of other people’s behaviours, could lead to them becoming self-critical if they then felt that they had prematurely judged another. The participants seemed to hold themselves to higher standards, feeling like they should “know better” regarding wellbeing because of their professional backgrounds. However, the participants collectively showed each other compassion and empathy within the discussions, and the message of being more understanding of others and also of themselves started to resonate.

Observation: A participant became quite emotional and tearful when sharing her recent personal struggles.

Reflection: Although this was a good opportunity for the group to offer the participant support and to be collaborative, I was concerned about the participant’s emotional state and wanted to explore whether she felt the session was exacerbating her wellbeing challenges. I considered my ethical responsibilities in line with the BPS’s Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021), particularly regarding having respect for the participant’s welfare, reviewing my limits of competence and determining whether a referral to another professional was necessary. To understand the situation further, I asked the participant to stay connected to the session after the group part had ended so I could check in with her on an individual basis. She explained she was feeling very tired which made her tearful, but that she had experienced several positive wellbeing moments over the weekend as a result of her prioritising more self-care activities in the face of challenging family circumstances. Therefore, on balance, it seemed the programme was having a positive effect on her, whilst also bringing her emotions to the surface. I’ll continue to observe and check in with the participant about her emotional state to ensure the programme is still suitable for her.

Summary of reflections from the third group session

Overall, the session appeared to have several key strengths, such as the participants increasing their self-reflection and empathy, with some also showing the capacity to apply the strategies across different life domains. The group dynamic also seems to be improving, where a supportive and compassionate environment has enabled the participants to share their challenges and growth. However, there are limitations in terms of the risk of self-criticism and the emotional vulnerability of participants, plus this session highlighted the challenge of balancing group dynamics with individual emotional support. As such, it is important that moving forward, any coach running this programme can flex the session to meet the emotional and practical needs of the group and be adept in balancing group dynamics with individual emotional support. It is also essential that coaches running this intervention comply with an established code of ethics and conduct, whether that is with the BPS or another recognised professional body.

7.2.5 Reflections on the fourth group session

Observation: A participant shared with the group how she was intentionally creating space for herself to apply the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies within her life to support her wellbeing, and she was seeing the benefit of putting in the effort. However, a second participant shared how she felt she was naturally increasing her mindfulness unconsciously and it was becoming integrated into her day without the need to set a dedicated time for it.

Reflection: I felt that it would be useful to discuss how it takes intentionality to start thinking a different way, and so setting aside time as the first participant has, and consciously adopting a socio-cognitive mindfulness mindset helps to activate it in that moment. But what they might find over time is that they'll develop a more natural capacity for it, and it can happen in the moment without deliberately making a plan, which the second participant alluded to. Upon reflection, I think this was a useful observation to make to help inspire the participants to keep going and pursue trait development of socio-cognitive mindfulness. I will add this point to the session notes for subsequent programmes.

Observation: A participant shared that despite experiencing a very tough and emotional week the previous week, she now planned to "reset" for the week ahead.

Reflection: The participant was visibly emotional in the previous session however seemed much better this week and verbalised that she was feeling more able to focus on her

wellbeing activities. I again reflected on whether the participant had been in the right place emotionally to have participated (i.e., was her mental health suffering to such a degree that she may have needed a different type of help?) However, she shared that she had been aware that it was mostly down to her husband being away for the week and having a painful dental treatment. Therefore, she recognised that the difficulties had passed, and she would be able to put the previous week behind her and start afresh. This is another example where a participant has generally applied the principles of socio-cognitive mindfulness to deal with challenges, i.e., rather than “giving up”, she accepted that the situation was temporary and that things would change and improve, thus giving her an opportunity to reset.

Observation: I used a comment made by a participant to provide an example of using labelling, i.e., when the participant had referred to an upcoming meeting with “a challenging team” in her contracting session.

Reflection: When I brought up the comment made by the participant from an earlier session, the participant did not recall the comment straight away. I wondered whether I should have done this, as perhaps it felt strange for the participant to have a comment from weeks ago played back to them. I was also concerned the participant may have felt put on the spot since I had brought the comment up rather than the other way around. The participant eventually remembered the comment and shared how she had approached the situation differently due to what she was learning from the sessions which had led to a positive outcome. However, upon reflection, I do feel that it was inappropriate for me to have done this and it had the potential to impact her psychological safety within the session. I will ensure that in the final session, I don’t bring up examples of past comments, etc, and instead invite participants to volunteer examples, if they’re comfortable to do so.

Observation: There was more time spent in this session for self-reflection during the ‘creating new categories’ exercise with less time for group collaboration.

Reflection: I may have missed opportunities to draw out group conversation following the exercise; however, I was conscious of giving the participants ample time for self-reflection this week. Perhaps there could have been time for both if the session was longer, which is something to consider when deciding whether the sessions should be extended during the next refinement of the intervention.

Observation: The coaching exercise involved asking the group to expand the global category of wellbeing by creating new categories and labels which may be more relevant to their chosen wellbeing focus and activities. Following a group coaching discussion, I set the home-based assignment of asking the group to make a slight change to their wellbeing activity to get accustomed to adapting and flexing their wellbeing routine.

Reflection: After the session, I reflected on how even though the coaching exercise and questions seemed to stimulate useful reflections from the group, I'm not sure I linked the exercise well to the home-based assignment. Therefore, there may be a risk that I have not consolidated their learning around the strategy of 'creating new categories'. I will start the next session by asking the participants for their updates from the week and checking their understanding of the strategy. If there are any gaps in understanding, I can look to rectify this at the start of the next session.

Observation: When I set the home-based assignment for the participants to make a small change or adaption to their wellbeing activities, the participants all committed to very different adaptations to each other, such as changing where they do the activity, changing the timing of their activity and changing the activity itself (e.g., changing from journaling using words to using imagery).

Reflection: The variety and creativity in the adaptations chosen by the participants reiterates the usefulness of offering space for the participants to personalise their wellbeing practices in ways that work for them. This appeared to be empowering for the participants and helped them to take more ownership of their wellbeing journeys. I will follow up in the next session to understand how they experienced continuing their wellbeing activities in slightly different ways.

Summary of reflections from the fourth group session

The strengths of this session include the development of an empowering environment for the participants where they could focus on personalisation which appeared to promote creativeness and an enhanced motivation for their wellbeing activities. Also, the participants were starting to show the ability to combine the different socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies which aligns with the idea that the strategies help to reinforce each other to create an overall increase in mindfulness. Some participants are even reporting experiencing a natural integration of socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies into daily life. However, there

are areas for improvement, particularly around maintaining psychological safety and ensuring a clear connection between session exercises and home assignments. By refining the balance between self-reflection and group interaction, as well as enhancing the coherence between exercises and assignments, the session could be made more effective.

7.2.6 Reflections on the fifth group session

Observation: A participant contacted me to say her dental appointment was running late (she had been experiencing severe toothache over the last week) and she would either be late for the session or may miss it altogether. Unfortunately, the participant did miss the session.

Reflection: I'm not sure how missing the final session will affect the participant's overall experience. I will ask her about this in her study interview to understand the impact this had on her.

Observation: Two participants had tried their wellbeing activities outside in nature and enjoyed this experience, with one participant saying that she even preferred it to how she had been doing it previously.

Reflection: Some participants reflected on how wellbeing development can be enjoyable, and how changing strict routines, structures and mindsets about wellbeing helped to integrate it into their lives in a more natural and pleasurable way. They acknowledged how adding novelty and changing/adapting their plan can bring more enjoyment to the process. This is a possible example of where multiple socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies overlap and reinforce each other.

Observation: A participant mentioned how her menstrual cycle had impacted her week in terms of lower mood and energy levels. This is not the first time that hormones have been mentioned within this group as having an impact on wellbeing.

Reflection: I wondered whether this level of openness would have been possible in a mixed-sex group. This is the first time I have been very aware that it is an all-female group and it made me reflect on whether this is something to consider moving forward. Should there be opportunities for some groups to be all-female to allow for this kind of discussion or would this be perceived as being discriminatory? Perhaps the interviews could include an additional

question to ask the participants how they felt about the programme being attended by an all-female group to understand the impact this had on their experiences.

Observation: The final exercise to support the week ahead was to ‘control the context’ of an upcoming challenge to their wellbeing plan. Timing did not allow for participants to pick individual challenges so I set the task based on the assumed challenge that the group sessions were coming to an end which might be difficult for some in terms of losing the “accountability” of the weekly sessions. However, several participants felt that this was not a relevant challenge for them.

Reflection: The two participants who did not see lack of accountability as a personal challenge, used the reflection time and discussion period instead to consider what would be a likely challenge for them. They were able to personalise the exercise and apply the strategy of controlling the context in a way that was meaningful to them. Additionally, they also commented on how they did not feel the sessions were holding them accountable because they had latched onto activities that were intrinsically motivating and enjoyable which they naturally wanted to continue for their personal benefit. Perhaps the participants who had previously mentioned that the sessions were helping to hold them accountable may have selected activities that required some external motivation as they were not as intrinsically rewarding as the activities selected by others. Furthermore, these two participants may have selected activities that they felt they ‘should’ do rather than what they wanted to do.

Observation: A participant reflected on how she had been applying the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies to lots of different activities at home, and another participant talked about “weaving” them into her busy week.

Reflection: Some of the participants are starting to show how they’re able to apply the strategies more flexibly and are transferring the strategies into different areas of their lives and wellbeing. One participant reflected on how she had found that it had worked better to integrate the wellbeing activities and strategies into her existing routine and plans, rather than set aside additional time for it.

Summary of reflections from the fifth group session

The strengths from the final group session include how more of the participants appeared to be learning how to integrate wellbeing practices into their lives which may be a result of the

supportive and flexible environment being cultivated by the group. Another key strength (which has also been demonstrated in previous sessions) seemed to be how the structure of the session encouraged personalisation, adaptability, and openness, with participants experiencing greater enjoyment and motivation by applying strategies in a way that suits their lifestyles. However, some limitations highlighted in this session were related to the varying levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation experienced by the participants based on their chosen wellbeing goals, as well as the unknown impacts related to the composition of the group (e.g., all-female groups). Moving forward, it would be useful to consider ways to address these limitations, such as spending more time exploring individual motivational styles and creating more diverse group settings. Finally, one of the participant's experiences of the programme may have been negatively impacted by missing the final session. Nevertheless, there has been very high attendance of the programme overall with only this one instance of non-attendance, and two occasions of slight tardiness, which are promising signs that the participants found the intervention beneficial.

7.3 Findings from Reflections

The following section will capture and categorise my overall perspective of the intervention's main strengths and limitations based on my practitioner observations and reflections. This will help to offer potential suggestions for improving the intervention and provide considerations for the ongoing research inquiry.

7.3.1 Main strengths of the intervention

Participant-centred approach

The focus on personalisation in goal setting and progress has been a key strength, allowing participants to align their wellbeing goals in meaningful ways with tangible actions. The sessions provided participants with strategies that they could adapt to integrate wellbeing practices into their daily lives, leading to increased engagement and contributing to a greater sense of ownership and empowerment over their wellbeing journeys.

Psychological safety

There was a strong emphasis on creating a safe space for participants, fostering an environment where individuals felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences. The collective commitment to maintaining psychological safety was a key success in encouraging

openness and growth. It is possible that this was achieved due to the high levels of self-awareness and empathy of the participants, given their professional experiences with wellbeing and coaching.

Group interaction and support

As the programme progressed, group dynamics improved, with participants building greater rapport and support for one another. There was a notable shift towards increased empathy, self-reflection, and shared learning. Also, starting each session with a reflection on their progress helped the participants to consolidate their learning as well as share their successes or challenges.

Practicality

Whilst hosting the programme online created a few slight technical challenges, overall, it worked well and significantly reduced the costs, time and resources that would have been needed to run the programme in person. There did not appear to be any issues with participants communicating openly with each other within the virtual environment. This is perhaps due to more people feeling increasingly comfortable with using videoconferencing following its widespread usage during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the participants seemed to find online tools like the wellbeing tracker mostly valuable in helping to reflect on their progress and track tangible changes. Overall, the high levels of attendance and adherence to the sessions and home-based assignments are promising indicators that the intervention in its current format is practicable and that the participants were engaged throughout and found value in the programme.

7.3.2 Main limitations of the intervention

Balancing coaching and facilitation

There were challenges in balancing both the coaching and facilitation needed to run the programme effectively. Over-facilitation sometimes stifled deeper participant engagement, group discussion and reflection.

Participant backgrounds

The current group consisted of participants with high self-awareness and coaching experience, which made goal-setting easier. However, non-coaching participants or those with less self-awareness may struggle with goal development and need additional support. It

is also unknown what the impact of a uniform group (e.g., all-female participants) had on the participants' individual experiences, which requires further exploration in the interviews.

Balancing individual and group support

There was a risk of emotional vulnerability becoming a barrier for some participants, as they may have struggled with self-criticism or experiencing hardships at home. Balancing individual emotional support with the needs of the group could be challenging, and there were risks to the group dynamic being impacted if the balance was not achieved.

Time management

A focus on reflection, such as reviewing progress at the start of some certain sessions, led to less time for participants to explore new strategies or more complex topics. Overall, the sessions felt slightly rushed, which would have been further exacerbated if the participants did not have professional coaching and wellbeing experiences.

As a result of the main limitations, the following recommendations are being made for consideration during the next intervention refinement cycle.

7.3.3 Recommendations to improve the intervention

Improve the balance of guidance and coaching

It will be important in future versions to establish clearer boundaries between coaching and facilitation. This may involve breaking each session into segments that focus on coaching (e.g., individual reflections or goal setting) and facilitation (e.g., providing explanations). This way, participants can have more space to reflect and engage while still receiving crucial instructions and information.

Provide additional support for non-coaching participants

For participants with lower self-awareness or less experience with coaching, it will be critical to offer additional resources or activities to help them develop their goals. This might include more structured exercises or one-to-one check-ins during or after the group sessions to support their goal-setting process and respond to any requests for additional help.

Review session timings

It will be useful to consider increasing the duration of the group sessions and reassessing the time distribution between reflection on past progress and exploration of new strategies or content. This will allow more time for deep discussions and exploration of new tools and strategies, particularly for participants who have been making progress. Finally, shifting the focus towards more time for group discussions and interactions will enable participants to share insights and learn from each other.

Increase participant diversity

It will be important to consider diversifying the group composition, as this can enhance the variety of experiences and perspectives shared during the sessions. Mixing backgrounds and experiences can also promote more balanced group dynamics and engagement.

7.4 Implications for Ongoing Research

This reflexive account may help to understand the intervention's possible strengths and limitations from the perspective of the coach conducting the programme. However, it is also important to explore the participants' perspectives on some of the limitations highlighted in this chapter, such as the cohort being an all-female group, and the sessions feeling too short and perhaps over-facilitated. Therefore, it is crucial for the author to bracket her practitioner experience as much as possible and to approach the interviews with the participants with a higher degree of objectivity. To do this, the author will continue her journaling and reflexive activities to shift her focus to her role as a researcher and to heighten her critical self-awareness.

7.5 Conclusion

Maintaining a reflexive journal throughout the intervention has provided both personal and practical benefits. From the author's perspective, it has increased her self-awareness by reflecting on her thoughts, feelings and potential biases throughout the delivery of the intervention. Journaling was useful in processing the emotional complexity that can arise when working closely with participants, particularly when the focus is on wellbeing. The reflective practice helped identify potential ethical issues and encouraged the practitioner to remain aligned with ethical standards and professional conduct guidelines. This ongoing

reflection throughout the intervention led to the author's continuous professional growth and supported the integration of her dual roles as both researcher and practitioner.

From a research perspective, reflexive journaling facilitated the identification of key intervention strengths and limitations, which in turn provided valuable insights for potential future improvements. The intervention's participant-centred approach, emphasis on psychological safety and supportive environment appeared to contribute to positive participant engagement and empowerment. However, challenges existed, such as time constraints, balancing coaching and facilitation, and the unknown risks associated with the group's professional backgrounds and lack of diversity. Recommendations for refining the intervention may include improving the balance of guidance and coaching, offering additional support for less experienced participants, reviewing session timings and increasing participant diversity. These reflections and suggestions will inform the ongoing development of the intervention, helping to create a more inclusive and effective programme in future iterations. However, the reflections from this chapter are intended to be supplementary to the in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences of the intervention, which will be fully investigated in the ensuing chapter.

Chapter 8. Feasibility Study: A Qualitative Exploration of a Wellbeing Coaching Programme Based on Socio-cognitive Mindfulness

8.1 Chapter Introduction

In Chapter 6 the outcomes of the coaching programme were analysed from a quantitative perspective, yet the findings are limited in relation to understanding if the programme theory underpinning the intervention is sound. Whilst there are useful examples within the literature which have outlined a mixed-method approach to assess the feasibility and acceptability of coaching programmes (Kenyon et al., 2015; Qu et al., 2022), the emphasis is commonly placed on the quantitative data. This chapter intended to complement the quantitative feasibility assessment of the intervention with an in-depth qualitative exploration of the user experience of the intervention. This is to provide a more comprehensive examination of the intervention's acceptability, as well as the processes occurring within the intervention from the participants' perspectives. The chapter summarises the methods used to attain the participants' in-depth perspectives and the six themes that were generated as a result which will inform ongoing intervention refinement.

8.2 Study Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this study was to enhance the overall mixed-method approach to the intervention's feasibility assessment by providing a qualitative perspective of how the participants experienced the complex features and effects of the programme (Petticrew et al., 2013). Thus, the primary aim of the study was to explore how the participants experienced the programme and whether they noticed any changes to their wellbeing as a result of attending. Additionally, the overall approach to this thesis has aimed to involve the views of key stakeholders that could be the end users of the developed intervention, as either recipients or practitioners. On this occasion, the participants who volunteered for the programme were all coaches. Hence, a secondary aim was to explore how the coaches made sense of the experience from a practitioner's perspective. The coaches' views help to inform the ongoing design of the programme whilst considering how it can be applied in practice. Thus, the research question in this study was: How did coaches experience attending a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness from both a participant and a practitioner perspective?

8.3 Methodology

8.3.1 Study design

As the coaching programme involves multiple interacting psychological processes where participants choose which outcomes to pursue, a qualitative approach was chosen to explore the unfolding nature of the programme (Passmore & Theeboom, 2016). It was expected that gaining the reflections of participants would provide a rich source of data from which to understand more about how the intervention worked in practice (Bowen et al., 2009). Qualitative interviews were deemed suitable for exploring the subjective nature of how the participants experienced the multifaceted features and effects of the intervention (Jamshed, 2014). As such, semi-structured interviews were chosen to explore the participants' reflections and interpretations in depth to gain useful insights about their experiences throughout the programme (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

8.3.2 Study participants and procedure

Chapter 6 provides the full information about the study participants and recruitment procedure. In summary, once receiving ethical clearance (Newcastle University Ethics Committee reference: 34512/2023) a purposive sampling strategy was employed to target a demographic likely to be attracted to this kind of programme, for example, professionals interested in pursuing development opportunities to enhance their mindfulness and wellbeing levels. This led to a sample of six female participants ($M_{age} = 47$, $SD = 6.3$); however, it came to light when collecting demographic information that they all had professional experience of coaching and wellbeing interventions. As discussed in Chapter 6, the specific professional backgrounds of the participants were seized as an opportunity to also explore their practitioner perspectives. Consequently, the research question was extended to not only investigate the participants' experiences from their personal viewpoints, but to also explore their practitioner perspectives based on their areas of professional expertise. The interview template was updated to include two additional questions: "How might this impact your work as a coach?" and "What is your view of how socio-cognitive mindfulness can support peoples' wellbeing?"

The recruited participants commenced the coaching programme once they had signed the consent forms. The intervention was delivered in a realistic setting and in a true-to-life manner to strengthen the study's ecological validity (Fletcher et al., 2016). To recap, the

coaching programme started with individual contracting sessions where the coach explained the programme structure and explored with each participant an area of their wellbeing that they wanted to focus on. Five weekly group sessions of approximately one hour followed, which aimed to facilitate the learning and application of five socio-cognitive mindfulness processes: attending to the process before the outcome, viewing from multiple perspectives, welcoming new information, creating new categories and controlling the context. Coaching processes were framed with a socio-cognitive mindfulness lens, and participants were expected to complete regular home-based activities. A comprehensive description of the intervention is provided in Chapter 5, with a summarised version outlined in Chapter 6.

8.3.3 Data collection

Once the programme ended, the participants were invited to attend semi-structured interviews lasting between 35-55 minutes. The participants gave consent for the interviews to be recorded and transcribed via Microsoft Teams. A template of open-ended questions was created and used, which included suggested prompts to approach the interviews with a level of consistency (see Appendix J). The recorded interviews were deleted once the transcriptions had been checked for accuracy. The extracts from the transcriptions were then exported into an Excel spreadsheet to support the analysis process.

8.3.4 Data Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was deemed to be the most fitting way to acknowledge the researcher-practitioner involvement in the co-production of knowledge with the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The thematic analysis followed the recommended stages iteratively: data familiarisation, data coding, theme generation, theme development, theme refinement and write-up. The supervision team reviewed samples of the codes and themes being generated to support the reflexive process. The final themes include extracts from the interview transcripts which best express the meaning of the themes and sub-themes.

The thematic analysis was mainly deductive and theoretically driven since the data was being interpreted through the lens of socio-cognitive mindfulness (Langer, 1989).

Additionally, as a coaching psychologist, the author was making sense of the data according to her existing awareness of psychological theories concerning adult learning, wellbeing and motivation (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The awareness of prior theory informed the coding and

development of themes, where the dataset was interpreted based on pre-existing awareness of relevant theories and concepts. This influenced how the initial codes, which were predominantly semantic, eventually developed into latent themes based on the conceptual interpretations being applied. Although some argue that research will always involve a degree of interpretation based on differing perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), it is still critical for researchers to be reflexive and critically interrogate their processes and their influence on the analysis and subsequent findings.

8.4 Reflexivity

To increase reflexivity throughout the research process, journaling and other reflexive activities were conducted. These activities were regularly reviewed with the wider research team who could provide objective observations and guidance (Braun & Clark, 2019). This helped to identify any potential conflicts of interest, particularly around relationship boundaries. This section provides examples and summaries of several of the reflexive activities completed by the author, which will be written in first person and using an informal tone.

8.4.1 Reflexivity statement

Prior to conducting the participants' interviews, guidance from Braun and Clarke (2022) was used to consider reflexivity from multiple angles, such as awareness of my social positions, research philosophy and held assumptions about the research topics and participants.

Personal reflexivity and social positions

Social privileges: White, British (born), heterosexual, atheist (raised a Protestant), non-disabled, late 30s, financially stable.

Social marginalities: Female, working class background (Northeast regional accent).

How do these social positions shape how I experience the world, and how I view others and how they might view me?

I have become more aware of the privileges my societal position brings me. This includes feeling privileged to have enough financial stability to be able to pursue academic endeavours. I grew up with full time working parents who came from working class backgrounds, therefore, I don't take my current opportunities for granted. I feel I'm in a

‘sweet spot’ in relation to my age; as a ‘mature’ student, I bring a wealth of working professional experience to this process along with plenty of gratitude for having the opportunity to return to studying. However, I hopefully have a long future ahead career-wise. But because of my upbringing, I can empathise with those that aren’t afforded the same choices as me and may have to prioritise earning income over personal fulfilment opportunities.

I’m self-conscious of my accent, as I feel it can make me sound unintelligent at times, and I’m very aware of this at conferences, etc, where there are more southern and ‘upper-class’ sounding accents than there are northern regional accents. This can sometimes make me feel inferior in certain company. Equally, I can instantly feel comfortable when I meet people with northern or other typically ‘working-class’ accents.

Recent worldwide events and movements have made me much more sensitive about race and sexuality issues. I feel I have always been a tolerant person, but now I’m more aware of the potential of unconscious biases and how people’s experiences of discrimination may be impacting their ongoing experiences. I can personally relate to the “Me Too” movement based on past professional experiences, and therefore, I do tend to feel more comfortable in female environments. However, I know that I could learn and understand more about racial tensions and immigration experiences and have tried to achieve this through community work with immigration charities.

Do they relate to any political, ideological, or theoretical commitment I have?

I believe my draw towards experiential learning and interpretative paradigms comes from a genuine desire to understand my own and others’ views and experiences. I also believe my drive to continually increase my tolerance and awareness of others feeds into my deep interest in Langer’s socio-cognitive mindfulness theory since a key element is being able to look from and accept other people’s perspectives more.

Functional and disciplinary reflexivity

Research training and experiences

I received research training during my master’s degree, and I also chose to attend a masters-level module in qualitative methods as part of my first year during my PhD. I knew early on

as a Postgraduate that I would want to approach any research qualitatively. If I was to use any statistical data, it would likely be simple and descriptive, and only to support how this can be expanded on qualitatively. I have conducted 3 studies up until this point: a systematic review with a narrative synthesis, a qualitative study using in-depth questionnaires and a focus group, and a method triangulation study. My fourth current study is a feasibility study which will take a mixed-method approach; quantitative data relating to the recruitment processes, measures and adherence to the intervention, then a qualitative arm to explore the participants' experiences.

Status and context as a scholar

I'm a PhD student at a Russell Group university, although I did transfer from an ex-polytechnic university. I am encouraged to publish, but more so to demonstrate that I'm engaging with my peers in the field in which I'm applying my research, with less emphasis on the ranking of the journals. This aligns with my practitioner background and focus for applying my research in practical and professional contexts.

Preferred methods and approaches

As much as I want to explore concepts and experiences experientially and flexibly, I also value highly systematic and transparent approaches. As such, I prefer to use established frameworks and guidelines to help guide my research process, whilst allowing me to flexibly select methods that integrate into the overall research process. I like to work alone with analysis but enjoy working collaboratively with others during the data collection process. I also prefer to work with smaller groups of people so that the conversations and discussions are in-depth rather than collecting lots of views but only at a surface-level.

Research philosophy and theoretical assumptions

I have identified as a pragmatist early in my academic career, which may be a result of coming to academia as a mature student having focused for many years previously as a practitioner. Therefore, I align with the ontological perspective that knowledge needs to serve a purpose and can be judged by its usefulness. From an epistemological perspective, I gravitate towards methods that can help to improve real-world situations, which often requires adapting to the fluid nature of the research process and selecting the right tool for the job.

I also believe “big Q” qualitative theory best helps to really understand what is happening when exploring a new idea or trying to solve a problem. Even during the systematic review, I emphasised the descriptions of the interventions and how the authors posited they worked from a psychological perspective; I was less concerned about the statistical effectiveness of the interventions. However, I was acutely aware that there was little data provided to capture the participants’ experience of the interventions and their interpretations on how it worked. This has helped to shape my approach to developing the current intervention and the methods I’ve selected to design and deliver it. As such, I believe my research philosophy values a qualitative approach that embraces the researcher’s active role and aims to understand the participants’ experience so that the research can lead to improvements and actionable outcomes. As a pragmatic researcher, I absorb myself in the experiential learning process; for myself as the researcher and for the participants I’m co-producing knowledge with.

Fears, anxieties, hopes and expectations

I worry sometimes how useful my research will be in the wider world beyond my PhD journey, as my expectations have always been to continue working with this idea in my professional practice with the hope that I can share this with a larger audience. My overall ambition is to integrate this into a coach and coach supervisor CPD product; therefore, I am aware that I have a personal and professional interest in the research leading to useful findings.

Reflexivity around specific topic

How are my positionings and/or life experiences related to my research topic?

I am coming to this research process with an idea that I would like to explore based on observations I’ve made within my professional practice as a coach/coaching psychologist and coach supervisor. Most of my clients are in service to their own clients, and sometimes overlook their ability to resource themselves, or at least they can sometimes deprioritise their own wellbeing. I have also had my own personal wellbeing journey where I have explored multiple ways to be proactive about my mental health by building resilience and developing self-care practices. I stumbled across socio-cognitive mindfulness within my MSc 3.5 years ago – it was discussed for about 15 minutes in total. Yet I was instinctively drawn to the concept as I could see how it could be integrated into wellbeing development and

coaching, and as such, I've been researching it ever since. Therefore, I'm personally and professionally invested in this journey.

What assumptions do I hold about this topic?

My assumptions based on my research so far is that socio-cognitive mindfulness is a useful theory to apply within coaching contexts, especially for improving wellbeing. I am quite confident that it's a compatible approach, therefore, the next stages of this research journey are more centred around the best approaches to integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching. I'm no longer asking, "would it work?" I'm instead exploring "how can it work best?" It may be too early for me to make this assumption from a research perspective; however, my practitioner experiences have given me enough examples of where applying the evidence-based strategies has led to positive real-world outcomes.

How might participants perceive me?

I tend to avoid using overly technical or academic language and along with my regional accent and my friendly demeanour, I believe participants will find me approachable. However, if some participants do want to hear that there is evidence and rigour behind this approach, I'm also comfortable and confident in discussing the topics and themes in more detail and complexity. Also, my enthusiasm for the research may be engaging, however, if over-done, some may feel obliged to 'be positive' about the programme, even if they are experiencing some doubts or concerns. I will therefore use my approachability to openly welcome criticism and invite participants to help co-produce knowledge that can help the ongoing improvement and refinement of the programme based on their honest feedback. Another area to be aware of is that I do have high expectations of people, and so I have to be careful that I am not overly demanding of the participants and not seen to be 'chasing them up' too often.

Where and how do I occupy positions of privilege and marginality in relation to my topic and the participants?

All the participants are female, white, with regional accents, and they all come from coaching backgrounds. Therefore, I share commonalities with the participants. However, I may be seen to have a privilege due to my higher education, and also that my status as a Chartered Coaching Psychologist may make me seem to be more 'qualified' within coaching.

This may, however, help them to view me as being able to bring a level of expertise to the experience that they can benefit from.

A male coach did apply to the study, as well as an Asian female who was a doctor, however, they were unable to participate due to personal circumstances and not being able to commit to the timings. However, I do wonder how a more mixed make-up of the participant group would have affected the study findings.

Am I an outsider or insider researcher?

I believe I am predominantly an insider researcher, as I match a lot of the participants' demographical features, and we also recognise ourselves as being part of a coaching profession with an interest in wellbeing development. However, as I am coming into the group as the researcher who is leading the programme and potentially bringing new knowledge to them in relation to their wellbeing, that does set me slightly apart from the participant group in terms of roles and responsibilities. This will also be made explicit during the contracting sessions.

Summary of reflexivity statement

Fook (2000) warns that reflexivity can lose its criticality if the researcher does not also increase their awareness of social positions and power balances. Writing the personal reflexivity statement prior to conducting the interviews was an opportunity to reflect on how my background, experiences and perspectives might influence the research process. I was able to regularly refer back to my reflexivity statement throughout to maintain my awareness of social positioning. Additionally, sharing my reflexive statement with the reader helps to increase transparency by being open about the context in which the research is being conducted.

8.4.2 Reflections on participant interviews

After each interview with a participant, I recorded observations I had made during the interview, primarily to analyse whether my dual role as a practitioner researcher may be impacting the research process. I was conscious that I had spent six sessions with each of the participants in my capacity as a coach and had developed relationships with them on that basis. Therefore, I needed to reposition myself with the participants during the interviews as

a researcher and not the practitioner, and I was keen to capture my reflections on how I felt I had handled this transition. Below is an example of observations and reflections I made following one of the participant's interviews.

Reflections on participant 1's interview

Observation: I found myself holding back on asking Participant 1 to describe her overall experience of the programme as she was explaining it in her own way in her own time. Instead, I asked her to summarise her experience at the end of the interview which she did succinctly.

Reflection: In future interviews I will move this question to the end as it seemed to work well as the interviewee had gone through the process of reviewing her experience from different angles and so was more prepared to provide a summary by this point.

Observation: Participant 1 shared some feelings that she had about another participant that made her feel very insecure about herself. I found myself slipping into a coaching role.

Reflection: It is not ideal that I crossed over roles during the interview as I became involved as a coach in discussing this situation to help her see her positive impact within the situation, rather than just asking her to describe her experience without input from me. However, as I have built a connection with this participant based on the coaching programme, I felt it would have been more damaging to not have addressed her concerns. However, for the purpose of the analysis, I will only use the proportion of the data where she first raises her insecurities before I intervene with coaching questions, and I will omit the coaching discussion that follows.

Observation: I added a follow-up question about what Participant 1 would specifically do to continue applying socio-cognitive mindfulness to her ongoing wellbeing development.

Reflection: I will include this as an additional question in the next interviews to ensure consistency.

Observation: At the end of the interview, I replied "I like that a lot" in response to a positive comment Participant 1 made about the programme.

Reflection: I believe it was inappropriate for me to respond in this way as it suggests I am personally pleased with her making a positive statement about the programme, which may

seem impartial. However, I am a naturally positive person when I respond to other people's positive comments, although I had refrained from doing this throughout most of the interview. It may have been because the interview was drawing to a close that I relaxed my position as an interviewer. I think if the comment had been made earlier, it may have influenced the interview more, but I hope it had less of an impact since it was right at the end.

Summary of reflections on participant interviews

My reflections from the interviews overall helped me to increase my self-awareness of potential assumptions or biases that may influence my interpretation and analysis of the interview data. I also found that by regularly considering and critiquing my dual role position as a practitioner researcher kept it to the forefront of my mind when in contact with the participants. The example notes provided in this section were from the first interview, and I felt that I improved my ability to manage my dual role more effectively as I became more practiced at increasing my reflexivity during the interviews.

8.4.3 Familiarisation with interview transcripts

After downloading the transcript from each participant interview, I read through the transcript several times to immerse myself in the content. I then used a selection of questions recommended by Braun and Clarke (2022) to guide my critical engagement with the transcripts. Below is an example of my familiarisation notes based on one of the participant's interview transcripts.

Participant 3 familiarisation notes

How does the participant make sense of whatever it is they are discussing?

The participant struggles to make sense of how the mindfulness strategies have been integrated, but she describes it as "infiltration", almost as if it's been a subconscious process. But she does also discuss how repeating activities helped to form a habit, which she believes is why her chosen wellbeing activity of Tai Chi will now be part of her ongoing routine. She also recognises that her learning has translated into other areas of her life and talks about how it helped in "reigniting" her openness and curiosity.

Why might they be making sense of things in this way (and not in another way)?

Perhaps she was surprised that the strategies would become more natural to her since she identifies as being more 'body-based' rather than being a 'thinker'. Therefore, she has been focused on the physicality of her wellbeing activity and less focused on how she is applying the strategies from a cognitive perspective.

In what different ways do they make sense of the topic?

She goes on to make sense of it by looking at how it's affected the other participants, as well as noticing how other participants changed over the course of the programme. She also considers how they were all relatively "intellectual" participants with existing levels of self-awareness, which she believes enhanced the process. She also discusses how she may not have fully taken in the cognitive processes because she is a visual learner and so would have benefited from more visual aids as well as additional information about the processes.

What sort of assumptions about wellbeing, mindfulness and coaching are being made?

She is coming from a wealth of knowledge about the meditative form of mindfulness and seems to use her body senses more than her thought processes to guide her. I think she may have assumed that she would instil a new wellbeing habit purely through repetition and following a coaching process of exploring options and making a plan, etc, however, she may have underestimated how the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies have played a part in integrating this new healthy habit into her lifestyle.

How is wellbeing, mindfulness and coaching characterised?

She is viewing this form of mindfulness as being suitable for 'thinkers' but that it's helped her to be more open and adventurous, which has in turn, increased her confidence in trying new things and being more sociable.

What ideas about coaching, wellbeing and mindfulness are being drawn on?

She discussed the GROW model, as well as aspects of shared learning. She also referenced ACT in terms of how she owns her negative emotions and responses which is an interesting observation to consider further. She draws upon her existing knowledge and preference of meditative mindfulness, but rather than using it to compare and contrast in order to reject socio-cognitive mindfulness, she seems to find a way to align her meditative and body-based

preferences with her new wellbeing activity of Tai Chi. She seems to achieve this by applying the concepts of socio-cognitive mindfulness to find enjoyable and novelty-seeking ways of embedding the activity into her lifestyle.

What moral frameworks does this participant rely on?

Self-kindness, compassion, listening to body

Summary of reflections on participant transcripts

By familiarising myself with all the interview transcripts before starting coding, I was able to engage with the data to understand the nuances in the participants' responses, as demonstrated in the previous example. Additionally, rereading the transcripts multiple times prevented me from making assumptions prematurely, and increased my sensitivity to the tone and meanings embedded within the participants' responses. This helped with the initial identification of patterns and themes which lay the foundation for the coding process.

8.4.4 Reflecting with supervisors

Another reflective strategy recommended by Braun and Clark (2022) is to review and reflect on analysis at all stages with more experienced researchers. I had the benefit of three experienced researchers in my supervision team who I was able to contact regularly throughout the whole research process. This was particularly useful during coding of the transcripts, theme generation and write-up. Braun and Clark advise that supervisors can "manage and contain anxieties about getting analysis 'right'" (2022, p.273). An example of this is demonstrated by an email I sent to my primary supervisor when I had started the coding phase:

"I'm surprised at how much I'm struggling with Reflexive TA this time around...maybe because the interviews are already discussing quite psychological topics so I'm struggling to be interpretative with their answers. So, I seem to be taking what the participant is saying at face value – especially as they're coming from coaching/wellbeing/psychology backgrounds. I'm not doing much latent coding, it's definitely more semantic – and sometimes even directly copying the participant's own terminology. But then I quite like that this makes the analysis at this point more participant-driven than researcher-driven...or am I just making excuses for not coding very well??"

Anyway, I've attached my brief notes on the familiarisation stage and then the coded transcript – I've just added comments to the word document and spaced out the transcript so it's hopefully not too messy. I'll move it all to a spreadsheet eventually. But I wanted to get your thoughts before I do anymore, as I'm feeling quite unsure of myself, as you can probably tell!"

My supervisor responded to this in a way that reassured me that my initial interpretations were sensible because much of thematic analysis involves using the participant's phrasing since it is their story and their perceptions we are trying to convey through the analysis.

Receiving reassurance from my supervisors was useful, but it was equally important to have my interpretations interrogated when needed. For example, during the write-up phase, one of my supervisors challenged a final theme which had been generated based on participant comments about my coaching skills and suggested it would be *"helpful to note awareness of dialogue pertaining to coach role and perceived helpfulness being within a conversation with the coach who delivered the intervention."* In a discussion with my supervisor, he explained that he felt that this was an instance where the data was too subjective and perhaps not relevant to the research inquiry about the effectiveness of the intervention. This was a useful outsider perspective to reflect on to consider whether I had attended to this part of the analysis reflexively enough. As a result of this discussion, it was agreed that comments which were directly about my capabilities as a coach, and not the coaching processes or relationships, would be disregarded.

Summary of reflections with supervisors

Regularly reflecting on my reflections and processes with my supervision team throughout the stages of the thematic analysis helped me to refine my interpretation of the data. As I had fully immersed myself in delivering the intervention and had developed a rapport with the participants, it was beneficial to integrate three different 'outsider' perspectives. My supervisors offered a critical eye and were able to point out when my assumptions or closeness to the data might be influencing the analysis. They brought a more objective perspective to the process and checked whether the resulting themes were suitably grounded in the data. Finally, they were able to give valuable feedback about how to clearly present the findings in the write-up phase.

8.5 Results

Six themes were developed from the reflexive thematic analysis that captured how the coaches made sense of their experience on the wellbeing coaching programme developed from socio-cognitive mindfulness. Four of the themes encapsulated how they subjectively experienced the programme from a participant's perspective: 'balancing coaching tensions to enable self-development', 'a learning mindset for manifesting socio-cognitive mindfulness', 'improving wellbeing through cognitive flexibility', and 'stages of motivation for change'. A further two themes covered how they interpreted the experience from a more objective practitioner perspective: 'interpreting socio-cognitive mindfulness through frames of reference' and 'experience-based insights into programme structure'. Overall, the themes portrayed a positive experience, including useful insights about how they felt the programme helped them to achieve varied wellbeing benefits. Table 13 provides the six themes and twenty associated subthemes, which are discussed in the following sections.

Table 13 Main themes and subthemes

Main theme	Subtheme
Balancing coaching tensions to enable self-development	Facilitated learning $\rightleftharpoons$ Self-directed learning
	Giving support $\rightleftharpoons$ Taking accountability
	Group connection $\rightleftharpoons$ Individual focus
A learning mindset for manifesting socio-cognitive mindfulness	Wellbeing development as a continuous process
	Attending to experiences and change
	Reflecting from different perspectives
	Generating new approaches to wellbeing
Improving wellbeing through cognitive flexibility	Increasing self-fulfilment by re-evaluating needs
	Improving relationships through cognitive empathy
	Increasing positive affect through cognitive reappraisal
	Increasing environmental mastery through solution-finding
Stages of motivation for change	The 'right' time to make a change
	Making time to habituate change
	Worth investing time in change
Interpreting socio-cognitive mindfulness through frames of reference	Finding synergies with relevant psychological theories
	Distinguishing from meditative mindfulness
	Conflicts with existing practitioner philosophies
Experience-based insights into programme structure	Impact of practitioner backgrounds on group dynamics
	Experience-based recommendations
	Applying socio-cognitive mindfulness to coaching

8.5.1 Balancing coaching tensions to enable self-development

One of the key themes related to how the participants were somewhat aware of a balancing act taking place within the overall coaching environment. The balance required adequate structure and guidance to support the participants through the learning process, whilst empowering them to create personalised plans and to take ownership of their progression.

Facilitated learning ⇌ Self-directed learning

The first coaching tension related to balancing the facilitated learning against how much the participants were able to self-direct their development. The participants reported the value they gained from *'knowing that I was following a programme'* (Participant 3) and *'somebody else taking the lead on something and then guiding me, and then me being able to do it.'* (Participant 6). Yet, the participants understood that the structure in place was for guidance and was not intended as a prescriptive direction:

'It wasn't like a set of tasks that we had to do each week, it was self-motivated and self-directed [...] prioritising what I wanted to do rather than working toward a checklist.' Participant 2

Despite the participants welcoming how the programme *'gave them complete autonomy'* (Participant 6), some admitted that at times they *'struggled with the concepts'* (Participant 3). Participant 1 agreed that she would *'have liked more explanation of the tools'*, however, she considered whether the programme approach had:

'Purposely left it vague for the tools for us to find our own way, because I know that sometimes with coaching or with these kinds of things, sometimes you can be too prescriptive. And if it was too prescriptive would that in itself have been tying up?'

Others recognised that although they wanted more information, either in the form of additional reading or written instructions, they concluded that the programme had *'been effective even without that'* (Participant 3). Participant 4 said:

'Things were working [...] and things were progressing. And so, I don't think it hindered anything.'

The participants indicated that they enjoyed having the structure of the programme whilst having the latitude to create their personalised plan, although they would have preferred to have had more information and theoretical background to the strategies.

Giving support ⇌ Taking accountability

There was a coaching tension between the participants wanting to be supported through their development whilst taking ownership of their progress. Some of the participants admitted to wanting or needing ‘*an external motivator*’ (Participant 5) to help them pursue their wellbeing development. They valued how:

‘Checking in [with] the group for that accountability [...] is giving me a bit more of an impetus and a focus to it rather than just me doing it on my own.’
Participant 3

Nevertheless, they recognised that the onus was on them to ‘*make it happen for themselves*’ (Participant 6). All participants understood that they were responsible for completing the wellbeing activities in between the sessions. They recognised that attending the weekly sessions each Monday and providing updates on their activities prompted self-reflection:

‘I think even though I wasn't doing the tasks in order to get the accountability, I think knowing that we had that on the Monday made me reflect on it.’
Participant 2

Participant 1 felt that the weekly wellbeing updates helped her to recognise the progress she was making:

‘Having to fill in this questionnaire and encouraging people to write down what they've done each day, it reinforces: you're doing something [...] So that discipline has helped me to shape my own behaviour.’

Although Participant 3 noted that:

‘There was no judgment whether you did, or you didn't [...] We all know if we're doing something, it's benefiting us.’

Consequently, there appeared to be an appropriate balance between the participants having access to a supportive, non-judgmental environment whilst taking responsibility for their development and progression.

Group connection ⇌ Individual focus

Another coaching tension was between the level of attention given to the group as a collective, versus the participants having time to focus on their individual needs. The participants generally found that they experienced ‘*a really positive group dynamic*’ (Participant 2) where the ‘*group naturally connected*’ (Participant 5). This translated into a group support system as described by Participant 3:

‘I think I got real joy in that, by sharing other people’s journeys from attending. And us also nodding and giving each other permission.’

Nevertheless, many of the participants appreciated not becoming too overly involved with each other, and having boundaries within the group setting:

‘There was no expectation to suddenly be really, really friendly talking about each other’s lives. We had one focus in that group and I kind of like having that structure and boundaries.’ Participant 6

The participants recognised that there was ‘*a mixture of extroverts and introverts*’ (Participant 1) which impacted how much group interaction they each preferred. Participant 1 further explained ‘*I really got it when it was mine*’ when the theory was connected to her individual circumstances. Likewise, Participant 2 appreciated the group activities, but described wanting to:

‘Get on and do my own thing. Personally, I think it would be as effective or better on one-to-one [...] You could probably get deeper and get really like into the nitty gritty more in one-to-one.’

Participant 6 disagreed saying:

‘It felt more natural and organic in a group. I think one-on-one would have felt a little bit too [...] I don’t wanna say forced, but just too intense, maybe, for what that particular course is.’

It seems whilst there was a consensus that an adequate balance between group connection and personal focus was achieved, there were still some who may have preferred it skewed towards their personal preferences. Yet, Participant 4 pointed out that:

'You wouldn't necessarily be accessing this if it's not something that would work for you anyway in terms of that group dynamic.'

Overall, it appeared that balancing the coaching tensions helped to achieve a level of synchronisation to create an environment conducive to personal growth (van Nieuwerburgh & Love, 2019).

8.5.2 A learning mindset for manifesting socio-cognitive mindfulness

Another key theme encompassed how the learning approach within the coaching programme helped the participants to develop socio-cognitive mindfulness, but equally, that the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies were conducive to developing a learning mindset. Thus, the coaching and mindfulness processes reinforced each other and helped participants to approach the programme as an ongoing learning process.

Wellbeing development as a continuous process

The participants agreed that understanding how to apply socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies to their wellbeing goals had *'been a learning process'* (Participant 4).

'I'd say a big realisation - even if you've got an end goal that you're working towards - because it's very process-based, the process might be completely different in order to get there.' Participant 2

Participant 6 described that focusing on the wellbeing process rather than the end result had *'given me the opportunity to slow down.'* Participant 4 further explained:

'I tend to disregard the process bit [...] I would just want to be there. I want to be at the end of it, and actually, that can throw obstacles up.'

Participant 2 compared taking a process-focused approach to wellbeing goals to her prior attempts which were more outcome-orientated:

'That maybe explains why previous attempts have been ineffective to build consistency. And so, whilst I don't feel like I've particularly reached a destination, I'm on the right path.'

The participants started to view the programme as the start of a lifelong learning process, or as described by Participant 3: *'Almost like the seed's been planted.'*

Attending to experiences and change

The participants reflected on how they had started to take more notice of their inner experiences as well as *'being more aware of my surroundings'* (Participant 5). They were then better able to detect new information or changes in themselves and their environments.

'There's always more you can become aware of. We all get complacent with that [...] I think they're the major things for me: just noticing the changes.'
Participant 3

Participant 5 had a moment of clarity about how her fixed thinking led to a self-defeatist attitude concerning her wellbeing activity:

'It was a light bulb moment for me within the programme, that I had all these rules, and if I didn't complete those, then it was a done deal and that was it: gone.'

Participant 5 learned to address this by noticing *'things that are coming in and out that change'*. Participant 1 also describes a moment when she realised that she was thinking about a situation in a *'fixed'* way and the impact that this had on her:

'It turned it on its head completely and it shocked me. And also made me think: "gosh, I can't believe how I'm seeing that." You know when you really get a big level of self-awareness? [...] That was very powerful.'

Similarly, Participant 4 became aware of her negative thoughts, but saw the value in having this experience during the programme:

'There's a bonus of that negative stuff coming up whilst you're in this process because it helps you reflect on that and other ways that I can be more mindful around that.'

As such, the programme *'brought new awareness'* (Participant 2) to experiences that they were then able to reflect on further, as discussed in the next sub-theme.

Reflecting from different perspectives

The participants acknowledged benefiting from sharing their experiences and learning from each other by being able to consider different perspectives. Despite everyone coming from different backgrounds, Participant 4 noted that:

'There'd be things that we were doing similarly, things that we were doing differently. But that we would be able to learn.'

It seemed to resonate with the participants that it was useful to consider *'people's intentions towards things'* (Participant 5) when dealing with challenging interpersonal scenarios. This helped Participant 5 to better reflect on:

'My reactions to those intentions. And actually, I've written a few things in my journal about [...] the intentions may not be what I'm assuming them to be.'

The group were finding it valuable to *'learn from everybody else'* (Participant 2), particularly in helping them to consider new ways to apply the strategies for themselves:

'Hearing other people's experiences of how they were putting it into practice, even though it was not relevant to mine, was useful to gain that experience of how they're applying it. And then I could apply it to myself through the week.'
Participant 2

Nearly all of the participants had found that the session which focused on the strategy of *'viewing from multiple perspectives'* translated well into personal situations that they were encountering during the programme. Participant 6 describes her experience:

'I'd had a situation that week where I was really nervous about something. And I had definitely gone into overthinking, assuming, forecasting [...] So that really helped me that week and because it just landed at the right time.'

By being able to consider situations from different perspectives, they were then more open to considering different ways of approaching related situations.

Generating new approaches to wellbeing

The participants discussed their reflections and ideas during the coaching sessions but conducted most of the wellbeing activities outside of the sessions in their own time. As the

programme progressed, they were more open to trying new ways of approaching their wellbeing:

'Trying out new things - that was the one that I think stimulated most for me, of all the concepts [...] It's made me more open and curious, definitely, to try things out.' Participant 3

Participant 1 found that using different approaches for her wellbeing activity was a '*game changer*':

'I know that as I'm designing and making the book, it will be going in at a different level and in a deeper place. Now I normally wouldn't do that, and it normally wouldn't be part of my process... So, the difference has had more impact than I thought it would do.'

The participants were energised by trying out new ways of approaching their wellbeing and were keen to continue their exploration:

'One of the things that I will look forward to is now I know a bit more about it, is setting myself another element to work on [...] how can I use it now maybe focusing on a different goal? I want to experiment with it and explore.'
Participant 4

By the end of the programme, the participants were more exploratory about their wellbeing development and how socio-cognitive mindfulness could support their ongoing learning.

8.5.3 Improving wellbeing through cognitive flexibility

The participants described how the programme cultivated their ability to think flexibly about various scenarios. This led to more adaptive behaviours which positively impacted different areas of their wellbeing. There appeared to be links between different forms of flexible thinking and specific wellbeing areas, as outlined in the following sub-themes.

Increasing self-fulfilment by re-evaluating needs

Some of the participants came to the realisation that perhaps their true wellbeing needs were different to what they originally thought. Participant 5 said, '*I found that actually what I intended to do at the start shifted.*' Participant 3 expands on this by describing how the increase in self-awareness led to the discovery of a wellbeing activity that felt wholly connected to her values and identity:

'It all seems to have come [from] being bit more aware about my needs [...] It's just so beneficial for me and for your body and your mind. And it just connects again [...] It's part of me now. It's part of my spiritual connection.'

Participant 2 describes a similar discovery about her wellbeing, but more about how she prioritises her wellbeing activities:

'It was only two sessions in, I was like, actually what I thought I needed isn't that [...] My ultimate goal is to be happier; have more subjective wellbeing in my life. I thought my root was very physical-based because it's something I've struggled with in the past. [...] Actually, I need to reprioritise what I'm spending my bandwidth on.'

Whereas others increased their engagement by adapting their wellbeing activity to their needs at that moment:

'And I've got to a point where actually some days emotionally I need to write more [...] some days I need to just plan.' Participant 5

It seemed that by re-evaluating their needs, they were able to align their wellbeing activities with their intrinsic motivation. Participant 2 summarises this reflection:

'I was going about it in a very kind of: "I should be doing this rather than I want to be doing this.'

Participant 1 explored how she could increase her intrinsic enjoyment of an activity by simply asking herself: *'What can I do that will make it a bit more of a treat?'* This ability to re-examine their intrinsic needs helped the participants to engage in more personally rewarding activities.

Improving relationships through cognitive empathy

The participants noticed improvements in their relationships as they learned how to develop cognitive empathy by viewing from others' perspectives.

'And that helped me to think about: don't judge; different perspectives; where's he coming from? What's he bringing to the table?' Participant 1

Although no one had selected a wellbeing goal related to relationships, Participant 3 found *'it's helped me be a little bit more mindful around friendships as well.'* Likewise, Participant 1 was seeing how this was translating into her professional relationships: *'it's about looking for more than just one way of approaching a situation or of influencing.'*

Participant 5 connected her increased cognitive empathy to how it positively impacted her wellbeing:

'I think if you are aware of their intentions and the judgment you're putting on, your response can improve your wellbeing. Relationships are so key to wellbeing. I'm perhaps seeing that in my own home, by the things I have said to improve relationships.'

Some of the improvements were more indirect and involved the participant recognising how they may be projecting insecurities onto others:

'But I also felt old feelings of guilt popping up [...] And then I thought: well, that's coming from me, that's not coming from other people [...] I suppose a lot of what I was doing was projecting guilt on people around me [...] I actually just need to know that I'm better if I just take care of my wellbeing at the moment so I can take care of those around me.' Participant 2

Thus, by increasing their empathy towards others and themselves, the participants felt a positive impact on their interpersonal relationships.

Increasing positive affect through cognitive reappraisal

The ability to approach situations with a less fixed mindset and instead *'being inquisitive'* (Participant 1) helped the participants *"to step out of my usual approach [...]* And just experience a different way of looking at my wellbeing (Participant 6). This then led to increases in positive emotions:

'It has actually allowed me to walk away, after I've journaled or after I've thought of different way of dealing with it, or thinking about it, paid attention to it - it's made me feel better.' Participant 6

Participant 5 felt that flexible thinking helped her to reach a level of attentiveness towards herself:

'Stretching my mind, not being very fixed, has really stuck. And then it gives me a level of gentleness, perhaps, on myself.'

Participant 4 was enthused about being able to identify when she was being fixed in her thinking, and could instead choose a more enjoyable path to overcome that:

"How can you enjoy that process much more? [...] Where am I stuck in a category or a label in my head that I'm saying: "That's fixed"? And actually, are there moments where I can challenge that because it's not fixed, and those categories can be changed? I can create new ones.'

Participant 1 felt inspired by how she could reframe potentially unpleasant situations by approaching them in a way that felt more appealing:

'It helps you to step away from the way that you normally approach something and approach it in a different way. And in that different approach or in that different standpoint or in that different viewpoint, it can open up different ways that you weren't aware of previously. So, it's particularly good to apply in situations that you find difficult or challenging or limiting, or that you don't like. Because it can be a way of turning those around completely.'

The ability to open their minds and reframe challenges as opportunities seemed to increase positive affect. This supported their ability to identify solutions, as discussed next.

Increasing environmental mastery through solution-finding

The participants felt they were learning effective strategies to find ways to improve their wellbeing which supported their sense of environmental mastery. Some participants described how they felt the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies helped them in the moment to protect their wellbeing:

'For me, it's made me feel more equipped in that moment. So, in terms of my wellbeing, when something has felt difficult or challenging, that could negatively impact my wellbeing [...] what it's enabled me to do is to have other ways of dealing with it. And therefore, my wellbeing has not declined in that moment.' Participant 6

Three of the participants used solution-finding to help increase their physical activities.

Participant 3 recognised she must 'use kindness' when choosing a gentler form of physical activity, which led her to explore Tai Chi. As a result, Participant 3 said 'because it's so good and I find it so beneficial, I think I did it five times last week.' Participant 4 agreed that having

self-compassion was crucial to her increasing physical activity, as well as *'being in that moment and meeting yourself where you are'*. Whereas Participant 2 looked for ways to incorporate joy into her physical activities, which led to further health benefits:

'I can combine that [bringing more joy] with something physical, so that I'm then more likely to do the physical thing [...] I doubled the amount of time I went for a walk yesterday just because I was really enjoying listening to my book. So, I got double the amount of exercise, the dog was happy, he slept better, I got better sleep.'

When the participants saw how applying the strategies led to successful outcomes, this made them more confident to try the strategies in other areas.

'I think seeing that it's worked around food and wanting to try it in different areas as well [...] It's given me that sort of "it'll be OK", you know, a bit more confidence to try it out on bigger things. Bigger steps.' Participant 3

As the participants noticed the positive impacts in their lives, they felt increased confidence and competence to create ongoing positive changes to their wellbeing: *'Now I've got the tools; I could maybe apply it again'* (Participant 2).

'It's really fired up that part of the curiosity that I think sometimes I've dampened that bit down. I feel a bit more confident in myself to try things and to have a go.' Participant 3

Overall, the participants seemed to experience a consolidation of the socio-cognitive mindfulness processes and developed an ability to be more open and flexible in their thinking. This led to increased confidence about being able to pursue their wellbeing goals, whilst ensuring they were approaching their goals with self-compassion.

8.5.4 Stages of motivation for change

The fourth theme relates to how the participants experienced different stages of motivation for pursuing wellbeing improvements throughout the programme.

The 'right' time to make a change

Most of the participants described feeling as though the programme had *'come at the perfect time'* (Participant 6), and that they felt ready for a new challenge and to make a

more concerted effort with their wellbeing. Participant 5 describes how the programme had landed well for her due to her readiness for change:

'I felt like I wanted to engage myself in something and it came at the right time. I really wanted to learn some more. The effort level I wanted. I was prepared to put in the time and so, I was sort of ready for it.'

Participant 3 agreed that she had felt ready to try something new, and she saw the programme as the chance to do that:

This is a perfect opportunity for me to embed something, to try things out. So, I was quite encouraged for that. I thought it was a privilege to be able to do.

Participant 2 experienced a sense of readiness once she had joined the programme:

'I became more aware of how lacking in joy my life was. And so that awareness was quite a shock. But it's also a motivation to then make some changes.'

Regardless of what prompted the participants' readiness for change, it was this impetus that fed into the sustained effort needed to make the change happen, which is discussed next.

Making time to habituate change

The daily home-based assignments were acknowledged by the participants as being key to habit formation. Participant 3 said, *'knowing that it would become more of a habit the more I did it'*. They felt that creating a positive change relied on making the space to put in the effort required to feel the benefit. This acted as a virtuous cycle for some:

*'If I didn't put that effort in, then I wouldn't get as much back for myself [...]
But I feel like that as each week went on, I was getting more and more out of it, so I was putting more and more in, and I was carving that time out.'*
Participant 5

Some felt that the structure of the programme helped to habituate their wellbeing activities.

'When you're creating a new behaviour or creating a new habit, sometimes you do need that structure around it before it becomes habitual.' Participant 1

Whereas some participants felt that even though they were making the time for their wellbeing activity, it did not necessarily feel effortful:

‘It wasn't an added thing that I had to build into my day, but I was way more conscious. So, if I saw my journal on my table I was like: “Oo, I’ve not filled that in yet.”’ Participant 6

Participant 3 even went on to describe how she had integrated her wellbeing habit to the point where she would now *‘just do it naturally’*.

Worth investing time in change

Once the programme had finished, the participants reflected on whether the time and effort commitment had been worthwhile, whilst *‘recognising the effects by the changes that had happened’* (Participant 3). The consensus was that attending and engaging fully in the programme had been a valuable personal investment, which went *‘above and beyond’* expectations (Participant 2). This sentiment was echoed by all the participants:

‘I feel like I’ve got a lot more out of it than I was expecting. So, I think it needed a lot of effort, but by doing that I feel like I’ve achieved something from it [...] and I really feel it’s made a big difference.’ Participant 5

Participant 1 felt that the gains she made outweighed the effort she put in:

‘I found it so worthwhile [...] If you look at return on investment, it’s been a massive return on investment.’

Participant 3 found that applying socio-cognitive mindfulness to her chosen wellbeing activity helped her to integrate it more fully:

‘It’s infiltrated my life [...] I’ve embedded [and] created a new habit that’s integral to my life, to me. And it’s something that I could probably do forever.’

Participant 2 viewed the programme as the start of a different approach to her wellbeing journey:

‘I think it has planted some new seeds that I think are going to grow into new wellbeing practices that will feel less like wellbeing practices and more just changes at an identity level.’

The participants felt that socio-cognitive mindfulness was *‘a transferable skill’* (Participant 2) which could be applied in multiple scenarios.

'I think understanding it more and the awareness of it can translate into anything you're going through really, and your understanding of it.'
Participant 5

Participant 4 summarised her overall experience: *'It's seen me move forward from where I was and want to continue to move forward.'* All participants discussed wanting to continue with their wellbeing development and building on what they had learned and applied within the programme.

8.5.5 Interpreting socio-cognitive mindfulness through frames of reference

Most of the themes generated were mainly from the participants' perspectives as coachees attending the programme. However, as coaches, they naturally found themselves reflecting on the programme from a more objective practitioner viewpoint based on their experiences and knowledge. Participant 3 described this as wearing a *'double hat'* where she sometimes found herself being drawn to reflecting on the programme through a practitioner lens. Therefore, two themes were identified that related to the participants' subjective observations of the programme from their practitioner perspectives. Therefore, the fifth theme relates to how the participants came to the programme with existing knowledge about mindfulness but found it *'brought new awareness to something I already thought I had quite a lot of awareness about'* (Participant 2).

Finding synergies with relevant psychological theories

One of the subthemes encapsulates the coaches' recognition that many elements of socio-cognitive mindfulness theory could be found *'elsewhere in psychological theory'* (Participant 1). For example, Participant 3 found that *'the principles are very similar'* to her work as a meditative mindfulness teacher. Participant 5 felt that having an understanding of meditative mindfulness did not mean that there could be more to learn about mindfulness:

'I'm quite good at mindfulness techniques anyway, I do lean into that. But I think almost knowing what I know about wellbeing sometimes is a negative. And I was really prepared to learn some more.'

All participants experienced being drawn to particular strategies based on their experiences. For example, Participant 6 found one of the strategies beneficial for re-evaluating how she approaches goals both personally and within her coaching practice:

'I am very solution-focused, even in my practice. And because that isn't my usual way of approaching something. If I have a problem, I'm solution oriented [...] and that was like: just pay attention to the process.'

The participants were able to make connections with how socio-cognitive mindfulness fit within coaching:

'I think what it does really well, is it keeps it in the coaching arena rather than the therapy arena. And so much of coaching walks that very thin line between it.' Participant 2

Some were able to see how it fit with coaching models they were already using. For example, Participant 1 connected the strategy of 'viewing from multiple perspectives' with Gestalt's 'chair work'.

'Because I'm doing a CPD session tomorrow with my coaches, and I'm gonna do it on chair work. And that is adopting different perspectives and sitting in them, isn't it? To help them to move from one to the other.'

Conflicts with existing practitioner philosophies

The practitioners described finding it difficult to resonate with certain strategies and concepts covered during the programme. Sometimes this struggle was due to pre-existing psychological terminology:

'The categories one: It was a strange...linguistic thing for me. I've come across it as scripts before [...] So thinking of it as categories is a different thing. And I think it took me a little while to kind of get past that and find my own interpretation of it.' Participant 2

A few felt conflicted between the strategy and what they were trying to achieve with their wellbeing goal:

'On that 'controlling the context'; I suppose part of the reason why I think I found that hard, was for me that week it was about me letting stuff go. So that's one that hasn't even resonated.' Participant 1

Participant 3 struggled with viewing from multiple perspectives which involved finding the positive intention behind someone else's seemingly negative behaviour:

'I used to always look from everybody else's perspective, but my own, and that's been a journey and a practice. But actually, my perspective is just as valid.'

Participant 2 goes on to speak more generally about the naming convention of socio-cognitive mindfulness:

'But I do think it needs more explanation because of the convoluted name. What do those words mean when they're all jumbled together?'

Participant 3 discussed the concept of socio-cognitive mindfulness more generally and how she was unsure of how it had worked to improve her wellbeing:

'I can't make any sense to it at all [...] Because I'm more of a body-based feel. I felt the concepts were quite up here [points to head]. Quite intellectual for myself sometimes.'

But when pressed, she said *'It's just worked on my brain [...] I think it's refired and rewired that part of the brain again'*.

Participant 1 found it useful to relabel strategies to fit her viewpoint: *'New categories: I've ended up calling that: breaking the rules.'* This is particularly interesting since Participant 1 was applying the socio-cognitive mindfulness process of 'creating new categories' to the process itself by creating a new label to help her understand it better and fit within her existing frame of reference.

Distinguishing from meditative mindfulness

All the participants have had some experience with meditative mindfulness, whether they have practised it for their own wellbeing, integrated it into their coaching or taught it within formal programmes. They were able to draw useful distinctions between socio-cognitive mindfulness to its meditative counterpart. In particular, the participants highlighted how the socio-cognitive approach was more active and could be integrated well into daily routines.

'People think of mindfulness, and they think about sitting there and concentrating on your breath and clearing your mind for 10 minutes or whatever. And actually, this is about being in the moment as you go through everyday life [...] And how that can kind of really centre you in terms of what's really going on for you and what do you need to work on.' Participant 4

Participant 6 shared that she had been practising mindfulness for many years and led group mindfulness sessions, but she felt that socio-cognitive mindfulness was ‘very different’ and described how she explained the concept to a colleague:

‘It’s not mindfulness as in sitting with your thoughts - it’s more active. It’s the opposite end of the scale to doing something mindlessly. It’s very much about how just being more intentional and conscious about the thoughts that you’re having or the actions that you’re taking, paying more attention to it, and actively doing something with them really does help you in terms of your wellbeing, in that you’ve got a specific focus or you’re able to apply a tool to look at a situation differently. And it just feels like you’ve suddenly been given the autonomy and the power to change something [...] you suddenly feel empowered.’

The participants were able to highlight the value of socio-cognitive mindfulness as a valuable approach to integrate into coaching:

‘It gives you a step-by-step process to change how you go about creating a mindfulness practice. It very much gets away from spiritual side of things and in that sense makes it very inclusive and open for all [...] And I would say it’s much more easily teachable to people who are outside of the spiritual kind of realm of coaching, which a lot of people are.’ Participant 2

Participant 3, who is an experienced meditative mindfulness teacher, felt that the two approaches could still complement each other since they appear to achieve similar outcomes:

‘You can practice mindfulness and you can meditate anyway and the theory on the mindfulness courses that I teach is based on psychological interventions. And so, it’s created the same result as the things that we sort of teach.’

8.5.6 Experience-based insights into programme structure

As experienced practitioners, they felt comfortable offering observations and recommendations about the coaching format.

Impact of practitioner backgrounds on group dynamics

Early in the programme, the group established that they were all coming from similar professional backgrounds, and they noted how this impacted how they worked as a group, particularly in being able to learn from each other’s experiences:

'We were all working in some kind of field where we've got that knowledge and we've got that interest [...] for us then, we also get the benefit of taking some of our learning away that we can maybe put into practice with some of the people that that we work with.' Participant 4

Others appreciated being able to share a common language and existing understanding of the psychological concepts being covered:

'We're all professionals. You could tell with the language that the people had some awareness of self-awareness, coaching, a bit of psychology there, a bit of mindfulness already there, wellbeing - that was helpful.' Participant 3

Participant 1 agreed that the common language helped to create a distinct rapport within the group:

'Making a connection with other psychologists feels nice because it's not something I can do normally, and with people who will talk about things in a similar way to how I talk about them is nice.'

Conversely, Participant 1 felt *'a pressure in the group'* due to thinking some of the other psychologists might not value her psychology credentials. Participant 2 also commented on how their professional backgrounds may have limited the depth of rapport achieved due to their analytical preferences:

'We're all in the wellbeing sector, we're all quite aware, and thinkers and analysers. Maybe that would have been a very different group dynamic if we all hadn't been coming from a coaching background.'

Another interesting dynamic related to how three out of the six participants were work colleagues, which was mostly viewed as a positive feature. Participant 3's perspective as one of those colleagues was: *'for me and for us in our situation, it worked'*, which her colleague, Participant 4, agreed with:

'[It] didn't hinder me in any way because we're an open team and we know each other quite well anyway.'

From an outsider's perspective, the colleagues were viewed as being *'very supportive of each other. But then the support translated - it was only a positive thing'* (Participant 5).

Experience-based recommendations

Whilst the participants enjoyed and benefited from attending the programme as participants, they instinctively brought a critical eye to the programme design. One area that all participants had views on was the length of the sessions. Most agreed that the hour-long session worked well in terms of scheduling.

'An hour worked really, really well because you can get an hour out of your diary most days, or you can find that time. If it gets any longer then sometimes that can be difficult.' Participant 4

Participant 6 agreed saying: *'As programs go - and I've done many - it felt just perfectly timed.'* Yet, the participants all agreed that they would have liked more theory, particularly as practitioners who like to understand the context behind models.

'I would have liked more theory just because that's my background. I like to know how things work and that's very much how I integrate things.'
Participant 2

Some considered whether it would have been worth extending the sessions slightly to accommodate this:

'In the session itself, I would have liked that little bit more context for that particular theme that week. I would say no longer than 75 minutes.'
Participant 6

Most agreed that extending the sessions by an extra ten to fifteen minutes to provide more context would have been useful. It was suggested to add more visuals or a *'worksheet'* (Participant 6) to accompany the sessions:

'For me, I'm a visual learner. So, I think if I'd had a picture on the screen to look at and then maybe I had access to them to then click on [...] It'd brought more clarification.' Participant 3

There were also suggestions to provide *'extended reading'* (Participant 5) outside of the session instead.

'Maybe just before the session, just a paragraph to say this is what we're covering in today's session. Keep an eye out for an email after today's session if you want to read the theory behind it and use this as a prompt through the week to support your tasks.' Participant 2

Some of the participants noted how the weekly wellbeing update they had been requested to complete to track their adherence to the wellbeing activities was useful for their reflection:

‘Having to do that questionnaire before the sessions, I know it was part of the research, but I’m just wondering if it would be quite a very powerful part of the program.’ Participant 1

Participant 6 further suggested that the weekly wellbeing update could add more reflective questions to help participants link their activity progress to their overall wellbeing and *‘the bigger picture’*. Participant 6’s experience was slightly different from the others as she had originally selected a distal wellbeing goal centred on planning for her long-term aspirations, but found that her daily journaling was becoming her wellbeing focus:

‘I was hoping to have some clarity around future goals [...] then by doing my journal, I recognised that actually, I was doing more of the day-to-day stuff, and I wasn’t actually thinking far ahead. And then I had that moment of: “Ah, but that’s OK.”’

However, Participant 6 admitted that she felt *‘a bit confused’* about having set an abstract wellbeing goal for herself upfront, but then applying the strategies to her more tangible daily wellbeing activity. This insight highlights the importance of participants having goal clarity throughout the programme.

Applying socio-cognitive mindfulness to coaching

Most of the participants were keen to explore how they could apply some of what they learned during the programme within their coaching practices. Despite signing up for the programme to benefit their wellbeing, some also had an additional intention to explore *‘how I could then use it in my own coaching practice to support clients and to support the broader network’* (Participant 1). Participant 6 agreed, saying:

‘For me moving forward as a coach [...] I would be able to use and apply them or even encourage other people to do that.’

Participant 2 could see how this alternative approach to mindfulness could benefit her clients who have struggled with meditative mindfulness previously:

‘Quite a lot of my clients are not very mindful, and I think it underpins so much of wellbeing. But I get a lot of people who come in who say “I’ve tried mindfulness. I can’t do it.” [...] It could help those who have become disenchanted by mindfulness to find a new way of doing it.’

Most of the participants were *‘keen to go more in-depth’* (Participant 5) about socio-cognitive mindfulness to help them integrate it into their coaching work.

‘It’s something that I want to read more around so that then I can maybe start to utilise and introduce this with some of my clients where it may be useful to introduce some of these concepts and have some conversations about it [...] I think some of this will be useful in terms of that knowledge and toolkit stuff for me as a coach.’ Participant 4

Participant 5 agreed that she could apply socio-cognitive mindfulness *‘in a more structured coaching session, depending on what the clients wanting’*, although she would want to have *‘a more in-depth view’* of the theory. Likewise, Participant 2 pointed out that socio-cognitive mindfulness:

‘Takes picking apart and more explanation - it has to come with the training. But I think there’s definitely scope for teaching somebody in it and then having a follow-up group [for] implementation and integration.’

Based on their views, it seems there could be an appetite for additional training for coaches who want to learn about socio-cognitive mindfulness to a level where they could apply it within their coaching work.

8.6 Discussion

8.6.1 Summary of themes related to the participants’ experiences

In summary, the participants provided useful insights about how they experienced the socio-cognitive mindfulness coaching programme and how they perceived it impacted on their wellbeing. The resulting themes can be aligned with relevant psychological theories, models and concepts that reflect the participants’ sense-making processes. These connections can help to interpret their experiences through established psychological and adult learning frameworks.

Self-determination theory

The first theme highlighted how the participants acknowledged the coaching tensions present in the coaching environment, and how participants were striving to achieve a level of synchronisation conducive to enabling personal growth (van Nieuwerburgh & Love, 2019). The participants' experiences of this balancing act seem to align with the psychological needs of relatedness, autonomy and competence required for human motivation within Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (SDT; 1985), whereby the programme's structure and relational support were balanced with opportunities for participants to self-direct their learning. This gave the participants a sense of empowerment in pursuing their wellbeing development and increasing their mindfulness levels (Spence, 2018). Furthermore, as the participants learned how to increase their mindfulness, they became more aware of what intrinsically motivated them, which encouraged them to pursue wellbeing goals that were meaningful to them (Spence, 2018).

Experiential learning

The second theme portrays the learning mindset the participants adopted during the programme to develop socio-cognitive mindfulness for wellbeing improvement. This cyclical approach to embedding socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies echoes Kolb's experiential learning cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation (1984). The participants reflected on their wellbeing experiences through a socio-cognitive mindfulness lens during the sessions and then conceptualised how they could apply each strategy to improve their wellbeing. Outside of the sessions, the participants experimented with how they could embed their learning and then shared key observations with the group in the next session. They were then supported to connect their new learning to the next socio-cognitive mindfulness strategy, thus, starting a new learning cycle. This echoes Kolb and Yeganeh's (2009) position that mindfulness practices can be learned from direct experiences by developing presence and deliberate attention. The idea of being constantly open to new learning and attending to the learning process fits with the philosophy of socio-cognitive mindfulness (Langer, 1997), and so experiential learning and socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies appear to complement and reinforce each other. Taking this experiential learning approach to develop socio-cognitive mindfulness seemed to support their wellbeing, which leads to the next theme.

PERMA-V model

The third theme reflects how the participants appeared to experience increases in their cognitive flexibility which helped them to choose more adaptive responses leading to various wellbeing benefits. Cognitive flexibility has been described as: “the human ability to adapt the cognitive processing strategies to face new and unexpected conditions in the environment” (Canas et al., 2006, p.296). This is at the heart of Langer’s method, which revolves around embracing and responding effectively to uncertainty and change (1989). This flexibility appeared to facilitate various wellbeing changes, such as improvements in positive affect, relationships, self-fulfilment, environmental mastery and to some extent, physical activity. These changes somewhat align with the domains in the extended PERMA-V wellbeing model: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, achievement and vitality (Seligman, 2011; Eacker, 2020) and indicate that the participants may have experienced a sense of flourishing as they noticed a range of wellbeing improvements.

Self-regulation

The fourth theme encompassing the participants’ reflections on how they experienced motivation for change at different stages are resonant of the cyclical stages of self-regulation; (1) forethought phase (2) performance or volitional control phase (3) self-reflection phase (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998). The participants described the forethought phase as the programme coming at an opportune time for them to focus on their wellbeing development. Most of the participants expressed a sense of readiness to put in the effort required to make the changes they wanted. As they engaged in the programme, they understood that they had the ‘volitional control’ to plan and perform meaningful wellbeing activities outside of the sessions which would be instrumental in ‘*developing a wellbeing habit*’ (Participant 3). They noticed that the more effort they put in, the more they benefited from it. The self-reflection phase post-programme led to conclusions that the level of time and effort invested in the programme had been worthwhile. This then created an enthusiasm to continue their wellbeing development, thus initiating a cycle of self-regulatory behaviour towards further wellbeing goals (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013). Furthermore, as the participants increase their mindfulness, they become more aware of what intrinsically motivates them, which feeds back into their self-determination to pursue wellbeing goals that are meaningful to them (Spence, 2018).

8.6.2 Summary of themes related to practitioner perspectives

As experienced coaching practitioners, the participants were able to make connections with other relevant theories based on their professional experience and frame of reference. For example, most of the participants made distinctions between what they already knew about meditative mindfulness and what they were learning about socio-cognitive mindfulness. The participants believed that there was space for an alternative, and that socio-cognitive mindfulness was a more active and strategic option, with some noting that they found it to be more appropriate for the non-therapeutic approach of coaching.

Some of the practitioners made connections with other concepts and coaching models, such as viewing from multiple perspectives sharing similarities with 'chair-work' within Gestalt approaches, and creating new categories being similar to changing 'scripts'. Some found that the overall tone of the programme was resonant with self-compassion and self-kindness approaches. As such, it is important that when presenting this programme to knowledgeable practitioners, it is acknowledged upfront that they will likely make distinctions and comparisons with other forms of mindfulness and psychological concepts throughout the programme and that this is part of the learning and consolidation process. Therefore, practitioners who attend future programmes could be encouraged to make sense of the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies by connecting them with their existing frames of reference to help embed their learning.

The insights shared by the participants enriched the acceptability content analysis developed in the quantitative study. The interviews gave the participants the opportunity to delve into their perspectives on the programme and suggest improvements based on their professional insights and experiences. A common recommendation from the coaches was the inclusion of more theory and explanation of socio-cognitive mindfulness and its associated strategies. Some participants expressed difficulty in fully grasping some of the concepts, however, they acknowledged their desire for deeper understanding as practitioners. Therefore, it is difficult to know whether non-practitioners who may be starting with a more foundational knowledge of the concepts discussed would need significantly more information provided during the programme. Conversely, non-practitioners may need less information and have the concepts explained in more simplified terms so that they know enough to apply the strategies but without the need to fully understand their theoretical underpinnings.

8.6.3 Strengths and limitations of the study

Some may consider the author's active role in the research as a limitation and have concerns about bias influencing the generation of themes. However, Braun and Clarke (2022) posit that it is not possible for themes to spontaneously emerge from the data, and so analysis relies on the researcher actively responding to and interpreting the data from their experiential viewpoint. In this study, the author adopted a mainly deductive approach to the analysis since existing knowledge and awareness of relevant theories and concepts were being applied to the interpretation of the data. Yet, qualitative health research is often described in the literature as an inductive approach, with less value placed on deductive methods (Morse, 2012; Thorne, 2000). An inductive approach would have proven to be challenging since the author would not be able to completely ignore or disregard her positionality within the data. Bergdahl and Bertero (2015) emphasise the value of deductive approaches for testing hypotheses to ascertain their utility for practice, whilst claiming that a purely inductive approach is unobtainable since it requires a "creative leap" to construct new theory (p.10).

Another area which could be viewed as a limitation is the sample's lack of diversity sample which limits the study's generalisability. The results need to be considered with this in mind as it may not be possible to extrapolate the findings beyond a particular subset population of the non-clinical adult population. However, this study intended to develop an in-depth understanding of the intervention processes and participants' experiences, rather than to generalise the findings (Carminati, 2018). Additionally, the study's homogenous sample (i.e., women in their midlife with professional experience as coaches) may strengthen the validity of the results for this specific population.

8.6.4 Implications for further research

It may be deemed useful to increase the diversity of the participant demographics to identify if the programme would attract, and be more effective, with a more diverse population. Alternatively, it may be worthwhile further exploring the impact that the intervention has on coach practitioners by measuring the efficacy of the programme with coaches compared to control groups in a randomised control trial. It would be beneficial to apply the insights from this analysis to the ongoing intervention development process for a full evaluation. For example, the hypothesised processes occurring during the programme could be investigated

via a process evaluation to understand more about the causal pathways and change mechanisms occurring within the coaching intervention (Moore et al., 2015).

8.6.5 Implications for practice

The insights indicate that it may be worth exploring the development of two versions of the programme. The first aligns with the original intention for the wellbeing programme being developed within this thesis which targets non-clinical adults who are interested in simple strategies to improve their wellbeing. The second version could be expanded to target practitioners who may want a more in-depth version which provides the theoretical explanation of the concepts and processes, including additional guidance for how to apply the strategies within their coaching practice.

8.7 Conclusion

The study aimed to explore how participants experienced the programme and whether they noticed any changes to their wellbeing as a result of attending. Based on the participants' descriptions, the experiential learning and self-regulation cycles helped to facilitate increases in cognitive flexibility, adaptive behaviours and wellbeing. This resulted in an enhanced motivation to continue their mindfulness and wellbeing development, although it is not clear how linear the sequence is since the multiple processes and cycles appear to overlap and occur simultaneously. What has been learnt in this study is that the combination of processes led the participants to view the overall experience as *'enlightening and empowering'* (Participant 1) which made them *'want to keep moving forward'* (Participant 4). Furthermore, the participants discussed how their positive experiences had encouraged them to apply the strategies within their coaching practices. They offered useful observations about how the programme could be improved, such as including more theoretical explanations about the socio-cognitive mindfulness processes. Their insights support and underpin the ongoing refinement of the coaching programme whilst providing the rationale to explore a continuing professional development version of the programme aimed at coaches. The main findings from this study will now be synthesised with the quantitative findings to understand more about the complex aspects of the intervention and the context within which it was conducted (Noyes et al., 2019).

Chapter 9. Discussion

9.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overall discussion of the findings from this thesis and the strengths and limitations of the methodological approaches taken. It reviews whether the original research objectives were met and to what extent the research questions were sufficiently answered. The chapter ultimately aims to bring together the conclusions made from the preceding chapters to make recommendations for how this research can inform practice and further research. This includes integrating the author's reflective insights and practitioner perspective into the accumulated research findings to provide a refined logic model of the intervention. Practical proposals are offered for ongoing refinement of the coaching intervention, and recommendations for how a full evaluation of the intervention could be approached. Finally, another potential avenue is considered, which expands on this research to create a continuing professional development opportunity for coaches.

9.2 Review of Research Objectives and Questions

The rationale behind this thesis is offered in Chapter 1 and is primarily driven by the increasing demand in the UK for proactive wellbeing interventions targeting adults who are not currently experiencing mental ill health or falling into the 'languishing' category. Throughout the duration of this thesis, this demand appears to have amplified, coinciding with a growing body of research and practical insights within the coaching psychology field. Furthermore, interest in mindfulness within coaching has also continued to expand, although there is still a lack of attention on the socio-cognitive mindfulness aspect. Nevertheless, Langer recently released a new book "The Mindful Body" (2023) which more directly applies her lifelong research and work to how we can improve our physical health and wellbeing. It feels even more relevant that the strategies within socio-cognitive mindfulness can be made accessible to the public and practitioners in the form of clear coaching and training solutions. The research objectives within this thesis aimed to address this need, with the methodological approach to achieving the objectives described in Chapter 2.

9.2.1 Research objective 1

The first research objective was to systematically investigate and develop an evidence-based coaching intervention to promote wellbeing development based on socio-cognitive mindfulness theory. This thesis aimed to address this objective by researching and answering the three research questions outlined in the following sections.

RQ.1: How is socio-cognitive mindfulness activated in non-clinical adults to promote wellbeing, and which insights are relevant to coaching?

To answer this question, a systematic review of socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions and their wellbeing outcomes was conducted and reported in Chapter 3. First, the eligibility criteria for the systematic review were determined based on the review question, such as studies involving socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions with non-clinical adults and using validated wellbeing measures. The search found 2,867 peer-reviewed papers, with twelve studies meeting the full eligibility criteria.

The features, processes, wellbeing outcomes, strengths and limitations of the twelve intervention studies were narratively analysed. From this analysis, it was possible to identify patterns and themes, which led to a synthesis of how socio-cognitive mindfulness appears to be activated or developed to increase various wellbeing outcomes. The findings were then interpreted through a coaching psychology lens to discuss potential ways to incorporate socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching to facilitate improved wellbeing outcomes in non-clinical adult populations.

RQ.2: What are coaches' views on the acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?

The findings from the systematic review were developed into a proposal of a wellbeing coaching programme based on socio-cognitive mindfulness. The acceptability of this proposal was investigated in a qualitative study with experienced coaches in Chapter 4, to gain their professional views about the strengths and limitations of the proposed approach. The study included an open-ended questionnaire with a sample of ten coaches, from which five coaches went on to participate in a focus group to discuss the proposal in more depth through discussion and sharing of ideas. The data from the questionnaires and focus group was analysed to develop themes which represented key considerations and

recommendations for how to develop the proposal further. Acceptability of the coaching intervention was investigated a second time in the thesis (Chapter 8) but based on coaches' experience of participating in the refined programme, which will be discussed further as part of the third research objective.

RQ.3: What is the programme theory of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?

The programme theory for the proposed coaching intervention was developed in Chapter 5 by triangulating the accumulated findings from the preliminary literature review, systematic review and acceptability study. This involved the author incorporating practitioner experiences of applying socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies within coaching. This led to a programme theory for how the intervention was expected to work and was illustrated in a logic model to represent how the intervention inputs and activities would interact with each other to produce its effects and outcomes. Following this, an overview of the coaching programme's structure was created which provided a prototype of the intervention ready to be feasibility tested in the next phase of the research inquiry.

9.2.2 Research objective 2

The second objective was to assess the acceptability and feasibility of a socio-cognitive mindfulness-based coaching intervention for non-clinical populations. This thesis aimed to address this objective by answering the below research question:

RQ.4: What is the feasibility and acceptability of a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness?

The feasibility and acceptability of the wellbeing coaching intervention developed in the first phase of this thesis was investigated in Chapter 6 with a sample of six participants who attended the six-week programme. This involved a quantitative assessment of the recruitment, attendance and adherence to the intervention, as well as the study procedures. The participants completed surveys at baseline, post-intervention and at a two-month follow-up which included wellbeing and mindfulness measures, plus acceptability questions at post-programme. The responses were analysed to produce a preliminary assessment of the intervention's efficacy which provided mixed results, with half of the participants demonstrating outcomes mostly in the intended direction. A content analysis of the

participants' acceptability responses indicated that the intervention was well-received and acceptable overall, but with some suggestions for further improvement.

9.2.3 Research objective 3

The third objective of this thesis was to explore how users experience a socio-cognitive mindfulness-based coaching intervention. This thesis aimed to address this objective by answering the research question below:

RQ.5: How do coaches experience a wellbeing coaching intervention based on socio-cognitive mindfulness from both a participant and a practitioner perspective?

To understand how participants experienced the coaching programme, a qualitative study was conducted and is presented in Chapter 8. The participants from the feasibility study were invited to semi-structured interviews to talk about their experience of attending the programme and how they made sense of any impact on their wellbeing. The data from the interviews was thematically analysed to produce themes relating to the participants' subjective experiences which helped to highlight key processes that occurred during the programme. There were also themes related to the participants' objective views of the intervention since they were able to discuss the programme from their practitioner perspectives as professional coaches. These themes were useful in identifying further refinements that could be made to improve the programme.

9.3 Researcher-Practitioner Reflections

As outlined in Chapter 1, the author brought a practitioner perspective to the research inquiry and was involved in the co-production of knowledge with the participants throughout the research process. Practitioner experiences and reflections throughout the first phase of the thesis were integrated with the findings of the studies to develop the programme theory in Chapter 4. This included reflections on integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies with coaching clients, which helped shape how socio-cognitive mindfulness could be applied to the intervention activities within the coaching prototype. The author was cognisant of her general experience with group facilitation when designing the group coaching format, as this helped in creating the overall structure for the programme by applying essential coaching principles for group work.

Therefore, it continues to be relevant to consider key reflections made throughout the second stage of the thesis when feasibility testing the intervention since the author was also the practitioner who facilitated the programme in her capacity as a coaching psychologist. Reflexive activities were conducted regularly throughout the process, such as those described in Chapter 8. A reflexive journal was also maintained throughout the delivery of the feasibility study as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2022) which is provided in Chapter 7. The reflexive journal recorded evolving tensions of the researcher-practitioner role whilst interrogating judgements, beliefs and practices, and any potential biases and assumptions being made. This included reflecting on any emotions or instinctive feelings arising and highlighting any conflicts between the dual roles of researcher and practitioner. Below are examples of the types of questions the author asked herself while completing her reflexive journal to help deconstruct her observations and reflections:

- Why do I think I know what I think I know?
- What assumption may I be making here?
- How might this affect the research data?
- Why might I have reacted in this way?
- What different ways could I make sense of the data?

The reflections led to key practitioner insights which are incorporated into the research findings to help shape the refined programme theory, reflect on the strengths and limitations of the methodological approach and discuss implications for future research and practice. The intention is to demonstrate how the researcher-practitioner approach and co-production of knowledge with participants enriches the overall findings of the feasibility phase.

9.4 Summary of Thesis Findings

The overall systematic approach taken to develop, and feasibility test, a new coaching intervention appears to have resulted in a promising coaching programme which could facilitate wellbeing development in non-clinical adults by integrating evidence-based strategies from socio-cognitive mindfulness. The findings from the feasibility stage suggest that a wellbeing coaching programme developed from socio-cognitive mindfulness is mostly

acceptable, although this can only be said about a specific audience. Whilst the original aim was to explore this with non-clinical audiences, the programme appeared to attract a more specific sub-population (i.e., coaches). Although this limits the generalisability of the thesis findings, it does indicate that there may be an appetite in the coaching community for a programme which supports practitioner wellbeing as well as provides practitioners with a coaching framework that they can apply in practice to support the wellbeing of their clients.

The feasibility assessment provided several promising indicators, such as high levels of intervention adherence and high ratings across areas of intervention acceptability, such as perceived effectiveness, coherence and ethicality. However, the participants' positive views of the impact on their wellbeing were not wholly supported by the preliminary outcomes of the feasibility study, where not all participants demonstrated that their mindfulness and wellbeing measures moved in the intended direction. As previously discussed, this may be the result of four of the participants experiencing significant negative life events post-programme, such as bereavement and illness. Nevertheless, the participants discussed finding the coaching programme to be a worthwhile experience which they believed to have had a positive impact on their personal growth and wellbeing. The participants provided useful insights about how the intervention processes helped them to think more flexibly and adapt more constructively to their ever-changing circumstances, which they associated with a variety of wellbeing improvements. By habituating the changes whilst adopting a lifelong learning attitude to their ongoing personal development, they felt motivated to continue pursuing increases in both mindfulness and wellbeing.

The themes which developed from the final qualitative study, along with the author's practitioner reflections on coaching the participants, appear to align with several psychological and adult learning theories. Some of the theories were briefly highlighted in the preliminary literature review at the outset of the thesis (Chapter 1) and further explored in the final qualitative study (Chapter 8) when discussing the main themes generated from the reflexive thematic analysis. They will now be reviewed against the logic model that was being feasibility tested to gain more understanding about the potential processes involved within the intervention. This may inform how the intervention can be evaluated further to address remaining uncertainties.

9.5 Refined Programme Theory

To configure the refined programme theory, the following sections revisit each element of the logic model created from the original programme theory in the first phase of the intervention development. Refining each component in turn based on the feasibility findings and practice reflections, may help to identify where the theory can be developed, as well as which areas are still unclear or unknown.

9.5.1 Refined intervention inputs

Self-determination theory

In the preliminary literature review, self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985) was highlighted to illustrate how mindfulness in coaching could support the psychological needs of coachees to help them to increase their awareness of intrinsic motivation (Spence et al., 2018). Spence et al. (2018) make this connection using a more inclusive view of mindfulness which takes into consideration both meditative and socio-cognitive constructs. Nevertheless, the first theme that was generated from the participants' interviews appears to align with the psychological needs emphasised within SDT, and how there was an awareness of a balance needed between support and autonomy within the coaching environment. The coaching literature supports the notion that achieving an appropriate balance between challenge and support in a coaching relationship can produce positive results (Day, 2012).

The participants also described becoming more aware of what they intrinsically needed and wanted for their wellbeing, and how they felt empowered to pursue what was meaningful to them. They articulated how they enjoyed making connections with the coach and the other participants in the group, but that ultimately, they needed a personal focus to increase their sense of competence over their wellbeing development. They achieved this by planning relevant home-based activities and regularly reflecting on the improvements they were making. The balance between what the coaching programme provided in terms of structure and guidance with what the participants needed to effect change for themselves created a space for fostering personal growth and wellbeing development. However, most of the participants agreed that they would have benefited further had the guidance been clearer and included further resources. The participants' views were captured in the first main theme of the qualitative study: 'Balancing coaching tensions to enable self-development'. This is represented in Figure 17, which is a diagram of the intervention inputs.

Figure 17 Intervention inputs



9.5.2 Refined intervention activities

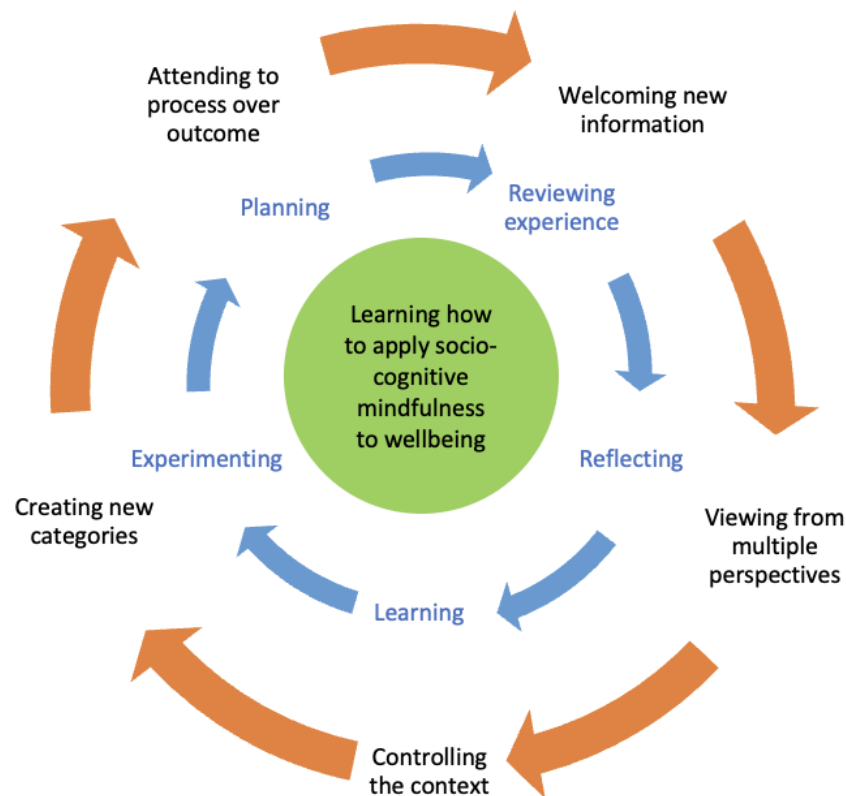
Experiential learning

The activities within the intervention were an integration of key socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies (which were identified within the preliminary literature review and systematic review) with fundamental coaching processes. This integration appeared to create a learning mindset in the participants whereby they undertook multiple cycles of experiential learning to embed the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies by applying them to chosen wellbeing activities. As they developed their capacity for mindfulness, they were able to reflect on their learning using a socio-cognitive mindfulness lens, for example, by attending to their wellbeing development as a process, and reframing any challenges within the process in a more constructive light by controlling the context.

The curious mindset and experimental application required within experiential learning complemented the open-minded and solution-orientated attitude associated with socio-cognitive mindfulness (Langer, 1995). This was encapsulated in the second main theme: 'A learning mindset for manifesting socio-cognitive mindfulness'. The participants described becoming more reflective as a result of this learning mindset, particularly with increased self-awareness of their wellbeing needs and their ability to reflect on situations from different perspectives. This is somewhat in contradiction with Yeganeh and Kolb's (2009) findings that socio-cognitive mindfulness is more aligned with the concrete experience stage of experiential learning and less so with reflective observation.

The findings in this thesis indicate that the processes within socio-cognitive mindfulness helped to reinforce each other, as well as aligned and supported each stage within the experiential learning cycle. The reinforcement of the socio-cognitive mindfulness processes and alignment with the experiential learning cycle is depicted in Figure 18.

Figure 18 Intervention activities



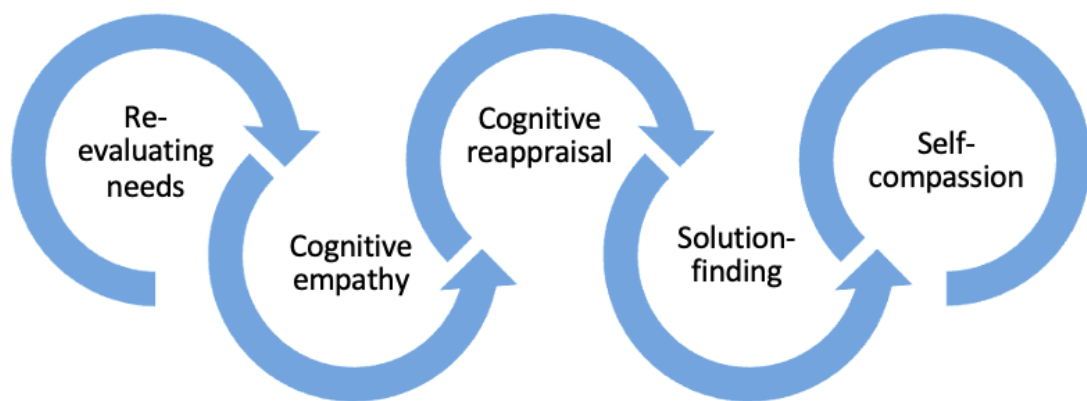
9.5.3 Refined intervention effects

Cognitive flexibility

The effects in the previous logic model were differentiated as producing the short-term effects of activating states of mindfulness, and the long-term effects of developing trait mindfulness. Still, it is difficult to confirm a clear distinction between short-term and long-term effects based on the feasibility findings, since the participants' descriptions within the qualitative study seemed to indicate a combination of short- and long-term effects. For example, the participants recounted occasions of being able to activate flexible thinking within specific situations, whilst describing a general sense of increased cognitive flexibility which supported multiple scenarios.

Increases in cognitive flexibility included enhanced cognitive reappraisal, cognitive empathy, self-awareness and solution-finding, as outlined within the third theme: 'Improving wellbeing through cognitive flexibility'. Self-compassion was also discussed by some of the participants as they became more aware of their changing wellbeing needs, and that they were able to be less critical of themselves as a result. As self-compassion was only discussed by half of the participants, it did not form one of the sub-themes within the qualitative study, yet it aligns well with the ability to flexibly attend to one's personal needs within their current circumstances. The combination of self-compassion and the different styles of flexible thinking appeared to overlap and integrate, as portrayed in Figure 19 which represents the various intervention effects.

Figure 19 Intervention effects



The participants echoed the findings from one of the studies in the systematic review whereby activating socio-cognitive mindfulness led to reduced cognitive biases and enhanced decision-making skills (Maymin & Langer, 2021). Furthermore, a correlational study has demonstrated a significant relationship between socio-cognitive mindfulness and cognitive flexibility, observing that "Cognitive and affective flexibility also process the ill-defined experiences of life in such a way that we can make choices and move forward with our actions and decisions" (Sinnott et al., 2020, p.8). This aligns with how the feasibility study participants described increases in cognitive flexibility in connection with increases in their wellbeing, as they experienced an agency over their decision-making and ability to choose more positive responses to challenging situations.

9.5.4 Refined intervention outcomes

Flourishing

The participants may have used slightly different terminology when describing the impacts on their wellbeing, but through the reflexive thematic analysis process, the following wellbeing areas were highlighted within the theme of ‘Improving wellbeing through cognitive flexibility’: increasing self-fulfilment, enhancing relationships, increasing self-esteem and increasing environmental mastery. Additionally, half of the participants reported enhancing their physical activity through their wellbeing focus. Together, the different areas generated an overall sense of improved wellbeing. This connects with Seligman’s (2011) description of flourishing as an enhanced state of wellbeing that is created when we attend to each element of the PERMA model: increasing positive emotions and engagement, improving relationships, finding meaning and achieving goals. The model has since been extended to PERMA-V to include the enhancement of physical vitality (Eacker, 2020). Overall, there appears to be an alignment between the participants’ described experiences and Seligman’s (2011) concept of flourishing.

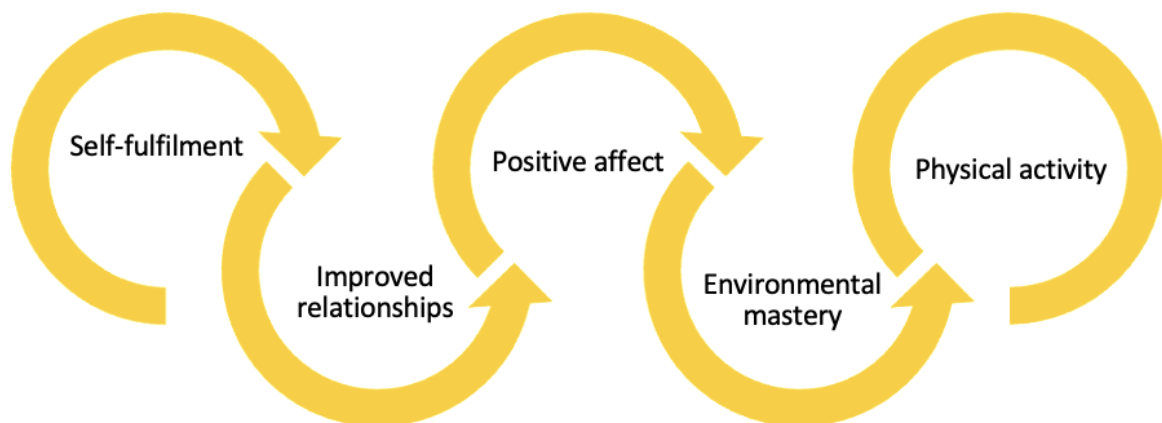
The preliminary evaluation of the changes in the overall wellbeing outcome measures suggests that the intervention only had the intended effects for half of the participants, whereas the other half reported a less pronounced change or moved in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, the scores recorded in the feasibility study do show increases in some of the individual items and subscales of the three measures used: Multicultural Quality of Life Index (MQLI: Mezzich et al., 2000), Ryff’s Psychological Wellbeing Scales (RPWB: Ryff & Keyes, 1995) and the Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS: Pirson et al., 2018). As highlighted in Chapter 6, there are increases in some of the sub-items within the measures which align to the PERMA-V model, such as improved emotional wellbeing (positive emotions), positive relations with others (relationships), personal fulfilment (meaning), environmental mastery (achievement) and physical wellbeing (vitality).

Engagement was the only PERMA-V component which decreased post-programme, albeit marginally. Although the participants discussed how they found new ways to intrinsically enjoy their wellbeing development more, there were only two participants (Participant 3 and Participant 2) who described experiences which resonated with being immersed in their wellbeing activity and perhaps experiencing a state of ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Nevertheless, the participants reported an increase in their global perception of quality of life which was supported by their in-depth descriptions of impacts to their overall wellbeing.

Like the various increases in cognitive flexibility described previously, there appears to be a reinforcing effect of the different components of wellbeing which interact to create an overall sense of increased wellbeing. Accordingly, the wellbeing outcomes to be presented in the refined logic model align with the participants' described experiences within the qualitative study which are partially supported by the preliminary results in the quantitative study. Due to some of the unclear findings, the outcomes will not be categorised as short-term or long-term. Figure 20 provides an overview of the intervention outcomes which mirrors the reinforcing diagram used for the intervention effects.

Figure 20 Intervention outcomes



9.5.5 Refined intervention long-term impact

Although it has been difficult to distinguish between short-term and long-term effects and outcomes, there are findings from the qualitative study that indicate the participants experienced ongoing progress with their wellbeing across the duration of the six-week programme. This longer-term impact will be considered from two different perspectives; how over time they increased both their self-regulation and self-efficacy relating to their wellbeing focus.

Self-regulation theory

The fourth theme within the qualitative study was: ‘Stages of motivation to change’. This represented the participants’ reflections on their evolving motivation across different phases of the intervention period, mainly at the start of the intervention, throughout the intervention and post-intervention. This was connected to the stages within the self-regulation cycle (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998) in the previous chapter: the forethought phase, the performance or volitional control phase, and the self-reflection phase. The participants described a sense of feeling ready and committed to making a positive change, which connected well with the forethought phase of self-regulation. Throughout the six-week programme, they had multiple opportunities – both within and outside of the sessions – to apply socio-cognitive mindfulness to their wellbeing. They recognised having volitional control over these activities as they were connected to their chosen wellbeing focuses.

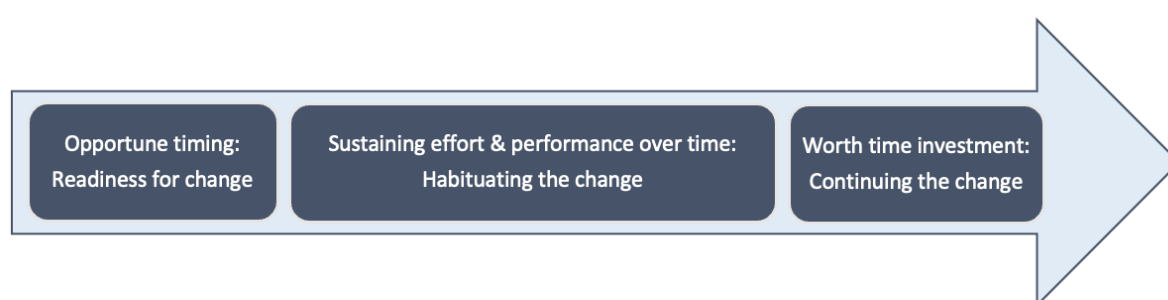
The participants were asked to regularly self-reflect on their progress by completing weekly wellbeing updates, and then they were asked to reflect on the overall experience during the post-intervention interview. The participants described becoming aware of how the level of benefit they gained was directly related to the level of effort they put in, which motivated them to continue making the effort. This reflects what was highlighted in the first chapter, in that self-regulation may be a mediating factor between mindfulness activities and wellbeing outcomes since self-regulation can support individuals in having more control over their thoughts and emotions (Masicampo & Baumeister, 2007). Additionally, the more self-regulation is activated, like the socio-cognitive mindfulness activities encouraged within this coaching programme, the more the self-regulation ‘muscle’ is exercised (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000).

The participants’ self-reflection at the interviews encompassed a sense of how their overall investment of time and effort had been worthwhile due to the wellbeing benefits they gained as a result. This appeared to foster an ongoing motivation to continue pursuing their wellbeing development, with most participants discussing how they planned to apply their learning to different areas of their wellbeing, thus perpetuating the self-regulatory cycle (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013). Despite their intentions, the overall follow-up measures taken two months after the programme ended do not reflect that most of the participants were able to continue developing and improving their wellbeing as intended.

The visual analysis reports three participants being able to maintain increases in their quality of life from baseline levels, and two being able to maintain increased psychological wellbeing at follow-up compared to baseline. This indicates that perhaps the participants needed further support or guidance to maintain their self-regulation cycles and continue to pursue wellbeing improvements. As mentioned in Chapter 6, four of the participants confirmed that they had experienced challenging life events, such as bereavement, since completing the programme. Such variables can make it difficult to determine the true impact of the programme.

The refined programme theory posits that the participants experienced a sense of increased self-regulation over the course of the programme by recognising the benefit they were gaining from the effort they were putting in. This resulted in a motivation to continue pursuing their wellbeing development beyond the programme, although it is less clear what happens from that point onwards. This is an outstanding uncertainty that would be worth exploring further in future research. Nevertheless, the stages of motivation for change that occurred within the timeframe of the coaching programme and the immediate post-programme self-reflection phase have been depicted in Figure 21.

Figure 21 Intervention stages of change



Self-efficacy theory

Although increases in self-regulation seemed to facilitate the ongoing motivation the participants experienced, their levels of motivation for change appeared to be connected to their increasing confidence. Upon broader examination of the participants' themes in conjunction with associated psychological theories against the intervention logic model, it is possible to connect the overall programme theory with the four sources of self-efficacy for

behaviour change as outlined by Bandura (1977): verbal persuasion, vicarious experience, performance accomplishments and emotional arousal.

First, verbal persuasion was represented by how the coaching environment provided the participants with guidance and encouragement to take ownership of their development. This was further enhanced by the supportive dialogue that took place between the participants each week in the group coaching sessions. This empowered the participants to cultivate the self-determination required to develop their wellbeing and socio-cognitive mindfulness (Spence, 2018). Second, the shared learning that occurred during the group coaching sessions supported their vicarious experiences. All participants noted how they benefited from hearing how others had successfully applied the strategies to their wellbeing development. This seemed to be further enhanced due to the mutual respect that was present in the group, particularly as they acknowledged the wealth of experience and knowledge that they were each bringing to the group.

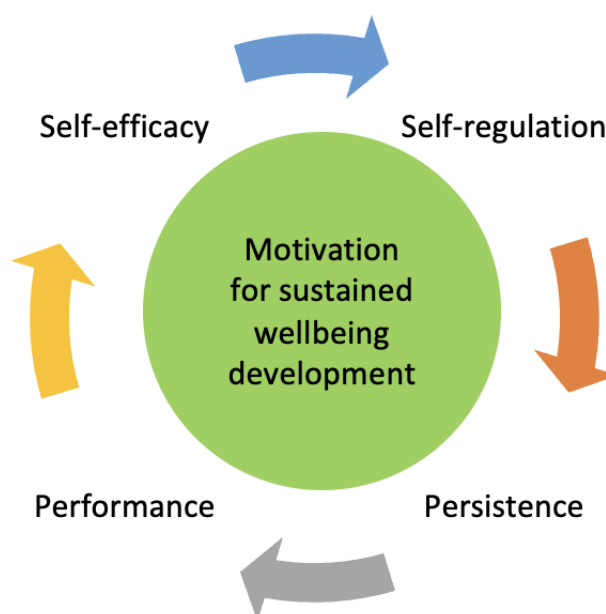
Third, the participants described multiple performance accomplishments as they applied the strategies to their home-based wellbeing activities and how they noticed positive outcomes as a result. This was reinforced by the experiential learning approach, particularly when they were asked to reflect on their wellbeing activities and progress in their weekly wellbeing updates and in the group sessions. Fourth, as the participants continued to develop their cognitive flexibility and noticed more positive outcomes, they experienced emotional arousal, such as increases in positive affect and self-fulfilment. Furthermore, some participants reported feeling less adverse emotions by increasing their cognitive flexibility, as they were able to reduce stress and worry by approaching potentially challenging situations with a more optimistic and constructive attitude.

Once the programme ended, the participants reported feeling equipped to continue developing and applying socio-cognitive mindfulness to their wellbeing goals (Vieira & Palmer, 2018). Bandura (2012, p.24) states that “Increasing people’s beliefs in their capabilities fosters efficient self-regulation and enhances motivation, persistence in the face of difficulties, and performance attainments.” This resonates with how the participants’ appeared to strengthen their belief in themselves and their motivation to continue making

the effort to explore socio-cognitive mindfulness and develop their wellbeing in a meaningful way (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001).

As the participants became more proficient at reframing challenges as opportunities for growth and learning, this helped them to persist through difficult situations. The increases in self-regulation and self-efficacy seemed to fortify each other to cultivate the participants' motivation to continue reaping the benefits they were gaining when successfully applying socio-cognitive mindfulness to their wellbeing development. The potential impact of the programme is depicted in Figure 22 as a virtuous cycle of self-efficacy and self-regulation to encourage persistence and sustained performance.

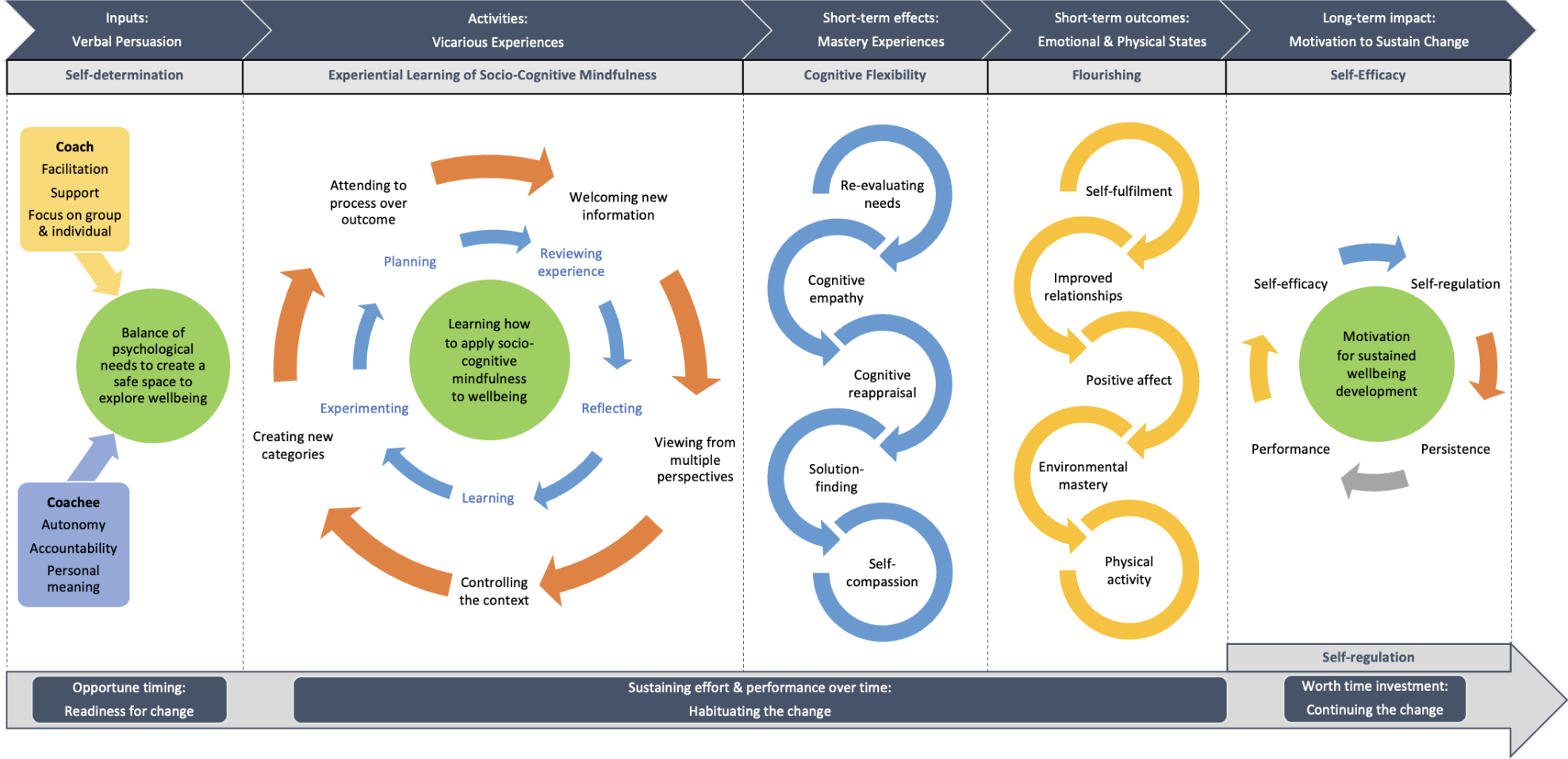
Figure 22 Intervention long-term impacts



9.5.6 Refined intervention logic model

Based on the discussions in the previous sections, the original programme theory and resulting logic model provided in Chapter 5 can be refined to integrate the recent findings and author's reflections from the feasibility studies. The refined logic model is provided in Figure 23.

Figure 23 Refined logic model of a wellbeing coaching intervention



9.6 Strengths and Limitations of Approach

It is possible to view any methodological approach in both a positive and a negative light. A quote from Langer helps to illustrate this point:

“While science has an air of objectivity, we must remember that all of the variables being studied – the kinds and amounts – were selected by people who have their own biases. Changing them could change the findings, which again are only probabilities, not absolutes. We should give up the idea of objective probabilities, or predictable risks, or decisions that can be classified as right or wrong in advance. Instead, we should treat all of our choices as opportunities for growth and education” (Langer, 2023, p. 46).

Consequently, once we are more aware of perspectives that are different to our own, we also become aware *“that there are as many different views as there are different observers”* (1989, p.70). Therefore, what may be viewed as a limitation by one researcher, may be viewed as a strength by another. This is a highly pertinent concept for reviewing the strengths and limitations of the overall approach to the thesis. For example, if one were to view the author’s in-depth involvement throughout the research process through a positivist lens, one may focus on how researcher subjectivity could lead to bias in the results. In contrast, an interpretivist perspective could reframe the same ‘problem’ as a ‘prospect’, whereby researcher subjectivity is utilised as a resource for enriching the research process (Gough & Madill, 2012).

Likewise, the researcher-practitioner model has been discussed as a strength in the coaching psychology literature based on its contribution to developing client-centred, evidence-based coaching models (Cavanagh & Grant, 2006, p.157). Yet, the same approach has been described as ethically problematic if the researcher-practitioner does not adequately attend to boundaries and potential conflicts of interest (Navab et al., 2015). This is where researcher reflexivity becomes essential in qualitative research (Elliott et al., 1999), not just during the analysis stage, but throughout the entire engagement with participants. Having high regard for research reflexivity likely influenced the author’s decision to use reflexive thematic analysis twice throughout the thesis, and to benefit from guidance on how to address the concerns of those who view subjectivity as a potential limitation. A reflexive approach to thematic analysis challenges the researcher to increase their critical engagement with the research process, whilst embracing their experiential perspective and

involvement by interpreting the data based on contextual and subjective standpoints (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Ultimately, a pragmatic approach was believed to be beneficial for developing a practical application from the data collected. This involved having the flexibility to select what appeared to be the most appropriate methodological design for each stage of the research inquiry. The key attitudes required for intervention development are described as dynamic, iterative, creative and open to change (O’Cathain et al., 2013) which the author resonated with. Still, to overcome the concern that a pragmatic approach can be undisciplined and unstructured (Kock et al., 1997), comprehensive guidance from the MRC regarding the development of complex interventions was employed to cultivate a systematic approach (Craig et al., 2013). The MRC’s updated advice (Skivington et al., 2021) was also followed to ensure the recommended core elements were repeatedly investigated throughout the first two phases of the intervention development as summarised in Table 14.

The table reinforces how the overall research strategy adopted a mixed-method approach, which included a combination of quantitative and qualitative designs. The intention was to combine both approaches to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the research inquiry than would have been possible if only one approach had been taken (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Yet, there are concerns that a mixed-methods approach takes qualitative methods out of their interpretivist context, and perhaps even relegates the qualitative findings to an auxiliary position within the overall research (Howe, 2004). The author submits that perhaps the opposite is true within this thesis whereby the quantitative methods take a more supplementary role rather than a primary role. This has likely been influenced by a preference for qualitative research, and therefore, how much emphasis has been placed on the findings from both reflexive thematic analyses. This preference may also be evident with how much the qualitative arm of the feasibility study has influenced the refined logic model, over the findings from the quantitative arm. Consequently, in the final stages of the thesis, there is a reliance on the author’s intuition in the final stages of this thesis to consolidate and interpret the accumulated findings. It is not possible to achieve this without a degree of researcher subjectivity, which a ‘fully qualitative’ position regards as a valuable resource for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Table 14 Review of core elements in phase 1 and phase 2 of intervention development

Core elements	Phase 1: Intervention development	Phase 2: Feasibility assessment
Consider context	Review of the compatibility of socio-cognitive mindfulness for coaching	Use of naturalistic recruitment approaches to understand who is attracted to the coaching intervention
Key uncertainties	Development of research questions to understand how socio-cognitive mindfulness works	Development of research questions to understand the feasibility and acceptability of the intervention
Engage stakeholders	Exploration of the acceptability of the intervention concept with experienced coaches	Exploration of the user experience of the intervention, including practitioner perspectives
Economic considerations	Identification of resource considerations for implementing the intervention	Confirmation that the low-resource online group approach is feasible and acceptable to both the intervention participants and the facilitator
Develop programme theory	Synthesis of literature findings to hypothesise how socio-cognitive mindfulness can facilitate coaching processes	See below
Refine programme theory	Triangulation of accumulated findings to hypothesise how the intervention could work to improve wellbeing	Synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative feasibility study findings, along with practitioner reflections to update the logic model
Refine intervention	Incorporation of practitioner reflections to the programme theory to design a coaching programme structure and prototype	Recommendations made for the ongoing intervention refinement based on the feasibility findings and practitioner reflections

Adopting a sequential approach where each stage of the research helped to shape the next stage also naturally aligns with Langer’s strategy of attending to the process before the outcome (Langer, 1989). This approach requires embracing the unfolding nature of the research process and being comfortable with the uncertainty of where it may lead, to allow novel insights to emerge. This may be a further reason why the thesis shares a stronger affiliation with the qualitative paradigm since it allowed for a flexible, reflexive and interpretative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Additionally, reflexive thematic analysis is context-driven and requires a tolerance for uncertainty and acknowledging multiple perspectives of the truth (Braun & Clarke, 2022), which are all concepts central to Langer’s theory of mindfulness (Langer, 1989).

Nonetheless, whilst the overall methodological strategy of the thesis appeared to be appropriate and aligned with the nature of socio-cognitive mindfulness, it is still useful to interrogate the process to consider where the approach may have led to compromises. Potential limitations have been discussed throughout the thesis, with a key concern over the small sample size recruited for the feasibility study due to the naturalistic and purposive sampling methods used. This led to a lack of diversity within the sample, where six white, female, coach practitioners were recruited. Although four other people expressed interest in taking part in the study, including a male, and a female from an ethnic background, they were unable to commit to the proposed dates of the coaching programme. This seems like a missed opportunity in hindsight, which perhaps required more attention at the time to explore other avenues to increase the sample's diversity.

Still, the four interested applicants for the study who were not able to participate, all came from coaching backgrounds, meaning ten out of the ten people who responded to the advert were coaches. This supports the notion that the programme appeared to attract those in the coaching industry. Perhaps coaches have a heightened awareness of how important wellbeing is to both personal and professional development. Once again, what can be viewed as a key limitation of the study can still be repositioned as a strength, in that it tells us how the intervention has attracted a specific audience. With this insight comes the prospect of extending and developing the programme to offer continuous professional development for coaches, which is discussed further next.

9.7 Implications for further research

This section will first make recommendations for the MRC's third phase of conducting a full evaluation of the intervention based on the outstanding uncertainties from this thesis. It will then make suggestions for refining the intervention based on the feasibility study results, feedback from participants and practitioner insights. Recommendations for the evaluation design and intervention refinement are summarised in Table 15 and expanded upon in the following sections.

Table 15 Key recommendations for evaluation design and intervention refinement

	Recommendations
Evaluation design	Conduct a process evaluation of the refined programme theory
	Include further outcome measures and test intervention efficacy
	Train more coaches to conduct the intervention
	Expand recruitment strategies to increase the sample size and diversity
Intervention refinement	Add further clarification and instructions to the coaching programme
	Provide additional resources and reading throughout the programme
	Extend sessions and programme duration
	Include post-programme activities and guidance to improve sustainability

9.7.1 Evaluation phase recommendations

Conduct a process evaluation of the refined programme theory

The findings from the feasibility study have led to a further iteration of the programme theory underpinning the coaching intervention. It would be useful to conduct a process evaluation next to explore whether the activities and outputs from the refined logic model are occurring as theorised (Skivington et al., 2021). The MRC provide further guidance on how to conduct and report on process evaluations and recommends a mixed-methods approach to exploring how the complex causal pathways stimulate change (Moore et al., 2015). The author recommends a qualitative approach, such as conducting interviews with the participants post-intervention to explore the intervention processes further. This is based on the richness of data generated via this method within this thesis. It would also be useful to include interviews at a two or three-month follow-up to explore more about the lasting impacts of the programme.

Furthermore, a theory-based approach to evaluating the hypothesised change mechanisms is recommended over a pure focus on efficacy, particularly as the thesis findings suggest that the outcomes may vary across individuals (Skivington et al., 2021). This is highly relevant to this intervention, as demonstrated by the six participants who all pursued different wellbeing outcomes which evolved over time and were approached in different ways. Table 16 captures the variety and complexity of the wellbeing outcomes pursued by the participants.

Table 16 Participants' original and reframed wellbeing goals

Participant	Original goal discussed in contracting session	Reframed goal following first group coaching session
Participant 1	To not hold on to things too tightly	To treat projects and meetings as unknown stories to be explored
Participant 2	To increase physical wellbeing	To build a consistent wellbeing practice that brings joy and physical well-being
Participant 3	To regain a sense of purpose with a new hobby	To find a new hobby and to explore options (Tai Chi became the new hobby)
Participant 4	To increase physical wellbeing	To explore the opportunities for bringing more movement into day-to-day activities
Participant 5	To increase consistency and reduce self-criticism whilst journaling	To regularly journal to boost wellbeing
Participant 6	To plan for the future	To cultivate an increased feeling of centeredness and alignment

Include further outcome measures and test intervention efficacy

To supplement any qualitative approaches within the evaluation, it is recommended to include further measures based on the processes and effects which the refined logic model suggests influence the intervention's impact. The processes identified in the refined programme theory include the development of self-determination, experiential learning, self-regulation and self-efficacy. Thus, the following validated measures could be considered for the process evaluation:

- Experiential Learning Survey (ELS; Clem et al., 2014) to measure perceptions of experience-based learning
- American Institute for Research (AIR) Self-Determination Scale (Wolman et al., 1994) to assess global self-determination for learning
- Self-Regulation Scale (SRS; Schwarzer et al., 1999) to assess attention control in goal pursuit.
- Generalised Self-efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy to predict coping and adaption

To test the efficacy of the intervention more accurately in relation to the outcome measures used in the feasibility study within this thesis, plus the additional measures suggested above,

it is recommended that a randomised controlled trial is conducted (Minary et al., 2019). However, this will require a larger sample to provide statistically meaningful results, which is a consideration that has informed the following two recommendations.

Train more coaches to conduct intervention

The author's involvement in the research process has brought benefits as outlined in the previous section. Nevertheless, it would still be prudent not to dismiss the potential limitations, and to move forward by involving more practitioners in any ongoing research. Accordingly, a recommendation is made for more coaches to be trained to deliver the intervention which could help to reduce concerns regarding researcher bias. Expanding the number of practitioners able to competently conduct the intervention improves the ability to increase the sample sizes for the full evaluation phase.

Expand recruitment strategies to increase the sample size and diversity

As well as training more coaches to deliver the programme, the recruitment strategy needs to be revisited to increase sample sizes and to expand the reach for attracting a range of diverse participants. A varied sample could provide additional insights into how the programme affects different people in different ways. Having more coach practitioners available to conduct the coaching programme increases the flexibility of running the programme at different times and for differing durations as it is not reliant on a single practitioner's schedule. This could lead to larger and more diverse samples.

9.7.2 Intervention refinements

Add further clarification and instructions to the programme

The first iteration of the logic model included feedback from coaches about ensuring there is clarity provided in the contracting sessions, particularly around the structure of the programme and expectations of the participants. Although there was only one participant in the feasibility study who perhaps felt this was not fully met, her insights are still critical to be included in ongoing refinements. Participant 6 described in both her post-programme questionnaire and interview that she was confused about how to apply the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies to her wellbeing focus, which was to plan for the future to increase feelings of centredness (see Table 16).

The abstract nature of the wellbeing focus chosen by Participant 6, as well as with Participant 1 who wanted “to not hold on to things too tightly”, was discussed during their contracting sessions, with potential challenges highlighted. Suggestions were made to support their chosen wellbeing focuses with more tangible activities. Both participants considered several potential complementary activities, such as journaling, vision-boarding and other forms of reflective writing. Whereas Participant 1 was able to use her reflective writing to support her overall wellbeing focus, Participant 6 felt confused between her wellbeing focus and the journaling activity she used to support it, i.e., she questioned whether she should be applying the strategies to her future planning or her journaling. She reported later that the strategies made more sense when she applied them to the tangible activity of journaling and that this in turn supported her ability to plan for the future. Nevertheless, the confusion could have been avoided with more clarity provided in the contracting session at the start of the intervention.

Another area of feedback which was discussed by all the feasibility study participants was the need for more explanation throughout the programme. Although they had understood enough to apply most of the socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies to their wellbeing development, they still felt they could have benefited further from more explicit guidance both during the coaching sessions and for their home-based activities. As a result of this feedback, it is recommended that the facilitation guides be expanded to include more detailed explanations of the strategies and activities. This is also important given the earlier recommendation to train more coaches to be able to conduct the programme, who will likely require thorough instructions and guidance on how to facilitate the activities and exercises within the sessions.

Provide additional resources and reading throughout the programme

All participants described wanting further reading and resources throughout the programme to deepen their understanding of the theoretical background of the strategies they were applying. This may be due to their backgrounds in coaching and psychology; therefore, it is not known whether this appetite for further knowledge would be shared by non-practitioner audiences. There still seems to be value in compiling a range of relevant resources, such as articles, books, podcasts and videos, to be made available to participants in future programmes. The participants suggested that the resources are optional for those who

wanted a more in-depth understanding, but that it was not essential for participants to know this additional context to be able to partake in the programme's exercises and home-based activities. There were also useful suggestions for expanding the weekly wellbeing updates with more prompts to help participants further reflect on their key learnings and review their progress.

Extend sessions and programme duration

Although most of the participants were satisfied with the length of the sessions and the overall programme timeframe, they did concede that to benefit from the additional guidance and information they wanted, the timings needed to be extended slightly. A common suggestion was to extend the group sessions by approximately fifteen minutes, but no longer than thirty minutes. Therefore, a recommendation is made to extend the sessions from 60 minutes to 90 minutes to provide the capacity for including further theoretical context to the strategies. This extra time would be especially important if future cohorts included non-practitioner participants who may need additional explanation and guidance. Two of the participants also recommended spacing the programme out over a longer period to provide more time to embed the learning in between the sessions. However, this requires participants to commit to a much longer programme. Perhaps the next stage of evaluation could provide two options in the recruitment stage; a programme which is run weekly (such as the approach used in this thesis) or a programme which is run fortnightly, or even monthly. This would help to gauge whether there is more appetite for a condensed approach or an extended version.

There was also a further suggestion to add an extra session to the overall programme since the last session in the existing format combines the fifth socio-cognitive mindfulness strategy and an overall debrief of the programme. An additional full session dedicated to consolidating their overall learning and creating an ongoing plan would be valuable and could also support the next recommendation.

Include post-programme activities and guidance to support sustainability

The participants provided useful ideas for how to sustain wellbeing and mindfulness improvements once the programme ends, including:

- Creating an option for the participants to continue sharing their experiences and learning with each other to maintain a sense of accountability, e.g., via a group chat facility
- A follow-up session with the group two months after the programme ends to regroup, check-in and revisit the strategies
- Follow-up emails post-programme to signpost additional resources

As mentioned, a dedicated final session could help to explore post-programme options that are attractive to the participants on that course, which could then be personalised to their needs and preferences. The session could give the participants the autonomy to plan and commit to ongoing development activities both individually and collectively, whilst capitalising on their increased sense of self-efficacy and self-regulation for change.

9.8 Implications for Practice

The coaching programme as it stands was well-received and the recommendations for refinements made in the previous section would not take vast amounts of time and resources to implement. The thesis findings provide useful insights and ideas to practitioners for integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into coaching practice. Nonetheless, most of the coaches in the feasibility study suggested that to feel capable of integrating the strategies effectively into their practice, they would need a more comprehensive understanding of the theory underpinning the application. As suggested, there could be a benefit to training coaches in being able to deliver this programme with larger samples for the evaluation stage, as well as thinking ahead to the implementation of the intervention on a wider scale. To achieve this, there needs to be a consideration for what the training of coaches would need to be, which may inform another research avenue of this inquiry. Thus, to expand the scope of this coaching intervention, there is a requirement to invite more coach practitioners to be involved, either as research participants or facilitators.

A study into the attitudes of coaches toward participating in coaching research highlighted the coaches' concerns, such as the effort required for participation and the fear that research will expose coaching as inefficient (Hinn & Kotte, 2021). All sixteen coaches who participated in the studies within this thesis were enthusiastic about participating and contributing to the field of coaching psychology research, even if they knew it would involve

time and effort. For this, the author is eternally grateful. Still, it is worth taking note of Hinn and Kotte's (2021) suggestions for making participation in coaching research more attractive to coaches, such as making it easy to participate (e.g., online options) and sharing study results in an accessible format with practical implications for coaches. They also advocate for training coaches in the scientific methods that can be integrated into their work with clients, which aligns with the recommendations made within this thesis as an important next step to the research inquiry.

There may be a further benefit to training coaches in socio-cognitive mindfulness, given the growing recognition that coaches should attend to their own wellbeing to remain effective in their roles (Hodge, 2016). This is particularly relevant for wellbeing coaches who may be susceptible to compassion fatigue and burnout, and therefore practitioners are strongly encouraged to adopt proactive wellbeing measures and self-care strategies (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016; Posluns & Gall, 2020). Developing a personal mindfulness practice has been discussed as part of an effective approach for coaches to protect their wellbeing (Virgili, 2013; Hall, 2013). The coaches within the feasibility study in this thesis discussed the wellbeing benefits they gained from integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies into both their personal and professional lives. Hence, there appears to be scope for presenting socio-cognitive mindfulness strategies to coaches seeking additional ways to enhance their self-care practices and maintain their professional effectiveness.

9.9 Conclusion

The overall aim of this thesis was to develop a coaching intervention grounded in socio-cognitive mindfulness theory to promote wellbeing development in non-clinical adults. The thesis findings suggest that there is a synergistic benefit to integrating coaching and socio-cognitive mindfulness processes for improving wellbeing. Socio-cognitive mindfulness offers useful strategies for creating positive wellbeing changes, and coaching processes provide methods for adults to integrate the changes in intrinsically meaningful ways. This integration helps to facilitate cycles of experiential learning, self-regulation and self-efficacy, which ultimately lead to a motivation to continue pursuing wellbeing development. However, the findings do not adequately answer how effective the programme is in sustaining those motivational desires over time when the coaching intervention has stopped. Hence, one of the key recommendations for refining the intervention is to consider ways to maximise the

levels of motivation discussed by the participants once the programme is completed by including ongoing activities and support.

There have been calls for steps to be taken to create more effective and sustainable collaboration between coaching research and coaching practice (Kotte et al., 2017), and for researcher-practitioners to conduct “systematic self-critical inquiry that is publicly shared” (Kemmis et al., 2014). The researcher-practitioner behind this thesis hopes to have met these demands by developing an applied research-based coaching intervention, where every step in the research process has been published and presented at national and international conferences. The thesis has contributed to the coaching psychology field by offering an evidence-based wellbeing coaching programme, whilst expanding the mindfulness literature by providing an applied route to developing mindfulness for those who want an alternative to meditative practices. The two fields share similar and complementary attributes, which when combined, can foster a learner attitude and intrinsic motivation for people to become more mindful and gain more agency over their wellbeing.

The overall purpose of this thesis has mostly been met by developing a proactive mindfulness-based wellbeing intervention, which demonstrates acceptability and feasibility. Nevertheless, there is still more work to do to make final amendments to the programme and for it to be fully evaluated before it can be implemented with a wider population. Whilst the small sample of coaches in the feasibility study limits the generalisability of any findings, it does also provide a different opportunity to what was first anticipated, which may take shape as a continuing professional development programme for coaches.

Whichever direction is taken next to continue and extend this line of inquiry, it will no doubt involve another emerging process into the unknown. Whilst there are no specific goals about what comes next, the author is committed to enjoying the process and sharing key insights of the research with both scholars and practitioners alike. The hope is that more people can experience the potential wellbeing benefits that socio-cognitive mindfulness can offer and that the coaching industry comes to recognise the value of this approach.

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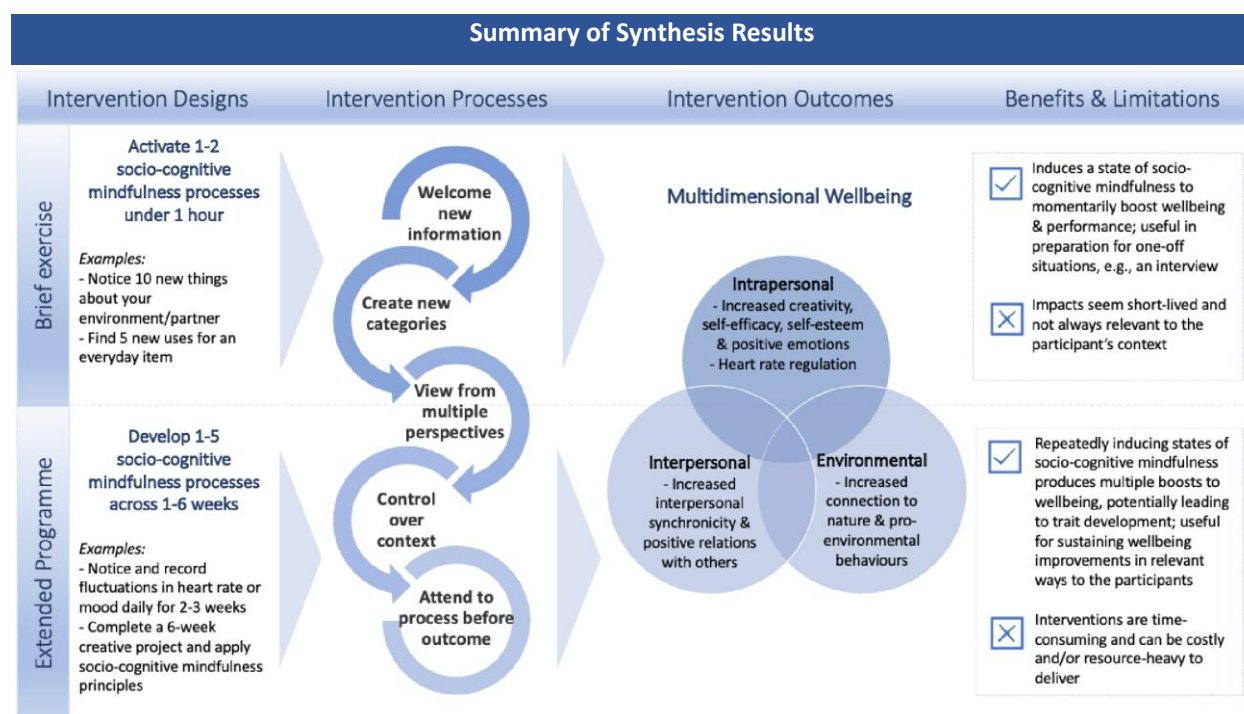
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Appendix A. Poster Presentation at BPS Coaching Psychology Conference

A Systematic Review of Socio-Cognitive Mindfulness Interventions and its Implications on Wellbeing Coaching

Katie Crabtree, CPsychol	William Pennington	Julia Papworth	Dr Katherine Swainston, CPsychol
Newcastle University	Anglia Ruskin University	Oxford Brookes University	Newcastle University

Purpose	Methods	Search Strategy
Socio-cognitive mindfulness (Langer, 1989) is a positive psychology theory which has evidenced links to improved performance and an array of wellbeing benefits. The purpose of this review was to investigate how socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions work to promote wellbeing and to discuss the potential relevance of these findings to coaching research and to coaching practice.	A systematic review was conducted to explore the current evidence base for socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions to understand how they are designed and how they improve wellbeing. The search strategy followed PRISMA guidance, with the final studies narratively analysed to examine the designs, outcomes, processes and limitations of the interventions.	Eight multidisciplinary databases were searched for peer-reviewed papers between 1989-2022 meeting the following inclusion criteria: ⇒ Intervention studies based on Langer's construct of mindfulness (1989) ⇒ Studies involving non-clinical adult participants ⇒ Studies using validated measures of wellbeing and mindfulness The search yielded 2,867 studies with twelve papers meeting the full eligibility criteria.



Implications for Coaching Psychology Research & Practice

Coaches can support coachees to activate states of socio-cognitive mindfulness via brief exercises during sessions to encourage boosts in wellbeing, for example, asking coachees to notice ten new things about a situation.	Coaching questions can be framed in such a manner as to stimulate socio-cognitive mindfulness, such as asking coachees how a situation would look different by viewing it from multiple perspectives.	The coaching process could incorporate psychoeducation on how to activate socio-cognitive mindfulness and how to integrate relevant exercises into everyday routines to promote prolonged wellbeing improvements.	Personalisation of socio-cognitive mindfulness coaching activities is key to ensuring coachees are engaged and autonomously motivated to approach their wellbeing development in a manner that appeals to them.

Appendix B. Poster Presentation at EMCC Research Conference



"Empowering and Enlightening": Coachees' experiences of a socio-cognitive mindfulness coaching programme

Katie Crabtree, Dr Gavin Clarke, Dr Tracy Donachie, & Dr Kate Swainston

School of Psychology, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Newcastle University



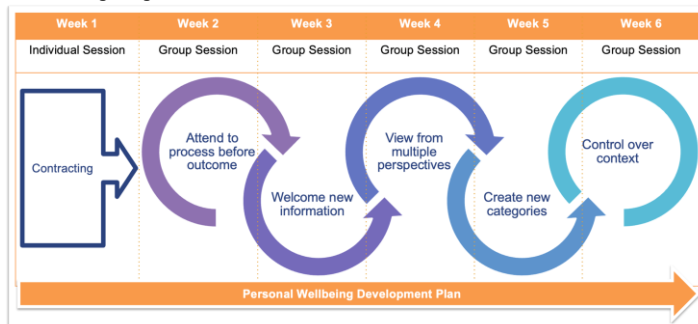
INTRODUCTION

Socio-cognitive mindfulness is a non-meditative approach which focuses on actively paying attention to novelty, context and different perspectives in the present moment (Langer, 1989).

It is described as a more 'active' form of mindfulness, where individuals attend to items in their awareness in a creative and constructive way which may be useful within coaching contexts (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013). It is also associated with improvements in cognitive performance, goal attainment and multiple wellbeing benefits, which are compatible with coaching processes and outcomes (Crabtree et al., 2024).

The authors have conducted prior research to develop a coaching programme based on socio-cognitive mindfulness (Crabtree & Swainston, 2023). The six-week group coaching programme is designed to help participants learn how to apply five socio-cognitive mindfulness processes to their wellbeing goals. The purpose of this study is to explore how the programme is experienced from the coachees' perspectives.

Coaching Programme Overview:



Reflexive thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, whilst acknowledging the researcher-practitioner's involvement in the co-production of knowledge with the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

The supervision team supported the lead researcher to maintain reflexivity throughout the research process.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To explore how coachees experienced a socio-cognitive mindfulness coaching programme

To understand how coachees made sense of any impacts on their wellbeing

RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative approach was used for exploring the subjective nature of how the participants experienced the various features and effects of the programme.

The purposive recruitment strategy led to a final sample of 6 women, with a mean age of 47, who all had professional experience of coaching.

The programme was delivered online in a naturalistic setting to strengthen ecological validity.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted post-programme to explore participants' reflections and interpretations of their experiences.

RESULTS

The analysis developed four main themes encapsulating the coachees' experiences:

1: Balancing coaching tensions to enable self-development

- Participants recognised how the programme's structure and relational support was balanced with opportunities for self-directed learning. This gave them a sense of empowerment over their personal development.

2: A learning mindset for manifesting socio-cognitive mindfulness

- Participants connected how the coaching and mindfulness processes reinforced each other which helped them to approach the programme as a continuous learning cycle.

3: Improving wellbeing through cognitive flexibility

- Participants expressed how the programme improved their ability to think flexibly and led to more adaptive behaviours which positively impacted their wellbeing.

4: Stages of motivation for change

- Participants described different stages of motivation for pursuing wellbeing improvements throughout the programme which supported how they embedded positive changes.

CONCLUSIONS

The coachees appeared to develop socio-cognitive mindfulness through cycles of experiential learning and self-regulation. This supported the coachees in enhancing their cognitive flexibility, which helped them to adapt more constructively to their ever-changing circumstances. This in turn led to wellbeing benefits, such as improved self-fulfilment, relationships, environmental mastery and positive affect.

The coachees' insights indicate that they experienced an overall increase in self-determination and self-efficacy by learning how to successfully apply socio-cognitive mindfulness processes to their wellbeing goals in a meaningful manner. This has motivated them to continue exploring their personal development.

Future research could explore how the insights from this study could inform a continuing professional development programme for coaches interested in integrating socio-cognitive mindfulness into their coaching practices.

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Appendix C. Prospero Registration for the Systematic Review



A systematic review applying social-cognitive mindfulness findings to coaching psychology research

Citation

Katie Crabtree, Kath Swainston. A systematic review applying social-cognitive mindfulness findings to coaching psychology research. PROSPERO 2022 CRD42022298522 Available from: https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospERO/display_record.php?ID=CRD42022298522

Review question

How is socio-cognitive mindfulness (SCM) induced in adult non-clinical populations to promote multidimensional wellbeing?

- How are SCM interventions implemented?
- What psychological processes are posited to influence the workings of SCM interventions?
- What are the limitations of SCM interventions in terms of generalisability, feasibility and sustainability?
- What are the potential multidimensional wellbeing outcomes of SCM interventions? (e.g., subjective wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, social wellbeing, environmental wellbeing)
- Which insights from the SCM findings may be relevant for coaching psychology research?

Searches

To ensure a multidisciplinary and broad literature search is conducted, the following electronic bibliographic databases will be searched: APA PsycARTICLES, APA PsycINFO, Business Source Complete, CINAHL Complete, Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), Education Resource Complete, MEDLINE, Psychology and Behavioural Science Collection and Scopus. Grey literature searching will be conducted using Google Scholar to locate any further relevant publications. All databases will be explored for relevant peer-reviewed papers between 1989 and 2021 to align with the emergence of Langer's concept of mindfulness. Papers in any language will be considered provided they offer an English title and abstract.

Types of study to be included

Inclusion: Peer-reviewed quantitative, qualitative or mixed method studies will be included provided they focus on socio-cognitive mindfulness interventions.

Exclusion: Correlational studies, cohort studies, diagnostic studies, literature and systematic reviews will be excluded, as well as any papers not published in a peer-reviewed journal, such as PhD and MSc theses.

Condition or domain being studied

The domain being studied is socio-cognitive mindfulness which focuses on the mental processes involved within social contexts and is an alternative to the meditative approach to mindfulness. This review aims to explore the accumulating body of empirical research to provide new insights into the workings of socio-cognitive mindfulness by holistically examining how the interventions are implemented and what psychological processes may influence their outcomes.

Participants/population

Inclusion: Included participants will come from a non-clinical adult population to ensure the focus of the study is on improving wellbeing rather than alleviating psychological or physical illnesses.

Exclusion: Participants under the age of 18 will be excluded and participants from a clinical population will also be excluded.

Intervention(s), exposure(s)

Inclusion: The basis of this systematic review is to explore interventions which have derived from Langer's socio-cognitive construct of mindfulness.

Exclusion: Any intervention which is not based on Langer's construct of mindfulness is excluded, such as all forms of meditative mindfulness.

Comparator(s)/control

Not applicable

Context

Studies in non-clinical contexts only will be included.

Main outcome(s) [1 change]

The most important outcomes of this review will be impacts on mindfulness and/or wellbeing following the intervention. As the review will be mapping wide-ranging experiments across multiple disciplines, various validated measures will be considered. The PERMA-V wellbeing model (Seligman, 2011; Eacker, 2020) will be used as a guideline for which wellbeing measures should be included. Although these core elements are interrelated, some examples of acceptable measures have been provided below:

Positive Emotions: e.g., Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), Affect Balance Scale (ABS)

Engagement: e.g., Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS)

Relationships (to include relationships with nature): e.g., Positive and Negative Relationship Quality Scale (PNRQ), Connectedness to Nature scale (CNS)

Meaning: e.g., Scales of Psychological Wellbeing (SPWB), Positive Aspects of Caregiving scale (PAC)

Accomplishment: e.g., Achievement Motivation Inventory (AMI)

Vitality: e.g., Heart Rate (HR), Body Mass Index (BMI)

Measures of effect

Additional outcome(s)

The secondary aim of this review is to clarify how SCM may be a relevant framework to integrate within coaching psychology research. This review hopes to provide recommendations and guidance for researchers interested in integrating SCM within coaching practices.

Data extraction (selection and coding)

Records will be located through database searching by utilising the key search terms and conducting forward and backward citation searching. The search items will be imported into Rayyan, with duplicates removed and recorded. All remaining records will be screened by title and abstract by the primary reviewer (Katie Crabtree) using the predetermined eligibility criteria. Any papers not meeting the inclusion criteria will be excluded. Full texts will then be retrieved for the remaining articles and assessed against the inclusion criteria, with eligible studies being recorded for the final synthesis stage. Reasons for exclusion will be recorded at each stage and the four-phased PRISMA flow chart will be employed to illustrate the steps in the review. In each sifting stage, a second reviewer (Katherine Swainston) will independently assess a random 20% of titles and abstracts against the inclusion/exclusion criteria, with any disagreements being resolved through discussion with a third reviewer (Helen Limbrick).

A data extraction table will be created in Microsoft Excel to record relevant information from the selected studies in relation to how the intervention is conducted, plus any limitations that are discussed within the paper. Suggested headings are:

- lead author and year of publication
- country
- study aims
- study methodology
- study context
- participant characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity)
- sample size
- intervention features (e.g., group size, duration, instructions provided)
- psychological processes used/discussed
- key results relating to the processes by which SCM influences study outcomes
- limitations relating to generalisability, feasibility and sustainability

To ensure the categories for data extraction are fit for purpose, 10% of the retrieved studies (or a minimum of 2 in the case of less than 20 included studies) will be piloted to assess whether all relevant data has been collected in accordance with the research aims.

Risk of bias (quality) assessment

Included studies will be quality assessed using the applicable Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklists for RCT or qualitative studies (or both in the case of mixed method studies). The primary reviewer (KC) will independently assess each included study for quality, with the secondary reviewer (KS) assessing a random 20% of studies for quality with any disagreements being resolved through discussion with the third reviewer (HL).

Upon completion of the systematic review, the Risk of Bias in Systematic Reviews (ROBIS) tool will be utilised by the research team to provide an overall assessment of the review as having achieved low, high or unclear risk of bias.

Strategy for data synthesis

To ensure robustness within the synthesis is achieved, the four-staged framework suggested within Popay et al.'s (2006) Guidance on the Conduct of Narrative Synthesis in Systematic Reviews will be employed. (1) The role of theory will involve utilising Langer's concept of mindfulness (1989) to help interpret the findings of the final studies in the review.

(2) Developing preliminary synthesis will include a content analysis-based approach to identify emerging patterns in the intervention design, study findings and the psychological processes purported to influence the intervention outcomes. (3) Exploring relationships within and between studies will involve analysing the variability in intervention design, psychological processes and outcomes to form themes to synthesise the findings relating to how and why the intervention works and the relevance to coaching research. Concept mapping will help to represent the relationships between the key concepts identified in the synthesis. (4) Evaluating the rigour of the synthesis will include utilising the CASP checklists to ensure that the strength of evidence used within the review is robust and can provide insights on socio-cognitive mindfulness that are transferable to other domains and with general audiences.

Analysis of subgroups or subsets

Not applicable

Contact details for further information

Katie Crabtree
k.crabtree@tees.ac.uk

Organisational affiliation of the review

Teesside University
www.tees.ac.uk

Review team members and their organisational affiliations [2 changes]

Mrs Katie Crabtree, Newcastle University
Dr Kath Swainston, Newcastle University

Collaborators [1 change]

Julia Papworth, Oxford Brookes University
William Pennington, Anglia Ruskin University

Type and method of review

Intervention, Narrative synthesis, Systematic review

Anticipated or actual start date

12 October 2021

Anticipated completion date

31 May 2022

Funding sources/sponsors

Not applicable

Conflicts of interest

Language

English

Country

England

Stage of review [2 changes]

Review Completed published

Details of final report/publication(s) or preprints if available [3 changes]

Crabtree, K., Papworth, J., Pennington, W. and Swainston, K. (2024) 'A Systematic Review of Socio-Cognitive Mindfulness Interventions and its Implications for Wellbeing Coaching', International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 22 (1), pp.84-108.

<https://doi.org/10.24384/jek2-d087>

Subject index terms status

Subject indexing assigned by CRD

Subject index terms

Cognition; Cognitive Behavioral Therapy; Humans; Mentoring; Mindfulness; Phobic Disorders

Date of registration in PROSPERO

05 January 2022

Date of first submission

15 December 2021

Stage of review at time of this submission [2 changes]

Stage	Started	Completed
Preliminary searches	Yes	Yes
Piloting of the study selection process	Yes	Yes
Formal screening of search results against eligibility criteria	Yes	Yes
Data extraction	Yes	Yes
Risk of bias (quality) assessment	Yes	Yes
Data analysis	Yes	Yes

Revision note

I have corrected the link to the published systematic review. Is there also a way I can change my contact details from my old email address (k.crabtree@tees.ac.uk) to my new one: k.crabtree2@newcastle.ac.uk I've done this previously when I've edited the protocol, but the version that gets published on your website still shows my old contact details.

The record owner confirms that the information they have supplied for this submission is accurate and complete and they understand that deliberate provision of inaccurate information or omission of data may be construed as scientific misconduct.

The record owner confirms that they will update the status of the review when it is completed and will add publication details in due course.

Versions

05 January 2022

05 January 2023

02 February 2024

02 February 2024

15 May 2024

Appendix D: Quality Ratings of Final Studies in the Systematic Review

Lead author & year	Weight of Evidence A - Trustworthiness	Weight of Evidence B - Appropriateness	Weight of Evidence C – Relevance	Weight of Evidence D - Overall quality
	<i>How sound is the study's methodology in its own terms, such as its accuracy, coherency and transparency?</i>	<i>How appropriate are the study's design and analysis to answering how socio-cognitive mindfulness is induced and how the interventions achieve their outcomes?</i>	<i>How relevant is the focus of evidence to answer the review question in terms of the generalisability of the population and how wellbeing is measured?</i>	<i>To what extent does this study contribute evidence to answering the review question?</i>
Delizonna (2009)	<i>Low</i> Control between-subjects design = reasonably high-quality methodology, however, no randomisation of groups. The study had a relatively high attrition rate, plus the exclusion of participants who had not followed the instructions fully, which led to a small sample size, weakening the statistical power. Data analysis could have been more coherent.	<i>Low</i> Sufficient detail was given regarding the intervention design. However, it was not made clear how the participants attempted to control their heart rates at the end of the intervention. The explanation regarding how the intervention achieved its outcomes is relatively thin.	<i>Medium</i> The participants were non-clinical. The measure used is quite an indirect measure of wellbeing taken in isolation from any other measures.	Low
Downey (1991)	<i>Low</i> RCT between-subjects design = high-quality methodology. The study is mostly transparent; however, the analysis could have been more coherent. The sample size is	<i>Low</i> Sufficient detail was provided relating to the design and delivery of the intervention. However, more examples of the process and outcome instructions would have been useful, although it is noted in the discussion	<i>Low</i> The participants were non-clinical, but from a specific gender and age range which may make results difficult to generalise. The wellbeing measures used were appropriate,	Low

Lead author & year	Weight of Evidence A - Trustworthiness	Weight of Evidence B - Appropriateness	Weight of Evidence C – Relevance	Weight of Evidence D - Overall quality
	relatively small and may decrease the statistical power.	that the strength of these instructions was inadequate. The authors speculate why no significant differences occurred between the groups.	however, the only statistically significant increase found for both groups was related to performance rather than wellbeing factors.	
Geng (2019)	<i>Medium</i> RCT between-subjects design = high-quality methodology. The study is transparent about its design. Data analysis could have been more coherent.	<i>High</i> Sufficient detail was provided about the intervention design. The authors provided detailed explanations for why the intervention had its effects on their participants.	<i>Low</i> The participants were non-clinical but family caregivers of cancer patients, making generalisations limited. Wellbeing measures were used but were very specific to the role of a caregiver.	Medium
Haas (2014)	<i>Medium</i> Control between-group design = high-quality methodology. The study is mostly transparent although randomisation is unclear. Data collection and analysis are coherent. The sample size is relatively small and may decrease the statistical power.	<i>Medium</i> Enough detail was provided about the intervention design. Explanations were provided for the processes involved in the intervention leading to the matching of heart rates when they returned to the room, but there is still some uncertainty as to how this directly links to wellbeing.	<i>Low</i> The participants were non-clinical but all university students which may make generalisation difficult. Although mindfulness was measured, the other measures were indirect links to wellbeing, with heart rate being used to measure physical synchronicity.	Medium
Langer (2010)	<i>Medium</i> RCT between-subjects design = high-quality methodology. The study is transparent about its design. Data analysis could have been more	<i>Low</i> Brief detail was provided about the design and delivery of the intervention. Some explanations were given for why the intervention worked	<i>Low</i> The participants were non-clinical, but all university students which may make generalisation difficult.	Low

Lead author & year	Weight of Evidence A - Trustworthiness	Weight of Evidence B - Appropriateness	Weight of Evidence C – Relevance	Weight of Evidence D - Overall quality
	coherent. The small sample size may also decrease the statistical power.	in some ways, but also why it was perhaps not fully effective. More depth would have been useful.	Although mindfulness was measured, the measure used for wellbeing is not a direct one.	
Maymin (2021)	<i>Medium</i> RCT between-subjects design = high-quality methodology. Coherent analysis. Anonymous recruitment strategy may make the data less transparent.	<i>Medium</i> Detailed content about intervention design was provided. It highlighted a potential link between inducing mindfulness and becoming more rational but could have provided thicker explanations.	<i>Low</i> The participants were recruited publicly and anonymously so demographic information is not available. The link between rationality and wellbeing may also be open to interpretation.	Medium
Pagnini (2021)	<i>Medium</i> RCT between-subjects design = high-quality methodology. Highly transparent about design. Highly coherent data collection and analysis. However, the small sample size means it is poorly powered.	<i>Medium</i> Ample information about the approach to intervention and a detailed summary of the content covered within the training, however, could have provided examples of exercises participants had to complete. Less detail was given about what processes may have produced the outcomes achieved, although a highly relevant summary was provided regarding the study's limitations.	<i>Low</i> The main proportion of the study's population was clinical which left only a small number of non-clinical participants receiving the mindfulness treatment (n=8) which makes results difficult to generalise. The outcomes were related to wellbeing but specifically focused on the caregiving role, again making generalisation limited.	Medium
Spence (2019)	<i>Medium</i> RCT between-subjects design = high-quality methodology. Highly transparent about design. Highly	<i>High</i> Ample detail was given about the intervention design and delivery. The authors provided several explanations	<i>High</i> The population was non-clinical and typical of an audience likely to seek out coaching. The study	High

Lead author & year	Weight of Evidence A - Trustworthiness	Weight of Evidence B - Appropriateness	Weight of Evidence C – Relevance	Weight of Evidence D - Overall quality
	coherent data collection and analysis. However, the small sample size means it is poorly powered.	for why they believed the intervention achieved its multiple outcomes.	looked at a range of relevant wellbeing outcomes.	
Tang (2017)	<i>High</i> RCT between-subjects design = high-quality methodology. Highly transparent about design. Highly coherent data collection and analysis.	<i>High</i> Sufficient detail was given about the intervention design and delivery, plus, the study was broken down into sub-studies to understand the effects of the intervention material further. A full explanation was given of the processes occurring which were likely to influence the study's outcomes.	<i>Medium</i> The participants were non-clinical but all university students which may make generalisation difficult. The measure used is linked, albeit slightly indirectly, to wellbeing.	High
Wang (2016)	<i>High</i> RCT between-subjects design = high-quality methodology. Highly transparent about design. Highly coherent data collection and analysis.	<i>Medium</i> Sufficient detail was provided regarding the intervention design. The authors discuss why the intervention achieved its effects, but this explanation could have been fuller.	<i>Medium</i> The participants were non-clinical but all university students which may make generalisation difficult. The measure used is linked, albeit slightly indirectly, to wellbeing.	Medium
Yeh (2020)	<i>High</i> RCT between-subjects design = high-quality methodology. Highly transparent about design. Highly coherent data collection and analysis.	<i>High</i> Very detailed information was provided about the intervention design and delivery. Thick explanations were given for why the	<i>Low</i> The participants were non-clinical but all university students which may make generalisation difficult. Although the focus of the study was creative self-efficacy, it is	Medium

Lead author & year	Weight of Evidence A - Trustworthiness	Weight of Evidence B - Appropriateness	Weight of Evidence C – Relevance	Weight of Evidence D - Overall quality
		intervention achieved its effects against each study hypothesis.	quite an indirect link to wellbeing and the measure had been adapted for this study.	
Zilcha-Mano (2016)	<i>High</i> Mixed methods: RCT between-subjects design including a narrative analysis = high-quality methodology. Highly transparent about design. Highly coherent data collection and analysis.	<i>High</i> Sufficient detail was provided about the design and delivery of the intervention. Thick explanations were provided for the processes likely to have influenced the outcomes, with the qualitative data providing insightful perspectives from the participants.	<i>Low</i> Even though the participants were pregnant, they were deemed by the researchers to be non-clinical due to their healthy pregnancies, however, this may make generalisation difficult due to the specificity of the population. Also, the study focused on some relevant wellbeing outcomes, although, other outcomes were excluded as they related to the health of the participants' new-born children.	Medium

Appendix E: Risk of Bias Assessment for the Systematic Review Process

	Study eligibility criteria	Identification and selection of studies	Data collection and study appraisal	Synthesis and findings	Risk of bias in the review
Signalling questions	1.1 Did the review adhere to predefined objectives and eligibility criteria? - YES	2.1 Did the search include an appropriate range of databases/electronic sources for published and unpublished reports? - PROBABLY YES	3.1 Were efforts made to minimise errors in data collection? - PROBABLY YES	4.1. Did the synthesis include all studies that it should? - PROBABLY YES	A. Did the interpretation of findings address all of the concerns identified in domains 1 to 4? - PROBABLY YES
	1.2 Were the eligibility criteria appropriate for the review question? - YES	2.2 Were methods additional to database searching used to identify relevant reports? - YES	3.2 Were sufficient study characteristics available for both review authors and readers to be able to interpret the results? - PROBABLY YES	4.2. Were all predefined analyses reported or departures explained? - YES	B. Was the relevance of identified studies to the review's research question appropriately considered? - YES
	1.3 Were eligibility criteria unambiguous - PROBABLY YES	2.3 Were the terms and structure of the search strategy likely to retrieve as many eligible studies as possible? - PROBABLY YES	3.3 Were all relevant study results collected for use in the synthesis? - PROBABLY YES	4.3. Was the synthesis appropriate given the nature and similarity in the research questions, study designs, and outcomes across included studies? - YES	C. Did the reviewers avoid emphasising results on the basis of their statistical significance? - YES
		2.4 Were restrictions based on data, publication format, or language appropriate? - PROBABLY YES	3.4. Was risk of bias (or methodologic quality) formally assessed using appropriate criteria? -YES	4.4. Was between-study variation minimal or addressed in the synthesis? - PROBABLY YES	

	Study eligibility criteria	Identification and selection of studies	Data collection and study appraisal	Synthesis and findings	Risk of bias in the review
		2.5 Were efforts made to minimise error in selection of studies? - YES	3.5. Were efforts made to minimise error in risk of bias assessment? - YES	4.5. Were the findings robust, for example, as demonstrated through funnel plot or sensitivity analyses? - UNCLEAR	
				4.6. Were biases in primary studies minimal or addressed in the synthesis? - PROBABLY YES	
Judgement	Concerns regarding study eligibility criteria specification - LOW	Concerns regarding methods used to identify and/or select studies - LOW	Concerns regarding methods used to collect data and appraise studies - LOW	Concerns regarding the synthesis - LOW	Risk of bias in the review - LOW
Rationale for judgement	Although there may have been some ambiguity around the eligibility criteria, detailed guidelines were created for the reviewers to ensure consistency.	The search strategy was broad and utilised multidisciplinary databases. A second reviewer independently assessed a random 20% selection from the screening stage with disagreements resolved through discussion with a third reviewer.	Data extraction was extensive and was piloted with 25% of the final studies to ensure all relevant study results were collected. A thorough quality appraisal was conducted with the second reviewer independently appraising 25% of the final studies to ensure consistency.	Due to the heterogeneous results, a narrative synthesis was appropriate for this review. Each sub-review question was answered in turn to reach an overall synthesis to answer the primary review question. However, there may be an element of bias in the interpretation of findings.	The synthesis was approached with rigour and provides a robust overview of appropriately selected studies. The final synthesis includes interpretation by the primary researcher, although the analytical process used was made transparent.

Appendix F: Practitioner Reflections on Coaching Exercise

(‘Welcoming New Information’)

Experiential learning stage	Practitioner reflections
Concrete experience	I have noticed that some clients can arrive at coaching sessions appearing to be distracted after a busy day, and still thinking about what happened earlier or about what is coming up later.
Reflective observation	When a client is ruminating about the past or future, it can prevent the client from being fully present in the session which can impact the client’s ability to be engaged and attuned to options and new ways of thinking.
Abstract conceptualisation	If the client were to start the session with a grounding exercise, this may help them to regain their focus on the present and be more engaged throughout the session leading to more positive progress. This could be achieved by inducing a state of socio-cognitive mindfulness at the start of the session, such as a brief exercise to activate the “welcoming new information” psychological process.
Active experimentation	At the start of several different coaching sessions, I included the simple intervention instructions provided within the Maymin & Langer (2021) study which enhanced mindfulness, rationality and decision-making abilities: “Look around where you are right now and try to notice at least three new things that you have never noticed before. What are those three things?” I expanded on this by inviting clients to notice even more new things by asking: “What else do you notice?” This encouraged clients to be more creative in their responses and look at their environment from different perspectives.
Concrete experience	I next tried this exercise within an online group coaching setting and noticed that it helped ground the group members in the present moment. However, I also noticed that they were looking at different environments which could not be easily seen by each other.
Reflective observation	The exercise seemed to break the group’s rapport and connection since the exercise drew their attention away from each other and towards different environments that they were not sharing.
Abstract conceptualisation	I theorised that it may be better to adopt the intervention used by Haas & Langer (2010), whereby participants increased interpersonal synchronicity by being asked to “Have a conversation with your partner for 15 minutes and notice 10 different things about them during this time.”
Active experimentation	I tested this idea with a different group who were having their second session together. I adapted the exercise since it was originally created for people working in pairs. I asked the group members to notice different things about every other member whilst they took turns talking about their goals for the sessions for approximately one to two minutes. I also reduced the number of things to notice

Experiential learning stage	Practitioner reflections
	from ten to three to make the exercise fit better within a group setting. After each member spoke, I asked the group to reflect on the kind of things they noticed and asked them how they felt during the exercise.
Concrete experience	Some group members found elements of the exercise useful to look and listen in a different way, but overall, they were uncomfortable being asked to observe each other and to share those observations afterwards. They felt that they became distracted by wondering what kind of things they should be noticing, i.e., what they're saying, body language, etc. Some were trying to remember details from previous sessions to be able to identify new aspects of each other.
Reflective observation	It seemed that I had overcomplicated the exercise whilst not providing clear instructions to set up the exercise in a way that made sense. As the psychological safety of a group is key, it is more important to ensure members do not feel uncomfortable during coaching exercises, and so, this adaption of the exercise needed a rethink to ensure psychological safety was prioritised.
Abstract conceptualisation	The adapted exercise created the opposite effect to what was intended as they were less engaged in noticing what was happening in the present as they were worried if they were doing it 'correctly' or trying hard to 'remember' details. Therefore, it made sense to return to the simplified version used previously of asking participants to notice new things in their environment since this did have the intended effect of grounding people and encouraging them to think creatively about familiar items, such as the room they are sitting in. To address the first issue of lack of rapport-building between the group members during the exercise, a possible adjustment could be asking the group members follow-up questions to help reconnect the group.
Active experimentation	I trialled the new iteration with several coaching groups and tried out several follow-up questions, such as: "What have you noticed about what other people notice?" "What changes have you noticed about yourself compared to the start of the session or compared to last week's session?"
Concrete experience	I asked the groups for feedback at the close of the sessions. The participants described how the exercise anchored them in the present moment and helped them to think more creatively throughout the remainder of the session. They felt that the follow-up questions helped them to notice how everyone approaches the same exercise slightly differently and that they learnt something new about each other by reflecting on this.
Reflective observation	This iteration of the exercise appeared to induce socio-cognitive mindfulness most effectively so far. The simplified instructions allowed participants to notice novelty within a familiar environment whilst noticing each other's different perspectives during the follow-up reflection period. It appeared that the 'viewing from multiple perspectives' process was also activated, which could help to reinforce the state of socio-cognitive mindfulness.

Appendix G: Participation Information Sheet for Feasibility Study



Information Sheet for Feasibility Study Participants

Title of Study: A feasibility study of a socio-cognitive mindfulness-based coaching programme

Principal Investigator: Katie Crabtree

Research Supervisors: Dr Katherine Swainston, Dr Gavin Clark & Dr Tracy Donachie

Invitation and Brief Summary

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. However, you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without any penalty.

What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of the research is to explore the feasibility of a coaching programme that has been developed from the theory of socio-cognitive mindfulness. Socio-cognitive mindfulness does not involve meditation, but instead focuses on developing a more responsive and flexible thinking style which may lead to wellbeing improvements. This study aims to investigate whether a coaching programme based on socio-cognitive mindfulness works.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part as you are over 18 years of age, have the ability to read, write and speak English and are not experiencing mental health problems or currently being treated or awaiting treatment for a mental health condition. Therefore, you may be in a position to help us explore whether this coaching programme works with non-clinical adults.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part. It is entirely up to you to decide to participate in the study. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form, a copy of which you will be given to keep. Deciding not to take part or withdrawing from the study will not affect you in any way.

What does taking part involve?

Should you wish to participate in the study, your involvement would be for 8 weeks, with a follow-up approximately 2 months after the coaching programme finishes. First, you will be asked to complete 2 self-report wellbeing questionnaires and 1 mindfulness questionnaire. You will then be invited to meet with the Principal Investigator, who is also the coach of the programme, via Microsoft Teams videoconferencing. This will be a "contracting" session lasting up to one hour to discuss each other's roles and responsibilities as "coach" and "coachee", and to explain what is involved in the coaching programme and the commitment required of you throughout. You will also discuss which wellbeing area you would like to focus on during the coaching programme.

The coaching programme will commence approximately one week after the "contracting" session and you will be required to attend five weekly group coaching sessions. Each session is 60-minutes long with an additional optional 15-minutes for participants who wish to ask further questions. All sessions will be conducted and recorded via Microsoft Teams videoconferencing with a maximum of 8 participants. During each coaching session, you will explore a socio-cognitive mindfulness process and learn how to apply it to your wellbeing goal.

Information Sheet for Feasibility Study Participants

You will also design daily home-based assignments within the sessions to carry out throughout the week ahead. This daily activity will take approximately 30 minutes per day and be conducted at least 4 to 5 days per week. After the final coaching session, you will be asked to complete the same 3 self-report wellbeing and mindfulness questionnaires, plus a questionnaire asking for your feedback about the acceptability of the coaching programme.

You will then be invited to attend a one-hour semi-structured interview via Microsoft Teams videoconferencing approximately one week later to answer more in-depth questions about your experience of participating in the coaching programme. You will be asked one final time to complete the 3 self-report questionnaires 8 weeks after the coaching programme finishes and be asked for your views on whether you are experiencing any ongoing effects from the coaching programme.

What information will be collected and who will have access to the information collected?

We will use your name and contact details [telephone number and email address] to make arrangements with you for participation. If you are happy for us to do so, we will ask you to tell us some demographic information about you (your age, gender, country of residence, employment status) and we will combine this information with the other participants as part of our description of the study. We will also ask if you are currently being treated or awaiting treatment for a mental health condition. This is to check whether you meet the eligibility criteria for the study. In the contracting session, you will be asked about your current levels of wellbeing, and what area of wellbeing you are aiming to improve during the coaching programme.

Your responses to the questionnaires will be collected via online survey software. One questionnaire asks for you to rate different areas of your wellbeing, e.g., physical wellbeing, social-emotional support, personal fulfilment, etc. The second questionnaire asks you to appraise elements of your psychological wellbeing, such as self-acceptance, purpose in life and positive relations with others. The third questionnaire asks questions to gauge your levels of mindfulness. The acceptability questionnaire will ask for your feedback on the coaching programme. You will be asked to input a unique participant code number when completing the questionnaires online so that your responses are anonymised.

The contracting session and the group coaching sessions will be recorded via the Microsoft Teams videoconferencing platform for the purpose of the Principal Investigator's reflective analysis. It is at your discretion whether you wish to use a pseudonym during the group coaching sessions, however, it is required that all participants leave their cameras on during the online coaching sessions and are visible to each other in order to support the coaching process and environment. The recordings made via Microsoft Teams will be transferred as soon as possible to a password-protected folder and used for research purposes only. The original files in Microsoft Teams will be deleted once they are transferred. The Principal Investigator will anonymise any analysis developed from the recordings and delete the transferred recordings once analysis is complete.

Your interview following the completion of the coaching programme will also be recorded and will be transcribed verbatim (word-for-word) via the Microsoft Teams videoconferencing platform and transcribing software. Interview data you provide will be anonymised at the point of transcription and the interview recording will be destroyed.

Information Sheet for Feasibility Study Participants

All the anonymised data collected throughout each stage will be kept separate from your personal information (such as your name and contact details on the consent form, and your demographic information) and will only be identifiable by a unique participant code number. No individually identifiable information will be stored outside the main research team. No individual will be identified or identifiable in any publication arising from the research. We will keep all information about you safe and secure. The research team would only be required to disclose your information if they have concerns regarding your wellbeing and/or safety.

The non-identifiable research data (questionnaire responses, reflective analysis of the sessions and the interview transcripts) will be stored indefinitely on a secure password-protected server at Newcastle University. This is in case other scientists wish to raise questions about the results that need checking against the data. The data may be made publicly available (for example, as a supplement to the journal article, or stored on an online scientific data repository), but information from which you could be identified would be removed from this. The study consent forms and demographic information will be stored on a secure password-protected server, and will be accessible to only the research team, and will be destroyed two years after project completion.

Personal data will be processed in the public interest. This will comply with the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018.

What would happen if I started, but changed my mind?

If you decide to take part, you can withdraw at any point throughout the coaching programme and up to one week after taking part in the interview, without giving a reason. There will be no negative impact on you if you choose not to take part or to withdraw from the study. You can withdraw by contacting the Principal Investigator, Katie Crabtree, by email: K.Crabtree2@newcastle.ac.uk

Please note that if you decide to withdraw during or at the end of the coaching programme, it would not be possible to immediately destroy recordings of any group coaching sessions you have attended if the other participants do not also withdraw. However, your contributions to the group sessions will be omitted from the Principal Investigator's reflective analysis and the recordings will be destroyed as planned once the analysis is complete.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are unlikely to be any benefits to you for taking part. However, your contribution will be invaluable in helping to develop research in this field to support people in improving their wellbeing.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is unlikely that taking part in this study will cause any disadvantages or risks to you. However, to support your physical and emotional comfort throughout, the sessions will be conducted via online videoconferencing to negate the need for you to travel to participate. There will be several checking-in points during the sessions and the interview to ensure you (and other participants) are comfortable and willing to proceed.

Your psychological safety and confidentiality will be made a priority throughout the programme but will also require you and the other participants to contribute to a climate of trust. Nevertheless, if you feel at any point that your wellbeing or confidentiality is at risk, please report it to the Principal Investigator immediately who will respond as required. If the Principal Investigator is unable to resolve the matter, she will signpost you to further sources of ongoing support as appropriate.

Information Sheet for Feasibility Study Participants

Who is the sponsor and data controller for this research?

Newcastle University is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. Newcastle University will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that Newcastle University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

The lawful basis for carrying out this study under GDPR is Task in the Public Interest, (Article 6,1e) as research is cited as part of the University's duties. Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as Newcastle University need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, Newcastle University will keep the information about you that has already been obtained.

To safeguard your rights, the minimum personally identifiable information will be used. You can find out more about how Newcastle University uses your information at:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/media/wwwnclacuk/research/files/ResearchDataManagementPolicy.pdf>

What will happen to the findings of the research study?

The findings will be published in the Principal Investigator's thesis as part of her PhD in Population Health Sciences. The results may also be published in scientific journals and presented at meetings and conferences. No personal information will be identifiable in any report, paper or presentation,

Has this study received ethical approval?

This study has received ethical approval from the Faculty of Medical Sciences Research Ethics Committee, part of Newcastle University's Research Ethics Committee on 21/07/2023. This Committee includes members who are internal to the faculty. This study was reviewed by members of the Committee, who must provide impartial advice and avoid significant conflicts of interest.

Who should I contact for further information relating to the research?

The Principal Investigator, Katie Crabtree, can be contacted by email: K.Crabtree2@newcastle.ac.uk

Who should I contact in order to file a complaint?

You can contact the Chair of the Faculty of Medical Sciences Ethics Committee at fmsethics@ncl.ac.uk

If you wish to raise a complaint on how your personal data is handled, you can contact the Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter: Maureen Wilkinson at rec-man@ncl.ac.uk

If you are not satisfied with their response you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):

<https://ico.org.uk/>

What happens next?

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide not to participate, there is nothing else you need to do. If you have any questions, please email the Principal Investigator. If you would like to participate, please complete and return the Consent Form to the Principal Investigator, Katie Crabtree, via email: K.Crabtree2@newcastle.ac.uk

Appendix H: Participant Consent Form for Feasibility Study



Consent Form for Feasibility Study Participants

Title of Study: A feasibility study of a socio-cognitive mindfulness-based coaching programme

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form.

Please initial box to confirm consent		
1.	I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated 29/08/2023 (version 2) for the above study, I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and I have had any questions answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, up until one week after the interview has taken place.	
3.	I understand that if I decide to withdraw, any data that I have provided up to that point will be destroyed, with the exception of any recordings of the group coaching sessions, which will only be destroyed once the analysis is complete. However, I understand that my contributions to these sessions will be omitted from the analysis.	
4.	I consent to the processing of my personal information, including my name, contact details, age, gender, country of residence, employment status and mental health and wellbeing status for the purposes of this research study, as described in the information sheet dated 29/08/2023 (version 2).	
5.	I consent to my anonymised research data being stored and used by others for future research.	
6.	I understand that my research data may be published as a report.	
8.	I consent to being audio and video recorded for the contracting and coaching sessions via Microsoft Teams videoconferencing software and I understand that the recordings will be transferred as soon as possible to a password-protected folder, with the original files in Microsoft Teams being deleted once transferred. I understand that the transferred recordings will also be deleted once analysis is complete.	
9.	I consent to being audio and video recorded for the semi-structured interviews via Microsoft Teams videoconferencing software and to being transcribed verbatim, with the interview recording being destroyed immediately after the transcription has been stored anonymously to a password-protected folder.	
10.	I understand that being audio and video recorded is necessary for my participation in this research.	
11.	I understand that I must make every effort to attend all the coaching sessions and complete the home-based assignments.	
12.	I agree to take part in this research project.	
Participant		
_____ _____ _____ <i>Name of participant</i> <i>Signature</i> <i>Date</i>		
Researcher		
_____ _____ _____ <i>Name of researcher</i> <i>Signature</i> <i>Date</i>		

Consent Form Version 2 / Date 29/08/2023

Appendix I: Participant Results from Acceptability Questionnaire

Acceptability component	Number of participants (%)				
Affective attitude	Strongly disliked	Disliked	No opinion	Liked	Strongly liked
Individual contracting sessions	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)
Group coaching sessions	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (50)	3 (50)
Home-based assignments	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)
	Very uncomfortable	Uncomfortable	No opinion	Comfortable	Very comfortable
Working in a group	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)
Working with a coach	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (100)
Burden	No effort at all	A little effort	No opinion	A lot of effort	A huge effort
Attending weekly sessions	1 (16.7)	4 (66.7)	0 (0)	1 (16.7)	0 (0)
Completing home-based activities	0 (0)	5 (83.3)	0 (0)	1 (16.7)	0 (0)
Ethicality	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
Programme was relevant	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)
Intervention coherence					
Understand how programme increases mindfulness	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)
Understand how programme improves wellbeing	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (50)	3 (50)
Opportunity costs					
Programme interfered with other priorities	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Perceived effectiveness					
Programme improved mindfulness	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)
Programme improved wellbeing	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)
Programme improved ability to pursue wellbeing goals	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (50)	3 (50)
Self-efficacy	Very unconfident	Unconfident	No opinion	Confident	Very confident
Participating in online sessions	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (50)	3 (50)
Completing home-based activities	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)
Continuing to use strategies for wellbeing development	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)
Embedding 'attending to the process before the outcome'	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (100)	0 (0)
Embedding 'welcoming new information'	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)
Embedding 'viewing from multiple perspectives'	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)
Embedding 'creating new categories'	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (83.3)	1 (16.7)
Embedding 'controlling the context'	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (16.7)	5 (83.3)	0 (0)
Timing	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
Acceptable programme duration	0 (0)	1 (16.7)	0 (0)	4 (66.7)	1 (16.7)
Acceptable session duration	0 (0)	1 (16.7)	0 (0)	3 (50)	2 (33.3)
General acceptability	Completely unacceptable	Unacceptable	No opinion	Acceptable	Completely acceptable
Overall acceptability of intervention	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (16.7)	5 (83.3)

Appendix J: Template for Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview Schedule

Introduction:

- The participant will be welcomed and thanked for their time
- The participant will be advised that the interview will be recorded to support analysis, however, their confidentiality will be protected
- The format of the interview will be explained, and that it will be up to 60 minutes
- It will be emphasised that there are no right or wrong answers
- The researcher will stress that they particularly welcome any critical feedback about the programme or their experience of it to support its ongoing improvement
- The participant will be asked if they have any questions before starting
- The interviewer will ask for verbal consent to start recording before starting the interview

Interview questions:

- What were your expectations of the programme at the start?
 - Were your expectations met?
- Can you describe your overall experience of participating in the coaching programme?
- Can you give examples of any significant moments or reflections made during the experience?
 - What sense do you make of that specific experience?
- Can you give examples of any negative experiences you had during the programme?
 - What sense do you make of that specific experience?
- How has the overall experience impacted your wellbeing, if at all?
 - How do you think this experience will impact your wellbeing on an ongoing basis?
- How do you demonstrate/embody socio-cognitive mindfulness?
- Which socio-cognitive mindfulness process resonated with you the most, if any?
- What did you come to understand about socio-cognitive mindfulness?
- What is your view of how socio-cognitive mindfulness can support peoples' wellbeing?
- How might this experience impact your work as a coach?

General prompts:

- Can you, tell me a bit more about that, please?
- What was that like for you?
- How did you feel about that?
- Could you give me an example of that, please?

Interview Schedule Version 2 / Date 12/09/2023