

## **BUDDHIST INFLUENCE ON THE MINDFULNESS MOVEMENT IN WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY**

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Since the beginning of the 1980s, Buddhism has increasingly been linked to the fields of psychotherapy, psychology and counselling, particularly in the West. Many therapeutic methods have evolved claiming Buddhist influences by way of theory or method. In particular, mindfulness is the main technique that has been adopted. The list of affiliations includes Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT), Gestalt, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy among many more. In addition, many mental health professionals profess personal affiliation to the Buddhist religion or a Buddhist-informed way of practice. This has also raised concerns over whether such integration or applications of Buddhism has been done in full awareness of the Buddhist soteriological approach. It is also not known to what extent Buddhist thoughts or techniques have been used to frame such therapeutic methods. Hence, the research problem is “What are the manners in which Buddhist theory and methods have been integrated with contemporary psycho-therapeutic or counselling methods?” The study seeks to compare the perceived applicability of Buddhist theory to the therapeutic orientations investigated, the sources of Buddhist theory utilised, the way ‘Buddhist’ concepts have been defined, and the extent to which Buddhist theory has been integrated into the theoretical framework or in the development process of the therapeutic model. In addition, the manner in which the developed therapy methods have been reviewed for efficacy were also investigated. The methodology takes the form of an exploratory literature review based on open-access research articles, review articles, books and official websites outlining therapeutic approaches in practice. The results reveal a wide array of theoretical orientations into which Buddhist influence has been integrated. The sources of Buddhist theory utilised are often derived from different Buddhist traditions, sometimes from a mixture of primary and secondary sources, sometimes from a mixture of secondary sources originating from different Buddhist traditions. Often there is no careful acknowledgement of the sources or definition of the Buddhist concepts adopted. At times, such concepts have been quoted without understanding the overall Buddhist theoretical approach. Typically, studies on effectiveness are carried out within the individual approaches, and therefore, they do not provide a common platform for comparison. The study shows that there is a need to formulate accepted guidelines on the most commonly used Buddhist terminology, and that in the majority of approaches reviewed, a comprehensive understanding of the Buddhist philosophical approach seems to be lacking.

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