Author’s response to reviews

Title: The extended nervous system: Affect Regulation, somatic and social change processes associated with Mindful Parenting.

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Version: 1 Date: 28 Mar 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Professor Harris,

RE: The extended nervous system: Affect Regulation, somatic and social change processes associated with Mindful Parenting.(PSYO-D-18-00143)

Thank you for reviewing the manuscript entitled, ‘The extended nervous system: Affect Regulation, somatic and social change processes associated with Mindful Parenting.’ The requested changes have been addressed as following:-

1) Please clarify and detail the procedure (i.e. verbal/written) for obtaining informed consent from the participants and/or from legal guardians. Please append this information to the Ethics approval and consent to participate section of the Declarations.

Participants provided written informed consent prior to the interview. The following has been included on p. 28, line 630.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

All participants in the study provided written informed consent. Ethical approval was granted by the Women and Children’s Health Network (HREC/16/WCHN/21). All procedures which involved human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of Helsinki declaration and its later amendments. This study also complied with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committees. No animals were used in this study.
2) Please re-order the Declarations so as to be consistent with BMC Psychology guidelines (https://bmcpsychology.biomedcentral.com/submission-guidelines/preparing-your-manuscript/research-article).

The declarations have been reordered to be consistent with BMC Psychology on p.28.

3) Please remove the running title header in the manuscript.

Running heading has been removed in the manuscript.

4) Please list email addresses of all authors on the Title Page.

Email address of all authors has been listed on the Title Page.

5) Please remove word count on the Title Page.

Word Count has been removed on the Title Page.

6) Please rename Method in your manuscript as Methods.

Method has been renamed to Methods.

7) Please remove Figure title and legend from the Figure as these are already placed in a dedicated section following the references.

Figure title and legend has been removed.

8) Please provide a list of the interview questions as a table in the manuscript and reference this in the text.

A list of interview questions have been provided in Table 1 p.8.
Reviewer reports:

Virginia Schmied (Reviewer 1): This is a really interesting preliminary study investigating the change processes that promote mindful parenting for the perspective of four facilitators of mindful parenting programs. The Introduction to this paper is very clear - well written.

Thank you for the feedback. This preliminary study clarified whether the change processes summarised in a systematic review are relevant to clinicians. The study is novel in summarising the various change processes identified in the literature into a cohesive model of the change processes associated with mindful parenting.

9) The methods are clearly explained but it would be helpful to see the questions or prompts used in the interviews.

The interview questions have been included in Table 1 p.8. A brief description of how the interview questions were asked is outlined on p.8, line 169 to 172. “The interview questions 1 to 10 outlined in Table 1 were emailed to the participants a week before the interview. Question 11 was not emailed prior to the interview in order to prevent influencing the participants’ responses.”

10) Also how long was each interview?

The duration of each interview was approximately 60 minutes (p.9, line 178).

11) I was not sure why the ethics approval was needed from the maternity hospital as well as the university. Considering all participants came from different states was this needed?

This qualitative study is the second stage of a quantitative study in the maternity hospital. An explanation of why ethics approval was granted from the hospital and university are outlined on p. 7 line 165 to p.8 167. “Ethics approval was required from the maternity hospital to interview their clinicians. As the research was part of a PhD project, ethics approval was also sought from the university to interview clinicians outside the hospital.”

12) Given the importance of the reflexive process in mindfulness and the qualitative nature of the study, it would be important to add a section on reflexivity. This is partly addressed in the limitations section and I suggest the following be moved to a new section just after data analysis - "To maintain the methodological rigor and reliability, the facilitators were given a copy of their
transcripts to verify if they agree with the content. An independent audit was also conducted by the second author to track the raw data to the final table. To the authors knowledge, the findings are reliable as the reiterative process checked the raw data accurately reflected the researcher's interpretation."

A section on Reflexivity has been added just after data analysis. The aforementioned section has been moved to p.12, line 251 in the Reflexivity section.

13) Also in the section on reflexivity include something on the background of the authors, how may your background and role influence or have the potential to influence the way in which data were collected, the questions asked, the analysis and interpretation of results and how was this managed. Reflexivity is an important part of all qualitative research studies. Please add a statement on this following data analysis.

Thank you for the feedback. A section on reflexivity has been added on p. 12 line, 251 to line, 263.

14) Results

The first theme somatic mechanisms - starts off in a very interesting way but I

Would like to see a little more in-depth data from what participants said about body being a trauma holder - this is a really interesting and important concept.

I understand the importance of social learning but the authors might like to comment more in results or discussion on how culture impacts aspects of social learning and parenting in this model.

The interviews illustrated how children and parents are particularly affected by the body holding the trauma. The toddler bouncing off walls gradually learnt to self-sooth as the mother started looking at her child’s face, particularly her eyes when she was raging. The parents’ restless legs, the labouring mother’s trauma during childbirth highlights how it is equally important for parents to work through physical trauma during the mindfulness program (p. 14, line 300).

Culture influences social learning within this model of mindful parenting. However all the clinicians and their participants were mostly Anglo Saxon Australians from educated, middle class backgrounds. Hence a limitation of this study was that it was unable to explore how cultural differences influence mindful parenting (p. 25, line 554).
15) In the discussion, the following point is made, "According to PA Levine [38] traumatized individuals cannot resolve the emotional trauma until the physiological trauma has been released. This appears to be particularly relevant to the children described in this study’s interviews." My understanding is that it would be equally important to the parents who are being supported through the mindfulness program - you may want to comment on this as well.

Thank you for the feedback. Table 2 on p.34 and 35 illustrates how clinicians assist parents to acknowledge and release the physiological trauma. Parents with a trauma background often find it difficult to meditate, so the clinicians encourage them to use mindful movement or focusing their attention outside the body to an outside sound or object.

16) While the idea of gestating a mother may be new to these authors, this notion has been explored in midwifery models of care previously. Similarly, the idea of the village raising a mother is not necessarily new.

The discussion on ‘gestating a mother’ and the ‘village raising a mother’ has been removed.

17) On line 539, the comment is made "Although it is unlikely, cultural differences may influence overarching change processes from other countries" This itself is not a complete sentence. But in addition, many anthropologists would argue that there may be cultural differences in the processes of parenting in particular processes that facilitate attachment. Although, as implied here the idea of a secure attachment is universal.

As recommended, amendments have been made on p.26 line 588 to p.27 line 590. The idea of secure attachment is universal. However, further research is needed to clarify how cultural differences influence secure attachment and other overarching change processes embodied in the anchor.
Reviewer 2: PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS

18) OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)? No - there are major issues

The objective of this qualitative study was to verify if the clinical insights are consistent with change processes identified in the systematic review. Mindful parenting is relatively new in Australia. This study aims to verify if Australian clinical insights are consistent with change processes identified in the systematic review. The study aims are outlined on p. 5 line 120.

19) DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?

No - there are major issues

The mixed methods study design is outlined on p.6 line 147 to p.7 line 153. Figure 1 summarizes the mixed methods design on p.7.

20) EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

No - there are minor issues

The technical rigor is explained in Figure 1 (p.7), Table 19 (p.8) and Table 2 (p.34, 35).

The theoretical rigor to allow confidence in the results followed the study design outlined in Figure 1. The data analysis section on p.11, line 233-246 explains how the data was analysed to maintain technical rigor. Methodological rigor is also discussed on p.25, line 557 to 558. Limitations with potential interpretation bias is discussed on p.25, line 457. Further research with a larger sample is needed to verify the confidence in these results across different countries, cultures and presenting issues.

Table 1 and Table 2

21) Statistics - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?

N/A - there are no statistics in this study
22) INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

   No - there are minor issues

   An example of how the results were interpreted is illustrated in Table 2 on p.34 and 35.

23) OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

   Maybe - with major revisions

   Major revisions have been included in the manuscript. The addition of Figure 1, Figure 3, Table 1 and Table 2 explains the technical soundness.

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: “My overall impression of this study is that it presents some interesting themes derived from interviews of Mindful parenting program facilitators. It has the potential to connect this qualitatively derived "model" of the processes of change in these programs to the conceptual models that have been guiding the creation of these programs.

There are several worthy things that I think the authors have done well. I like that the authors connect the ideas of Mindful parenting to other critical theoretical approaches strongly connected to parenting (attachment). I like that the authors valued the perspectives of the facilitators and that the facilitators provided insights about their views of how these programs are changing parents.”

24) My thoughts about how it might not meet best practices include:

   * Fuller Description of the methods:

      a) Describing their purposive sampling of 4 facilitators. Why 4, why were these programs chosen?
The purposive sample of only 4 clinicians were used as the Mindful Parenting programs are not widely used in Australia. It was difficult to recruit facilitators as there are few clinicians that deliver mindful parenting programs in Australia. The clinicians were accredited by peak training body for mindfulness teachers in Australasia, the Mindful Training in Australia and New Zealand (MTI ANZ). The clinicians maintained regular personal meditation practice, attendance at yearly retreats, regular peer support and supervision. Ideally, the researchers would also interview the parents. However ethics approval was not granted to interview the parents. A seven year hospital dataset was first analysed, prior to interviewing the clinicians (Townshend et al., 2018). Some of the clinicians that were interviewed had delivered this program at the hospital for 7 years.

b) What were some exemplar questions from the semi-structured interview- good that authors were consistent across the 4 facilitators , but the essence of the FINDINGS are that they are elicited from SPECIFIC QUESTIONS. To fully evaluate the quality of the study, we need to know the quality of the questions. All the interview questions have been included in Table 1 on p.8. A brief description of how the interview questions were asked is outlined on p.7, line 169 to p.7 line 172.

26) Authors could explain the data analysis more completely - for example, HOW were notes transformed in to themes. How were these reduced into higher order themes?

It would be useful to have a table illustrating this - or a figure illustrating the process/method that was used. Authors note Figure 2, but there was not one in my version.

Table 2 on p. 34 to 35 provides an example how the transcript was analysed to produce the explanatory notes and higher order themes. Figure 2 and Figure 3 are in the attachments.

27) Unclear why the paper focuses on the processes of somatic, emotional and social learning - ostensibly 3 of the 6 themes?

This paper focuses on 3 themes as it would have exceed the word limit to include the analysis of all other themes. The other themes have been analysed in another manuscript which can be submitted to BMC Psychology if it is acceptable.

28) a) Themes don't always hold together in terms of broad GROUP processes - social learning and processes that might be more specific to mindful parenting groups?
Group processes are relevant even outside mindful parenting groups. Culture is a social learning process which influences parenting even outside of a mindful parenting group. Culture is also sub-theme within social learning (p.20 line 440).

b) The Anchor - the final conceptual model - needs to be described more fully and clearly connected back to the themes. Why anchor?

The anchor is frequently used by mindfulness practitioners such as Martine Batchelor (2018) and Joseph Goldstein (2013) as a metaphor ‘to ground’, ‘to come home’ to one’s breath and body. Another shape could have been used to summarise the processes. The first stage of developing the theoretical model was to summarise the change processes identified in the systematic review. This resulted in Figure 3 which was published in Townshend (2016). The second stage of developing the theoretical model entailed interviewing clinicians delivering mindful parenting programs. These clinicians highlighted not all processes have equal influence. Reflective functioning was identified as having a stronger influence on developing mindfulness. Hence the processes were organised according to the strength of their association with mindful parenting and similarity with other change processes. So the cognitive processes were group together, affective processes were clustered together and body referred to the somatic processes. There may be other processes which have not yet been identified. The anchor is simply a mnemonic device, a visual summary of the change processes, which have been currently associated with mindful parenting.

b) Authors can connect to other theoretical models of Mindful Parenting Processes

The other theoretical model of mindful parenting

This is one of the first theoretical models of mindful parenting which has visually summarised change processes outside a program (Duncan and Bardacke 2010; van der Oord et al., 2012) or scale (Duncan 2007). Townshend (2016) outlined one of the first theoretical models of mindful parenting. This manuscript extends the work of Townshend (2016).

c) Some minor typos - but in prominent spots.

The manuscript has been reviewed for typing errors. If further errors are detected please let me know and I will correct them.

Yours sincerely,