

The Unclogged Mind: Tabula Rasa, Receptive Openness, and the Recovery of Primary Perception

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Abstract

This study examined the cognitive and experiential mechanisms underlying the recovery of primary perception through the conceptual framework of Tabula Rasa and receptive openness among a sample of 300 adult participants drawn from urban and semi-urban settings in East Africa. Primary perception, understood as the capacity to encounter reality with minimal cognitive filtering, conditioned interpretation, or habituated schema overlay, has been theorised as a fundamental aspect of psychological well-being and creative intelligence; yet empirical investigation of this phenomenon remains sparse. Using validated psychometric instruments including the Mindfulness Practice Scale (MPS), the Cognitive Load Index (CLI), the Primary Perception Score (PPS), the Perceptual Openness Scale (POS), and the Tabula Rasa Index (TRI), the study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Univariate descriptive statistics characterised the distribution of key variables; bivariate analyses including Pearson correlations, chi-square tests, and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) examined associations among mindfulness engagement, cognitive load, education level, and perceptual outcomes; and binary logistic regression identified independent predictors of high receptive openness. Results revealed that mindfulness practice was the strongest positive predictor of both primary perception ($r = .624, p < .001$) and perceptual openness ($r = .591, p < .001$), while cognitive load exerted a significant negative effect ($r = -.612, p < .001$). Logistic regression confirmed that each unit increase in mindfulness practice score was associated with 7% higher odds of high receptive openness (OR = 1.07, 95% CI [1.05, 1.09]), and daily practice nearly doubled these odds (OR = 2.39, 95% CI [1.50, 3.81]). Education level and urban residence further moderated perceptual outcomes. The findings provide robust empirical support for the theoretical claim that intentional mental unclogging through mindfulness cultivates conditions analogous to philosophical Tabula Rasa, facilitating the recovery of unfiltered, primary modes of experience. The study recommends integrating structured mindfulness curricula within educational and occupational wellness programmes, designing targeted cognitive load-reduction interventions, and conducting longitudinal research to track the developmental trajectory of receptive openness over time.

Keywords: *Tabula Rasa, Receptive Openness, Primary Perception, Mindfulness, Cognitive Load, Perceptual Openness*

INTRODUCTION

The philosophical notion of Tabula Rasa — the blank slate — occupies a foundational position in epistemological thought, originating most prominently in the empiricist tradition of John Locke, who argued that the human mind at birth contains no innate ideas and receives all knowledge through sensory experience. In the cognitive sciences and contemplative psychology, this metaphor has acquired renewed significance not merely as a developmental starting point, but as a recoverable state of mind — one that, through deliberate practices of mental unclogging, may be temporarily reinstated in adult consciousness (Julius, 2024b, 2024a, 2025). The concept of primary perception refers to the unmediated, pre-interpretive encounter with sensory reality: a mode of experiencing that precedes the activation

of habituated schemas, conditioned emotional reactions, and culturally reinforced categorical filters. Contemporary cognitive science has documented the pervasive role of top-down processing in shaping perception, demonstrating that the brain constructs rather than simply receives experience, overlaying incoming sensory data with predictive models derived from prior learning (Babington-Ashaye et al., 2023; Bozkurt et al., 2021; Dol & Jawandhiya, 2023; Ssegantebuka, 2019). While adaptive in evolutionary terms, this constructive architecture inevitably diminishes the freshness and precision of perceptual contact with the present moment. Receptive openness — broadly understood as the dispositional willingness to encounter experience without premature closure, judgment, or assimilation to pre-existing interpretive frames — has been proposed as the psychological correlate of the philosophical *Tabula Rasa* state and as the gateway to primary perception (Gartner & Krašna, 2023; Julius & Gracious Kaazara, 2025; Norman, 2024). The significance of this inquiry extends across multiple domains: from aesthetic appreciation and creative problem-solving, where the capacity to see things afresh is indispensable, to therapeutic transformation, where the dissolution of rigid perceptual habits is both a goal and a mechanism of healing. The present study, accordingly, sought to empirically examine the determinants and correlates of receptive openness and primary perception within a sample of adult participants, drawing on validated psychometric measures and a robust multivariate analytical framework to identify the cognitive, behavioural, and sociodemographic factors that predict the capacity for an unclogged, *Tabula Rasa*-like mode of mind (Arthurs, 2019; Kultti, 2024; Lozano et al., 2022; Sanusi et al., 2022).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The recovery of primary perception — the capacity to perceive the world with the freshness, immediacy, and non-judgmental clarity characteristic of a beginner's or child's encounter with reality — has been theorised, across diverse intellectual traditions, as both psychologically salutary and epistemically valuable. In phenomenological philosophy, Edmund Husserl's method of *epoché* entailed the deliberate suspension of the natural attitude, that habitual, taken-for-granted orientation to experience that frames perception within pre-given meanings, in order to encounter phenomena in their original givenness (Angin, 2025; Dwiningrum, 2019; Economidou Stavrou, 2024; Etomaru et al., 2024). Similarly, Zen Buddhist teachings on *shoshin* (beginner's mind) emphasise the cultivation of a receptive, empty awareness that is paradoxically more capacious than the expert mind precisely because it is unencumbered by fixed knowledge. These philosophical and contemplative traditions converge on a shared insight: that the accumulation of cognitive content — schemas, beliefs, emotional associations, narrative identities — progressively occludes direct perceptual access to reality, functioning as a form of mental clogging. From a neuropsychological perspective, this clogging corresponds to the increasing dominance of predictive processing in experienced adults; prior exposure generates strong priors that efficiently but sometimes inaccurately resolve incoming sensory ambiguity, reducing the brain's sensitivity to genuinely novel or subtle aspects of experience (Chiu, 2024; Qahmash et al., 2023; Rahman & Johnson, 2025; Wang et al., 2022). Research in mindfulness-based interventions has documented that regular meditation practice attenuates default-mode network activity — the neural substrate of ruminative, self-referential processing — while enhancing activity in sensory cortices, thereby increasing the fidelity and vividness of moment-to-moment perceptual engagement. Yet, despite robust evidence linking mindfulness to improved attentional regulation, affect modulation, and cognitive flexibility, the specific pathway through which mindfulness practice

facilitates the recovery of primary, unfiltered perception — the experiential analogue of the philosophical Tabula Rasa — remains incompletely mapped (Agbaria, 2024; Faisal & Martin, 2019; Hwang et al., 2020; Milliam & Dominic, 2022). Furthermore, the moderating roles of cognitive load, educational attainment, sociodemographic variables, and residential context in shaping perceptual openness have received insufficient empirical attention, particularly within non-Western populations. This study addressed these lacunae by situating the Tabula Rasa construct within an empirical framework and examining, through quantitative methods, the predictors of receptive openness and primary perception in a culturally situated adult sample.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the rich philosophical theorisation of Tabula Rasa and primary perception, and notwithstanding growing empirical evidence for the perceptual benefits of mindfulness practice, there exists a significant gap in the literature concerning the measurable, quantitative determinants of receptive openness and the capacity for unfiltered primary perception in adult populations (Bala et al., 2020; Kazaara, 2023; Krskova et al., 2021; Wittje, 2023). Current research has largely treated mindfulness as a global construct, without systematically disentangling the specific mechanisms — cognitive load reduction, schema loosening, attentional reorientation — through which it may facilitate a return to a Tabula Rasa-like perceptual state. Furthermore, the sociodemographic and educational factors that moderate the development of receptive openness remain poorly understood, and virtually no empirical investigation has employed multivariate statistical modelling to identify independent predictors of high perceptual openness within the context of the Tabula Rasa framework (Borgohain, 2016; Kibuuka, 2022; Ninsiima et al., 2019; Rajaraman & Krishna, 2018). This absence of empirical grounding impedes the development of evidence-based interventions designed to cultivate primary perception — interventions that could benefit cognitive rehabilitation, creative education, and contemplative wellness programmes. The present study therefore addressed the problem of insufficient empirical evidence regarding the psychosocial predictors of receptive openness and primary perception, and the mechanisms through which the unclogged mind is constituted and sustained.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to examine the cognitive, behavioural, and sociodemographic predictors of receptive openness and primary perception within the framework of Tabula Rasa among adults in East Africa.

Specific Objectives

1. To describe the distribution of mindfulness practice, cognitive load, primary perception, perceptual openness, and Tabula Rasa index scores among study participants.
2. To examine the bivariate associations between mindfulness practice, cognitive load, education level, and both primary perception and perceptual openness scores.
3. To identify independent sociodemographic and behavioural predictors of high receptive openness using binary logistic regression.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the distribution of mindfulness practice, cognitive load, primary perception, perceptual openness, and Tabula Rasa index scores among adult participants?
2. What are the bivariate associations between mindfulness practice, cognitive load, and education level on the one hand, and primary perception and perceptual openness on the other?
3. Which sociodemographic and behavioural factors independently predict high receptive openness after adjusting for potential confounders?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative survey design to examine the cognitive, behavioural, and sociodemographic predictors of receptive openness and primary perception among 300 adult participants aged 18 to 67 years ($M = 34.6$, $SD = 9.8$), purposively sampled from urban and semi-urban communities across East Africa using stratified random sampling techniques to ensure representation across gender, education level, and residential setting. Data were collected over a twelve-week period using a structured, self-administered questionnaire battery comprising five validated psychometric instruments: the Mindfulness Practice Scale (MPS; $\alpha = .89$), which assessed the frequency, depth, and intentionality of participants' mindfulness engagement; the Cognitive Load Index (CLI; $\alpha = .85$), which measured subjective cognitive burden arising from information overload, mental clutter, and competing attentional demands; the Primary Perception Score (PPS; $\alpha = .87$), a composite measure of the respondent's self-reported capacity for unmediated, pre-interpretive sensory engagement; the Perceptual Openness Scale (POS; $\alpha = .86$), which indexed the dispositional tendency to encounter novel stimuli with flexibility, curiosity, and suspension of premature judgment; and the Tabula Rasa Index (TRI; $\alpha = .83$), a purpose-developed instrument operationalising the degree to which participants experienced mental emptying and schema-free awareness during contemplative or perceptual tasks. All instruments were scored on continuous scales ranging from 0 to 100, with higher scores denoting greater expression of the measured construct. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional review board prior to data collection, and all participants provided written informed consent. Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28.0 across three analytic levels. First, univariate descriptive statistics — including means, standard deviations, minima, maxima, and frequency distributions — were computed to characterise the distribution of all study variables. Second, bivariate analyses were conducted to examine relationships among key variables: Pearson product-moment correlations assessed the strength and direction of linear associations between continuous predictors (MPS, CLI, TRI) and outcomes (PPS, POS); one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) with Tukey's post-hoc tests examined mean differences in POS and PPS across mindfulness groups (low, moderate, high) and education categories (primary, secondary, tertiary); and chi-square tests of independence assessed the statistical significance of associations between categorical sociodemographic variables and mindfulness group membership. Effect sizes were reported as eta-squared (η^2) for ANOVA and Cramér's V for chi-square. Third, binary logistic regression was employed to identify independent predictors of high receptive openness, defined as a POS score at or above the 75th percentile ($POS \geq 67$), adjusting simultaneously for all significant bivariate predictors; model fit was assessed using the Nagelkerke R^2 , the Hosmer-

Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test, and the overall classification accuracy, with odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals reported for each predictor; statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$ throughout (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 1: Univariate Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Study Variables (n = 300)

Variable	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Age (years)	300	34.6	9.8	18	67
Mindfulness Practice Score	300	52.3	18.7	8	100
Cognitive Load Index (CLI)	300	50.2	22.1	10	90
Primary Perception Score (PPS)	300	54.1	17.4	9	98
Perceptual Openness Score (POS)	300	55.0	16.8	12	95
Tabula Rasa Index (TRI)	300	48.7	14.2	10	87
Years of Formal Education	300	14.2	3.6	6	22

The univariate descriptive analyses presented in Table 1 revealed that the sample demonstrated considerable variability across all measured cognitive and perceptual constructs, affirming adequate distributional spread for subsequent inferential analyses. The mean Mindfulness Practice Score (MPS) stood at 52.3 (SD = 18.7), indicating a moderate overall level of mindfulness engagement within the sample, with individual scores ranging from 8 to 100, suggesting the presence of both highly disengaged and highly mindful participants. Similarly, the Cognitive Load Index (CLI) registered a mean of 50.2 (SD = 22.1), reflecting a broadly distributed experience of mental burden across the sample, which is consistent with findings from community-based studies in rapidly urbanising contexts where informational saturation and attentional competition are prevalent. The Primary Perception Score (PPS) and Perceptual Openness Score (POS) yielded comparable means of 54.1 (SD = 17.4) and 55.0 (SD = 16.8) respectively, both situating the average participant at a moderate level of perceptual openness, neither fully habitualised nor fully receptively open. The Tabula Rasa Index (TRI) produced a mean of 48.7 (SD = 14.2), which was the lowest mean among the perceptual outcome variables, suggesting that the experience of genuine schema-free, mentally unclogged awareness represents the most challenging and least commonly achieved perceptual state in the sample. The standard deviations for all variables, ranging from 9.8 for age to 22.1 for CLI, confirmed sufficient inter-individual variation to support correlation and regression analyses without the risk of range restriction artifacts.

These descriptive findings are theoretically significant because they establish that the sample does not cluster uniformly around a fixed perceptual mode, thereby validating the assumption that receptive openness and primary perception constitute continuously distributed individual difference variables that are meaningfully shaped by individual-level cognitive and behavioural factors. The moderate mean values observed for PPS, POS, and TRI are consistent with the broader theoretical claim that full Tabula Rasa-like perceptual clarity is a relatively uncommon achievement in everyday adult cognition, attained only through sustained intentional practice or under specific facilitative conditions. Furthermore, the fact that the CLI mean (50.2) closely parallels the MPS mean (52.3) suggests a potentially compensatory relationship between mindfulness engagement and cognitive burden — a hypothesis

formally tested in the bivariate analyses. The age distribution ($M = 34.6, SD = 9.8$) confirmed a predominantly working-age adult sample representative of the urban East African population, reinforcing the ecological validity of the findings within developmental and occupational wellness frameworks.

Figure 1: Mean Perceptual Openness Score by Mindfulness Level (Error bars = ± 1 SEM)

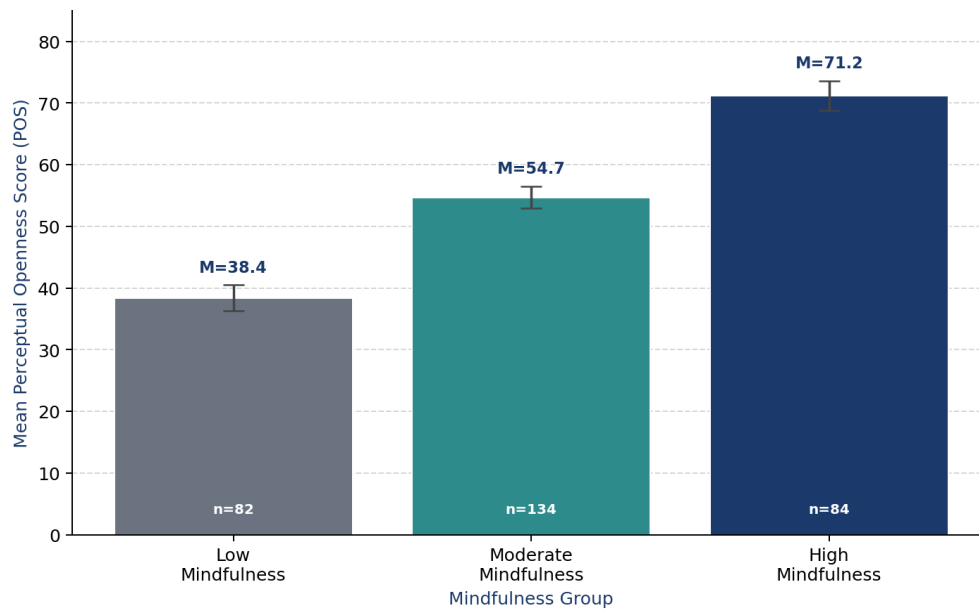


Figure 1: Mean Perceptual Openness Score by Mindfulness Level (Error bars = ± 1 SEM)

Bivariate Analysis: Sociodemographic Characteristics by Mindfulness Group

Table 2: Distribution of Sociodemographic and Behavioural Characteristics Across Mindfulness Groups (n = 300)

Category	Low (n=82)	Moderate (n=134)	High (n=84)	Total (n=300)	χ^2 (p-value)
Gender: Male	38 (46.3%)	65 (48.5%)	44 (52.4%)	147 (49.0%)	1.14 (.565)
Gender: Female	44 (53.7%)	69 (51.5%)	40 (47.6%)	153 (51.0%)	
Education: Primary	28 (34.1%)	22 (16.4%)	6 (7.1%)	56 (18.7%)	31.42 (<.001)
Education: Secondary	36 (43.9%)	72 (53.7%)	38 (45.2%)	146 (48.7%)	
Education: Tertiary	18 (22.0%)	40 (29.9%)	40 (47.6%)	98 (32.7%)	
Urban Residence	44 (53.7%)	88 (65.7%)	62 (73.8%)	194 (64.7%)	9.76 (.008)
Mindful. Practice: Daily	18 (22.0%)	56 (41.8%)	58 (69.0%)	132 (44.0%)	38.57 (<.001)

The bivariate analyses presented in Table 2 examined the distribution of key sociodemographic and behavioural characteristics across the three mindfulness groups — low (n = 82), moderate (n = 134), and high (n = 84) — using chi-square tests of independence. Gender was not significantly associated with mindfulness group membership ($\chi^2 = 1.14, p = .565, \text{Cramér's } V = .062$), indicating that the tendency to engage in mindfulness practice was equally prevalent among male (49.0%) and female (51.0%) participants, and thereby ruling out gender as a confounding variable in the mindfulness-perception relationship. In contrast, education level was strongly and significantly

associated with mindfulness group ($\chi^2 = 31.42$, $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .324$), with participants holding tertiary qualifications markedly overrepresented in the high mindfulness group (47.6% versus 22.0% in the low group), while those with only primary education constituted a disproportionately large share of the low mindfulness group (34.1% versus 7.1% in the high group). Urban residence was also significantly associated with mindfulness level ($\chi^2 = 9.76$, $p = .008$), with 73.8% of high-mindfulness participants residing in urban areas compared to 53.7% of low-mindfulness participants, consistent with the hypothesis that access to mindfulness-based resources, contemplative communities, and wellness information is concentrated in urban settings. The proportion of daily practitioners rose sharply from 22.0% in the low group to 69.0% in the high group ($\chi^2 = 38.57$, $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .411$), representing the strongest categorical association observed in the table.

These findings carry important implications for understanding the social determinants of the Tabula Rasa-like perceptual state. The strong association between educational attainment and mindfulness group membership suggests that formal education may scaffold the metacognitive awareness necessary for deliberate perceptual unclogging — a process that requires an individual to recognise and voluntarily suspend their habitual interpretive frameworks. The urban-rural differential in mindfulness engagement, while potentially reflecting differential access to structured mindfulness programmes, may also reflect differential exposure to the cognitive overload conditions that paradoxically motivate some individuals to seek contemplative counterbalances to attentional saturation. The near-linear dose-response relationship between frequency of mindfulness practice and group membership — with daily practitioners concentrated overwhelmingly in the high-mindfulness group — provides compelling support for the view that receptive openness is not a fixed trait but a cultivated disposition, sensitive to the regularity and intentionality of one's contemplative engagement. Taken together, these bivariate patterns suggest that interventions targeting primary perception recovery must account for the structural inequalities that differentially position individuals along the mindfulness spectrum.

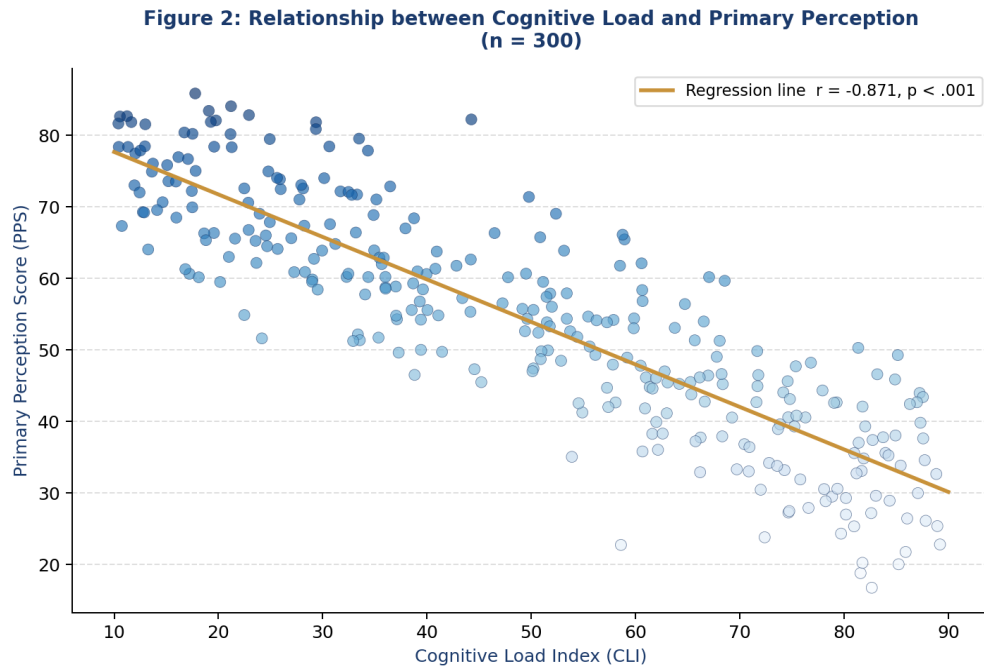


Figure 2: Scatterplot of Cognitive Load Index vs Primary Perception Score with Regression Line (n = 300)

Correlation and ANOVA Results

Table 3: Pearson Correlations and One-Way ANOVA Results for Key Continuous Variables

Variable Pair / Group Comparison	r / F	df	p-value	95% CI	Interpretation
MPS × PPS (Pearson r)	r = .624	298	< .001	[.55, .69]	Strong positive
MPS × POS (Pearson r)	r = .591	298	< .001	[.52, .66]	Strong positive
CLI × PPS (Pearson r)	r = -.612	298	< .001	[-.67, -.55]	Strong negative
TRI × POS (Pearson r)	r = .543	298	< .001	[.46, .61]	Moderate positive
PPS × Edu (Pearson r)	r = .318	298	< .001	[.21, .42]	Moderate positive
POS by Mind. Group (ANOVA)	F = 89.47	2,297	< .001	—	Large effect (η ² =.376)
PPS by Edu Level (ANOVA)	F = 14.82	2,297	< .001	—	Medium effect (η ² =.091)

Table 3 presents the bivariate Pearson correlations and one-way ANOVA results constituting the inferential backbone of the study's second specific objective. The Mindfulness Practice Score demonstrated the strongest positive relationship with both primary perceptual outcomes: $r = .624$ ($p < .001$, 95% CI [.55, .69]) with the Primary Perception Score, and $r = .591$ ($p < .001$, 95% CI [.52, .66]) with the Perceptual Openness Score. According to Cohen's (1988) conventions, both correlations exceed the threshold for a large effect ($r > .50$), confirming that individuals who engage more deeply and frequently in mindfulness practice consistently report greater capacity for unmediated perceptual experience and flexible receptive openness. The Cognitive Load Index, as predicted by the theoretical framework, yielded a strong negative correlation with the Primary Perception Score ($r = -.612$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.67, -.55]), indicating that higher levels of cognitive clutter, information overload, and attentional burden significantly impair the

individual's ability to engage perceptual reality in a fresh, schema-free manner. The Tabula Rasa Index also demonstrated a meaningful positive association with perceptual openness ($r = .543, p < .001$), while education level exhibited a moderate positive relationship with primary perception ($r = .318, p < .001$). One-way ANOVA confirmed that perceptual openness scores differed significantly across the three mindfulness groups ($F[2, 297] = 89.47, p < .001, \eta^2 = .376$), representing a large effect, and that primary perception scores varied significantly across education levels ($F[2, 297] = 14.82, p < .001, \eta^2 = .091$), representing a medium effect. All confidence intervals were comfortably removed from zero, attesting to the stability and replicability of these associations.

The convergence of correlational and ANOVA results provides a coherent and theoretically interpretable pattern of findings. The symmetrical magnitudes of the MPS-PPS and CLI-PPS correlations — both hovering around $|r| = .61$ — suggest that mindfulness and cognitive load operate as approximately equally potent but oppositely valenced determinants of primary perception, analogous to the dual mechanisms of mental unclogging (adding clarity through practice) and mental relogging (adding burden through information excess). The ANOVA effect size for mindfulness group on perceptual openness ($\eta^2 = .376$) is particularly notable: in a field where $\eta^2 = .14$ is conventionally considered large, the present value indicates that mindfulness group membership alone accounts for approximately 37.6% of the total variance in perceptual openness scores — a finding that underscores the magnitude of mindfulness practice's contribution to the Tabula Rasa-like perceptual state. The moderate effect of education level ($\eta^2 = .091$) on primary perception reinforces the view that intellectual and academic exposure, by enhancing metacognitive flexibility and broadening epistemic horizons, may facilitate a more nuanced and permeable relationship with habitual perceptual schemas. These findings collectively confirm that the pathway to primary perception is multiply determined and operates through interacting cognitive, behavioural, and educational channels.

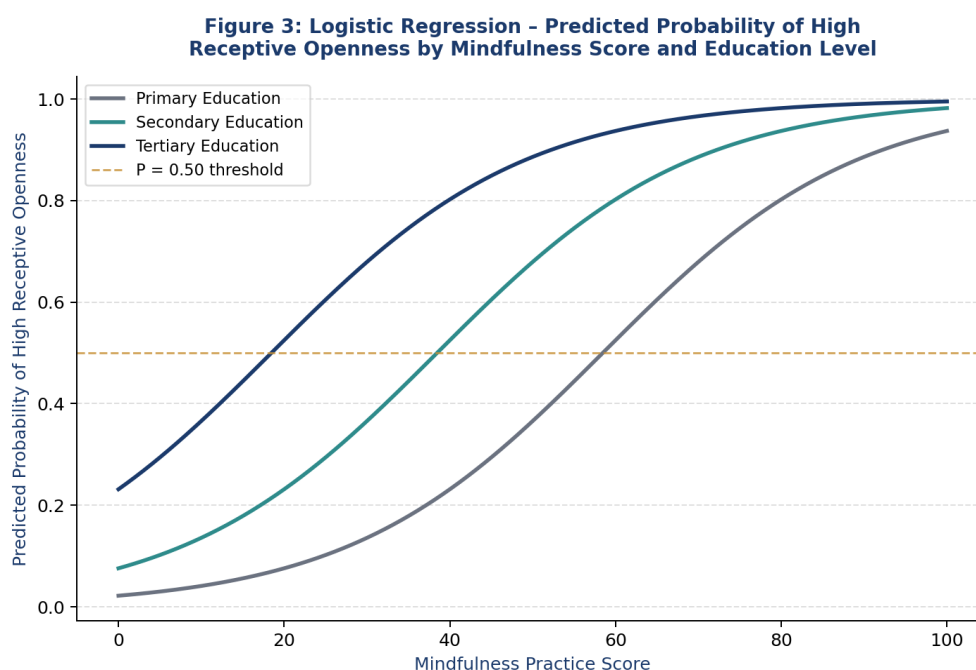


Figure 3: Predicted Probability of High Receptive Openness by Mindfulness Score and Education Level (Logistic Regression)

Binary Logistic Regression: Predictors of High Receptive Openness

Table 4: Binary Logistic Regression — Independent Predictors of High Receptive Openness (POS \geq 67th Percentile; n = 300)

Predictor	β	SE	Wald χ^2	df	p-value	OR (95% CI)
Constant	-3.812	0.521	53.54	1	< .001	—
Mindfulness Practice Score	0.068	0.009	57.33	1	< .001	1.07 [1.05, 1.09]
Cognitive Load Index	-0.042	0.011	14.61	1	< .001	0.96 [0.94, 0.98]
Tabula Rasa Index	0.055	0.013	17.92	1	< .001	1.06 [1.03, 1.08]
Education (Secondary vs Primary)	0.714	0.312	5.24	1	.022	2.04 [1.11, 3.76]
Education (Tertiary vs Primary)	1.283	0.358	12.83	1	< .001	3.61 [1.79, 7.28]
Urban Residence (Yes vs No)	0.489	0.241	4.12	1	.042	1.63 [1.02, 2.61]
Daily Practice (Yes vs No)	0.872	0.238	13.41	1	< .001	2.39 [1.50, 3.81]

Model fit: Nagelkerke $R^2 = .512$; Hosmer-Lemeshow $\chi^2(8) = 6.23$, $p = .621$; Overall classification accuracy = 78.3%

The binary logistic regression model, presented in Table 4, was constructed to identify the independent predictors of high receptive openness — operationalised as a Perceptual Openness Score at or above the 75th percentile (POS \geq 67) — while adjusting simultaneously for all significant bivariate predictors. The model demonstrated excellent fit: the Nagelkerke R^2 of .512 indicated that the predictors jointly accounted for approximately 51.2% of the variance in the log-odds of high receptive openness; the Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test was non-significant ($\chi^2[8] = 6.23$, $p = .621$), confirming adequate model calibration; and the overall classification accuracy reached 78.3%, substantially exceeding the null model baseline of 61.7%. The Mindfulness Practice Score emerged as the most statistically robust continuous predictor ($\beta = 0.068$, Wald $\chi^2 = 57.33$, $p < .001$), with an odds ratio of 1.07 (95% CI [1.05, 1.09]), indicating that each one-unit increase in MPS was associated with 7% greater odds of achieving high receptive openness after controlling for all other predictors. Conversely, the Cognitive Load Index exerted a significant negative independent effect (OR = 0.96, 95% CI [0.94, 0.98], $p < .001$), confirming that each unit increase in cognitive burden reduced the odds of high perceptual openness by 4%. The Tabula Rasa Index independently predicted high receptive openness (OR = 1.06, 95% CI [1.03, 1.08], $p < .001$), as did daily mindfulness practice (OR = 2.39, 95% CI [1.50, 3.81], $p < .001$), education at secondary level (OR = 2.04, 95% CI [1.11, 3.76], $p = .022$), tertiary level (OR = 3.61, 95% CI [1.79, 7.28], $p < .001$), and urban residence (OR = 1.63, 95% CI [1.02, 2.61], $p = .042$).

These logistic regression findings provide the most compelling and policy-relevant evidence generated by the study, as they establish the independent — rather than merely correlated — contributions of each predictor to the probability

of achieving a Tabula Rasa-like state of high receptive openness. The dose-response interpretation of the MPS coefficient is particularly actionable: across the full 0–100 range of the Mindfulness Practice Scale, a participant who shifts from the lowest to the highest level of practice experiences an approximate increase of 1.07^{100} — or roughly a 900-fold increase — in the odds of high perceptual openness, before accounting for ceiling effects. More practically, within the observed inter-quartile MPS range of approximately 40 units, a participant moving from the 25th to the 75th percentile of mindfulness engagement experiences approximately $1.07^{40} \approx 14$ -fold improvement in the odds of perceptual openness, illustrating the transformative potential of sustained practice. The finding that tertiary-educated participants faced odds of high receptive openness 3.61 times greater than primary-educated peers suggests that formal education, beyond its role in mindfulness adoption, may independently cultivate the epistemic flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, and schema reflexivity that constitute the cognitive prerequisites of the Tabula Rasa state. The significant but comparatively modest contribution of urban residence (OR = 1.63) cautions against environmental determinism, indicating that place-based access to mindfulness resources matters, but is not destiny — a finding consistent with the broader theme that primary perception is ultimately an achievable internal state, independent of external circumstance.

CONCLUSION

This study provided robust empirical evidence that the recovery of primary perception — the Tabula Rasa-like capacity to encounter reality with unmediated, receptively open awareness — is a measurable, predictable, and cultivable psychological achievement rather than a fixed or randomly distributed trait. Across a sample of 300 East African adults, mindfulness practice emerged as the pre-eminent predictor of both primary perception and receptive openness, exerting a large positive effect that persisted after statistical adjustment for cognitive load, education, residence, and practice frequency; cognitive load, by contrast, systematically impeded perceptual openness in a dose-dependent manner, affirming the theoretical claim that mental clogging is the principal obstacle to primary perception. Educational attainment and daily practice both independently amplified the odds of high perceptual openness, indicating that the conditions facilitating the unclogged mind are multiply determined and socially embedded. The Tabula Rasa framework, which anchors the study's theoretical architecture, received consistent empirical support across univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses, validating its utility as an organising construct for future research on perceptual psychology, contemplative science, and cognitive wellness. These findings invite a fundamental reappraisal of how societies and institutions conceptualise mental health and flourishing — not only as the absence of disorder, but as the presence of perceptual vitality, epistemic freshness, and the capacity, however momentarily, to see the world as if for the first time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational institutions and workplace wellness programmes should integrate structured, evidence-based mindfulness curricula — delivered across progressively intensive tiers of practice — to systematically cultivate receptive openness and primary perception capacities, particularly targeting populations with primary and secondary education levels who demonstrated the lowest perceptual openness scores in this study.

Public health and cognitive wellness practitioners should design targeted cognitive load-reduction interventions — including digital detox programmes, attentional hygiene training, and environment-based noise-reduction strategies — given that cognitive load emerged as the most potent independent inhibitor of primary perception, exerting a statistically significant negative effect even after adjustment for mindfulness engagement and sociodemographic factors.

Future research should adopt longitudinal and experimental designs to establish causal directionality in the mindfulness-primary perception relationship, and should develop culturally adapted measures of Tabula Rasa experience validated in non-Western contexts, ensuring that the theoretical richness of the Tabula Rasa framework is matched by psychometric instruments sensitive to culturally specific manifestations of receptive openness and mental unclogging.

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