

THE ROLE OF MATERNAL MINDFULNESS IN SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

Shazma Azmi*¹ & Dr. Deepshikha Gupta²

*¹ Bachelor of Occupational Therapy, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, India

*² Assistant Professor (Occupational Therapy), Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, India

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Abstract

Background & Objective: The mother is the primary caregiver in the infant's life, where the child is having his/her initial communication, interaction, and bond formation. Previous researches suggest the positive role of mindfulness in parenting and child development. The present study examines the association between maternal mindfulness and social-emotional development of the child.

Method: 119 mothers of children participated in the study and completed the set of standardized questionnaires. Further, the participants were divided among four groups depending on the children living in a joint family or nuclear family and mothers who stayed home or working. Data was collected and analysed using the Pearson correlation coefficient.

Result: There was a significant difference in the mean of ASQ: SE score among the group 1 (stay home mothers living in a joint family) and group 4 (working mothers in a nuclear family) and also the mean score for mindfulness in mother for group 1 with is highest whereas lowest for group 4. Hence this indicates that children living in the joint family with a stay at home mothers have higher Social-Emotional Development as compared to children living in nuclear families with working mothers.

Conclusion: The finding of the study suggests that there exists a positive correlation between the mindfulness of the mothers and the Social-Emotional development of their children.

Introduction

During infancy, parents' primary role is to provide for the physical, social, and emotional needs of children who are fully dependent on them¹ and from previous researches we understand the importance of parenting in social emotional development of the child². In addition to this, there has been evidenced based studies which suggest that the physical and mental health benefits of mindfulness for children and adolescents³ and hence efforts have been made to incorporate the mindfulness-based studies with intervention for strengthening family programs and parenting strategies⁴⁻⁷. To understand this, we need to first be familiar about the term, Mindfulness. It is refer as a state of self-awareness, which not only enhance the ability to process the information but also bringing the attention to the present moment to moment experience⁸. It is indeed essential to understand the approach of mindfulness and apply to promote awareness in the moment and being non-judgemental towards it⁹. This practise of living not only gives a in the direction towards life but also a better understanding of our behaviour with our moral reasoning and ethical decision making¹⁰.

Mindful parenting

Mindful Parenting is a form of mindfulness where the parents learn the concept of increasing awareness of the present moment thus letting them pay attention to their children non-judgmentally, and reduce unpleasant negative reactions towards child's behaviour¹¹. The mindfulness in parenting was first time published by Kabat – Zinn in 1997. This led to furthers studies and in 2009, Duncan et al described model for mindful Parenting. This study suggested that, by encouraging the parents to bring the practise of moment to moment attention in their everyday parenting will help in enhancing their parent-child relationship. This model comprises of five dimensions of mindful

parenting, (1) Listening with full attention : It is crucial for parents to draw attention to their child's words along with movements of limbs or facial expression of their child's emotions when engaging with them (2) Non-judgemental acceptance of self and child: This guides parents to be supportive and non-judgemental of their children behaviours and have expectations that are realistic for both as a parent from the child and from self . (3) Emotional awareness of self and child: To build in parent-child relationship the parents should monitor their automatic emotions response and take informed actions. This will not only help the child to understand of their feelings but will also encourage behaviour that are more acceptable. (4) Self-regulation in parenting relationship: This is a practise encourages parents to pause or step back before responding to child's behaviour. To a significant extent this has not only helped parents to be more attentive and think about the consequence of their reaction on the emotional response of the child but also that child grows to be emotionally and socially competent individual¹² (5) Compassion¹³ : This is one of the important aspects of good parenting that is showing empathy towards your child's problems and encourage them to express their feelings. This will not only help in better communication between the parent and the child but also the child feels understood and supported, it is more likely that he/she will stay motivated and become self-aware of his problem and will help in developing effective cognitive and emotional learning^{14,15}

Significantly more studies have identified the practise of mindfulness in parenting in reduction of the level of parental stress,¹⁶ anxiety, and parent child relationship in terms of attachment, involvement and parental confidence¹⁷ and hence the mindful training appears to be new age interventional strategy. The literature in the recent years suggest its scope as it seems to be beneficial in diverse area of mental health, parenting, child development and family studies^{18,19}

Social- emotional development

The ability of the child to understand about their emotions and that of others and use it to establish meaningful relationships and engaging in peer group play depends upon the social-emotional development of the child²⁰. It is also important to consider that the initial years of infant's life lay an essential role in the physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing of the child. In context to the social- emotional development the child develops the skill that encourage him to use more of verbal communication, express their thoughts, be empathetic and develop confidence²¹. Moreover, studies conducted in the past suggest that the pre-schoolers perform well in study grades, establish new friendship, social adjustment and having constructive behaviour are those with better social-emotional competence²². In significance to this, some studies correlate the lack of empathy, cooperation, and social withdrawal to the child's decrease understanding of social conduct and prosocial behaviour during their social participation^{23,24}.

To understand the importance of social-emotional development, the initial step is to identify the dimensions of the social-emotional development. The following includes: (1) Social Competence: It defines the skills required for age-appropriate for social interaction. This may include peer participation; group play and coordinated interaction. (2) Attachment: It helps children to form attachment and develop bond formation with the caregiver and familiar adults. (3) Emotional Competence: It specifies understanding of Strategic awareness of one's own and others' emotions and to act on this awareness, to negotiate interpersonal exchanges, and regulate emotional experience. (4) Self-Perceived Competence: It helps the child's ability to recognise his/her name, the idea of his/her emotions, and develops the concept of self-reliance that is the ability to makes his/her own decision. It is the ability to recognise one's own abilities (cognitive, physical, and social), especially in comparison to others. (5) Temperament/Personality: It is the specific trait of an individual in self-regulation and reactivity²⁵.

Role of parenting in social emotional development of a child

Parenting is an all-inclusive, multi-dimensional framework that enables parents to meet the child's needs thus play a crucial role in the growth and development of the child²⁶. It is observed that infants initially communicate their feelings and needs by crying, laughing or turning to or away from what they like or dislike. Once these needs are

fulfilled regularly and lovingly, babies are more relaxed, pay more attention to what is happening around them, are more open to discovering their surrounding and are more able to calm down and control their emotions^{27,28}. Scientist from the field of the social emotional development studies have made stress on the role of parenting to enhance the learning, prosocial behaviour and communication in the child²⁹. Moreover, it is important to understand that early interactions may how infants and young children begin to understand, manipulate and master their environment with the development of self-perceptions²⁶. Indeed, many young children have greater problems in building connection and maintain peer group and friendship than other children along with aggression and social withdrawal. Such problems are related to their parent's attitude and characteristics³⁰. To further investigate this, studies have been conducted which suggests there is increase chances of breaking friendship in children due to negative features of parenting, such as parental depression and psychological control³¹. To further investigates this, some research put forward the consideration of the parental involvement and support along with emotional counselling are related to more efficient emotional regulation in children. In comparison to expressed frustration, psychological control and criticiser correlated to difficulties with in controlling emotions in children with depressive symptoms and low self esteem^{32,33,34}.

Current study

The study aims to explore the role of mindful parenting in the social-emotional development of the child in the Indian population. Moreover, this study is done to evaluate the association between self-reported maternal mindful parenting and the social-emotional development of the child (Child age range birth-5years). Additionally, the participants are divided into four groups depending on children living in a joint family or nuclear family and mothers who stayed home or working. The primary hypothesis of this study is the children with more mindful mothers would have better social-emotional development than those children of the less mindful mother of the same age group. However, further to this the study also considers the hypothesis that the children living with a joint family with stay home mothers will have age-appropriate social-emotional development as compared to the children whose social-emotional development will be at risk while living in a nuclear family with working mother.

Methodology

Research design: Correlation

Sample design: Convenience sampling

Sample size: N =119

Sample source: Community

Inclusion criteria

1. Children up till 5 years of age
2. Mothers aging up to 40 years of age.

Exclusion criteria

1. Children having any mental or physical difficulties.
2. Single, separated or divorced families
3. Mother mental illness or history of postpartum depression.
4. Mothers aging above 40 years
5. Children aging above 5 years

Result and discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the social-emotional development of children in a general population of the age group from birth to 5 years and to determine the Maternal Mindfulness of their mothers. This survey also aims to finds out the association between maternal mindfulness and social-emotional development of the child. Hence, the result of the study suggested that Higher maternal mindfulness more will be the social-emotional Development of the child.

A total of 119 participants were taken in the study after considering inclusion and the exclusion criteria. The average age of the mothers was from 25-32 years. The participants were divided into 4 groups selectively. Group 1 had 44 participants living in the joint family with stay home mothers. Group 2 had 34 working mothers living in the joint family. Group 3 included 21 participants living in a nuclear family with stay home mothers. Group 4 included the rest of the population who were working mothers and living in a nuclear family.

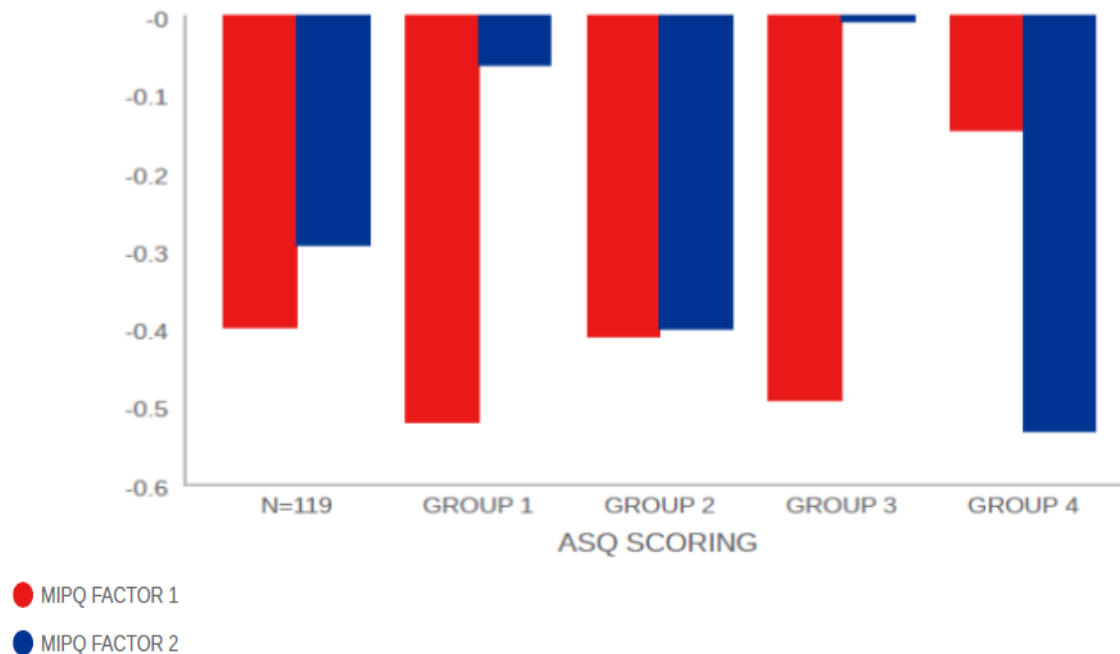
The participants were explained the objective of the study in their understandable language and consent was taken. The questionnaire was filled by the researcher by face to face interview. These questionnaires used were Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional ed 2 for Social-Emotional development (ASQ: SE) of a child and Maternal Mindfulness was evaluated by Mindfulness in Parenting Questionnaire (MIPQ). The MIPQ is a 28-item measure that contains questions in two categories Factor 1 and Factor 2. Factor 1 (Mindfulness Discipline) reflects parents' self-efficacy, non-reactivity, and awareness within the parenting role while Factor 2 (Being in the moment) reflects the parents'-centred attention, empathetic understanding and acceptance of the child.

Table 1. Correlation coefficient between ASQ scoring and Factor 1 and Factor 2 of MIPQ questionnaire

ASQ SCORING	MIPQ FACTOR 1	MIPQ FACTOR 2
N=119	-0.399**	-0.295**
GROUP 1	-0.522**	-0.063**
GROUP 2	-0.411*	-0.401*
GROUP 3	-0.494*	-0.008*
GROUP 4	-0.148*	-0.534*

**significant at 0.01 level

*significant at 0.05 level



Graph 1. Correlation coefficient between ASQ scoring and Factor 1 and Factor 2 of MIPQ questionnaire

The scoring for the different questionnaire was calculated by the investigator and was statistically analysed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The result of the study for N=119 the ASQ: SE scores had a negative correlation coefficient with Factor 1 and 2 of the MIPQ scale, which is significant at level 0.01. The mean value for ASQ Scores is 52.65 with a standard deviation of 18.306. The mean value of Factor 1 of MIPQ is 99.52 with a standard deviation of 2.062 and the mean value of Factor 2 of MIPQ is 99.45 with a standard deviation of 2.342. This suggests that higher the Maternal Mindfulness more will be the Social-Emotional development of the child. In total population, mothers have more mindfulness of being in the moment with the child and comparatively less mindfulness towards discipline, self-efficacy, and non-reactivity.

In group 1 the ASQ scores have negative correlation coefficient with Factor 1 and Factor 2 of MIPQ scale, which is significant at 0.01 level, the mean value of Factor 1 of MIPQ is 100.16 with a standard deviation of 1.855 and mean value of Factor 2 of MIPQ is 100.32 with a standard deviation of 2.088. This result states that mothers living in a joint family and are stay home have a higher level of mindfulness. These Mothers are more mindful of attention and acceptance of the child as compared to mindful discipline and having thoughts before scolding the child. The mean value of ASQ: SE score for group 1 is 49.20 with a standard deviation of 15.56 which is lowest among all the groups, which suggests that lower the ASQ scoring, more will the Social-Emotional development of the child.

In group 2 the ASQ: SE scores have a negative correlation coefficient with Factor 1 and Factor 2 of the MIPQ scale, which are significant at 0.05 level. This result suggests that the mothers who are living in a joint family and are working are comparatively less mindful than mothers who are living in a joint family and are staying home. These mothers significantly have the same level of mindfulness of being in the moment and towards the discipline of the child. The mean value of ASQ: SE score for group 2 is 54.71 with a standard deviation of 21.068, this means that there is slightly low Social-Emotional Development among children of this group of mothers.

In group 3 the ASQ: SE scores have negative correlation coefficient with Factor 1 and Factor 2 of MIPQ scale, which is significant at the level of 0.05, The mean value of Factor 1 of MIPQ is 99.21 with a standard deviation of 2.213 and mean value of Factor 2 of MIPQ is 98.68 with a standard deviation of 2.847. This result suggests that the mothers who are living in a nuclear family and are stay home are comparatively less mindful than the mothers who are living in a joint family and are staying home. These mothers have more mindfulness towards being in the moment than as compared to mindfulness discipline. The mean value of ASQ: SE score is 52.14 with a standard deviation of 18.746, this states that the Social-Emotional Development of this group is higher than that of group 2 but is still lower compared to group 1 children.

In group 4 the ASQ scores have negative correlation coefficient with Factor 1 and Factor 2 of MIPQ scale which is significant at the level of 0.05, The mean value of Factor 1 of MIPQ is 99.71 with a standard deviation of 1.793 and mean value of Factor 2 of MIPQ is 99.43 with a standard deviation of 1.434. This result suggests that the mothers who are living in the nuclear family and are working are comparatively less mindful than the mothers who are living in a joint family and are staying home. These mothers have more mindfulness towards mindful discipline as compared to being in the moment and attention to the child. The mean value of ASQ: SE score is 57.25 with a standard deviation of 16.16, this states that the Social-Emotional Development of this group is lowest among all the groups.

The result of the present study suggests that there is a positive correlation between the Mindfulness of the mothers and the Social-Emotional Development of their children. This outcome is supported by the research conducted in 2016 by Angela F. Y. Siu et al at Department of educational psychology, the Chinese University of Hong Kong on Maternal mindfulness and child social behaviour; the mediating role of Mother-Child Relationship. It concluded that mindfulness was positively correlated with attachment, involvement, and parenting confidence and conversely, mindfulness was negatively correlated with relational frustration, conduct problem, emotional symptom,

hyperactivity and peer Problem³⁵. There is also a significant association between the level of mindfulness among the stay home and working mothers and children living in the joint family and nuclear family on the Social-Emotional development of a child. This relation is supported by a comparative study, conducted by Mrs. Ancy Alexander et al on behavioural problems of preschool children among working and non-working Mothers in 2014. The study included 30 working and 30 non-working mothers of pre-school children. The result suggested the preschool children of working mothers have more behavioural problems than those of non-working mothers³⁶. In addition to this a research paper was published by Ritu Singh et al in 2014 on Impact Analysis: Family Structure on Social and Emotional Maturity of Adolescents. 277 adolescents studying in class XI were taken randomly for the study. Results revealed that respondents from joint family were more personally, interpersonally and socially adequate and thus, socially mature than those from nuclear family. Similarly, they were significantly higher on emotional stability, emotional progression, social adjustment, personality integration, and independence component of emotional maturity than those from the nuclear family³⁷.

Conclusion

The finding of the study suggests that there exists a positive correlation between the Mindfulness of the mothers and the Social-Emotional development of their children. There was a significant difference in the mean of ASQ: SE score, the lowest score was for the group 1 (stay home mothers living in a joint family, 49.20), highest was that of group 4 (working mothers living 57.25) and that of group 3 (52.14) was lower than that of group 2 (54.71) children. Hence this suggests that children living in the joint family with stay home mothers have the highest Social-Emotional Development as compared to children living in a nuclear family with working mothers. The Factor 1 (Mindful Discipline) of MIPQ scoring for mothers for group 1 (100.16) with is highest whereas lowest for group 4 (98.45) and there exist a slight difference in the mean value among group 3 (99.71) and group 2 (99.21). The factor 2 (being in the moment) of MIPQ scoring for group 1 mother is highest (100.32) whereas lowest for group 4 mothers (98.85), Group 3 mothers (99.43) MIPQ scoring Factor 2 was slightly higher than that of group 2 mothers (98.58). These values indicate that there is a difference in the level of mindfulness among stay home mothers and working mothers as well as mothers living in joint families and the nuclear family.

Limitations of study

- Sample size taken in the study is very small and cannot be generalised
- The level of Mindfulness and Social Emotional Development might have influenced by recall bias of mothers.

Future -recommendation

- This study could be conducted on a larger population so that result can be generalised.
- This study can be used for public awareness, parenting workshops, and child development intervention protocol.
- Future research should consider the various risk factors for the delayed child's social-emotional development. This study only measured the level of mindfulness among mothers, this could be further be surveyed among fathers. Consequently, this will give the multifaceted approach to analyse the parenting style and effect of the stereotype gender-based parenting on a child's social-emotional development.

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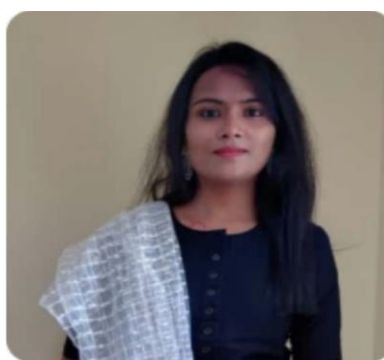
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Author Bibliography

	<p>Shazma Azmi</p> <p>I am Shazma Azmi, I have recently completed my bachelors of Occupational Therapy from Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, India. I am currently a Research Trainee at Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, New Delhi, India, in IC-IMPACT funded COPE Project – Community Health Outcomes and Personalised Education/ exercise for spinal cord injured individuals. This is a joint venture of The Indian Spinal Injury Centre, Vasant Kunj and the University of British Colombia, Canada. I have completed my total number of eight semester with the aggregate marks of 72.60% and have secured second rank in my batchalong with completion 6 months of internship program. My experience in the field of Occupational Therapy includes my academics, fieldwork, clinicals, workshops and health camps. I have been an active learner and have attended various conference and workshop at state and national level.</p>
	<p>Deepshikha Gupta</p> <p>Hello, this is Deepshikha Gupta. I have done my Bachelors from Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities in 2015. I Did Masters from Jamia Hamdard in 2017 in Musculoskeletal. I worked as an Occupational Therapist in Clinical Field for one year and dealt with all kind of Paediatric Cases Including Gross Developmental Disorder, Learning Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Erb’s Palsy etc. I Joined Jamia Hamdard as An Assistant Professor in Rehabilitation Department, Occupational Therapy Unit In 2018. Since then I have been serving the field as a Part of Academic and Research.</p>