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Mindful Parenting and Children's Emotional Well-Being: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

Mindful parenting is a relatively recent but rapidly developing research area. The care and welfare of their children fall under the purview of the parents, and mindful parenting can be a valuable tool in fulfilling this role. This scoping review aims to map existing empirical literature and identify gaps for the impact of mindful parenting on the emotional well-being of children. A systematic review of papers after 2014 was conducted in three electronic databases: PubMed, Semantic Scholar, and ERIC to identify relevant studies examining the impact of mindful parenting on the emotional well-being of children by using keywords 'mindful parenting' and 'emotional well-being' and 'children'. Only one study was identified on this topic, which may be due to the use of only three databases and a limited set of keywords. Future research should include a broader range of databases and more comprehensive keywords to improve search accuracy. Additionally, there is a need for more empirical studies to strengthen the evidence base in this area.

Keywords: Children, Emotional well-being, Mindful parenting.

1. INTRIDUCTION

In the fast-paced world of today, mindfulness provides a means to observe events with clarity and acceptance, fostering emotional balance and psychological well-being. Kabat-Zinn (1994) defines mindfulness as "Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally". Bishop et al. (2004) defines mindfulness as "A kind of nonelaborative, nonjudgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is". Brown & Ryan (2003) defines mindfulness as "Open or receptive attention to and awareness of ongoing events and experiences". Three related terms—awareness, present moment, and non-judgement—that fully characterize mindfulness are derived from these three definitions. One way to define each of these three is to consider awareness as a container for our experiences, feelings, and sensations (Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2001). Staying present-focused involves avoiding concerns about the past or the future, and being nonjudgmental means avoiding adding your own thoughts, ideas, or assessments to experiences. Numerous studies have shown the benefits of mindfulness in varied aspects to promote overall well-being (Arch & Landy, 2015; Brown & Ryan, 2003; David & Hayes, 2011; Hulshegar et al., 2013; Maher, 2021; Westphal et al., 2015; Zelazo & Lyons, 2012). It helps us to connect us with ourselves and others. It allows individuals to aware and accept their own and others' thoughts, emotions, and intentions. One of such social contexts is parent-child relationships, where principles of mindfulness can be applied.

The care and welfare of their children fall under the purview of the parents. Being a parent is a difficult and complicated job in itself. In addition to caring for themselves, parents now have to look after their children. They have to manage their children's emotions, behavior, and developmental needs. It is more stressful when the child or parents are dealing with behavioral issues or other issues like marital issues, financial difficulties, etc. Today, family structures have changed, parents' schedules have become busier, and life has become more stressful. Their

responsibilities are continuously shifting as they have to manage job, family, and personal life. At the same time, children are growing up in a world dominated by technology and social media, which hinders real communication and quality time with their parents. Mindful parenting can be a valuable tool in this. Kabat-Zinn (1997) defines mindful parenting as "paying attention to your child and your parenting in a particular way: intentionally, here and now, and non-judgmentally. The term mindful parenting was first used by Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn in their book, *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting*, from 1997 (Bogels & Restifo, 2014). He purposed three components of mindful parenting including *sovereignty* (respecting child's autonomy), *empathy* (understanding child's perspective), and *acceptance* (open mindedness). Simply, it means apply the elements of mindfulness in parenting.

Duncan (2009) emphasized on five components of mindful parenting including *listening with full attention, non-judgmental acceptance of self and child, emotional awareness of self and child, self-regulation in the parenting relationships, and compassion for self and child.* It promotes kindness, acceptance, and compassion in parent-child interactions.

2. LISTENING WITH FULL ATTENTION

Listening with full attention means that when a child speaks, parents should not only understand their words but also their facial expressions. Allow the children to express them openly. Do not judge or use preconceptions; try to understand their perspective too.

Suppose a child coming home from school looking upset, at that time, parents should ask their child what happens? Why are you looking sad? Instead of quickly giving advice, they should try to understand their perspective. It helps them to openly communicate and develops a healthier bond with them.

2.1 Non-judgmental acceptance of self and child

Accept the child as they are. Do not criticize or label them, even if they show contradictory behavior. Parents should provide a safe space where the child feels respected. This helps in forming a strong and healthy parent–child relationship.

Parents should not compare their child with others, whether in academics, sports, or any other area. Constant comparison can make a child feel inferior or less capable. Parents should appreciate their child's efforts and encourage them to do their best.

2.2 Emotional awareness of self and child

It includes recognizing and understanding children's emotions as well as their own during interactions with them. It allows children to manage their emotions and express them effectively. It contributes towards their overall well-being. Suppose a child shows aggression and looks frustrated. Instead of getting angry at them, parents should take a deep breath and try to understand what their child is feeling. There might be a reason behind the behavior. When parents respond with patience and understanding, it helps the child calm down and feel safe to express their emotions.

2.3 Self-regulation in the parenting relationships

Self-regulation in parenting relationships refers to the parents' ability to manage their own thoughts, emotions, and behavior while interacting with their child. Do not respond harshly or impulsively during interactions. For example, if parents are feeling frustrated or tired because of work, they should still try to respond calmly when their child behaves in a challenging way. At that time, they should calm themselves, and then speak to the child in a gentle way.

2.4 Compassion for self and child

Compassion for self and child means showing kindness towards oneself and the child. Even if they make mistakes, they should not be too harsh. They should treat themselves and the child with patience and accepting way. Suppose if a parent make mistake, they should not blame themselves too much. They remind themselves its okay to be

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imperfect. Similarly, if a child makes mistake, parents should not too much criticize them. They should respond gently.

2.5 Importance of Children's Emotional Well-being

Well-being is a broad and multi-dimensional construct including physical, psychological, social, emotional, financial, and spiritual well-being. Keyes (2002) conceptualizes well-being as including emotional, psychological, and social functioning, representing a complete state of mental health. Emotional well-being specifically involves the recognition, expression, and regulation of emotions in an appropriate manner, which fosters healthy coping mechanisms, and supportive interpersonal relationships. Children's emotional well-being is crucial for their healthy development, as it supports positive relationships, self-acceptance, and overall psychological growth. It allows them to express them efficiently; hence improves their social relationships. It also encourages them to use adaptive coping mechanisms in stressful situations. A child who is happy and healthy is more likely to reach his or her full potential. The way children initially express and manage their emotions is influenced by what they observe within their family environment, and how their parents respond to their emotional needs. Parents play a crucial role in shaping their child's emotional well-being. The way they interact, nurture, and guide their child significantly influences the child's emotional stability, confidence, and social skills. Mindful parenting can help children grow into balanced, resilient, and responsible individuals.

Mindful parenting is a relatively recent but rapidly developing research area. Mindful parenting is valuable because it improves parent-child relationships. When children feel understood and supported, improves their emotional and behavioral outcomes. Existing studies have either included clinical populations or focused on parental outcomes. Very few studies specifically examine how mindful parenting influences children's emotional development, especially within the non-clinical population. Therefore, this scoping review aims to synthesize existing empirical literature and identify research gaps for the impact of mindful parenting on the emotional well-being of children.

3. METHOD

A systematic search of papers after 2014 was conducted in three electronic databases: PubMed, Semantic Scholar, and ERIC to identify relevant studies examining the impact of mindful parenting on the emotional well-being of children by using keywords 'mindful parenting' and 'emotional well-being' and 'children'. Filters available in the databases (such as publication year, peer-reviewed status, and full text availability) were applied to refine the results where necessary.

Inclusion Criteria of studies-
Studies focused on mindful parenting.
Studies focused on emotional well-being of children.
Studies published in English.

Exclusion Criteria of studies-
Studies focused on clinical populations (e.g. ADHD, ASD).
Theoretical papers

4. RESULTS

A total of 855 studies were identifies from the three databases, PubMed, Semantic Scholar, and ERIC. After 10 duplicated studies were removed, the remaining studies (n=845) were screened by titles and abstracts. Of these, 10 full text-articles were assessed, and only 1 study met the inclusion criteria. In a study by He et al. (2025), the resesrchers examined how maternal mindful parenting influences preschoolers' emotional regulation using a moderated-mediation model. The study included 556 mothers of preschool-aged children and assessed mindful parenting, maternal depression, children's emotional regulation, and the parent–child relationship. Results showed that higher mindful parenting was associated with better emotional regulation in children. This link was partially explained by reduced maternal depression, indicating that mothers who practice mindful parenting tend to experience fewer depressive symptoms, which in turn supports children's emotional functioning. Additionally, the strength of the association

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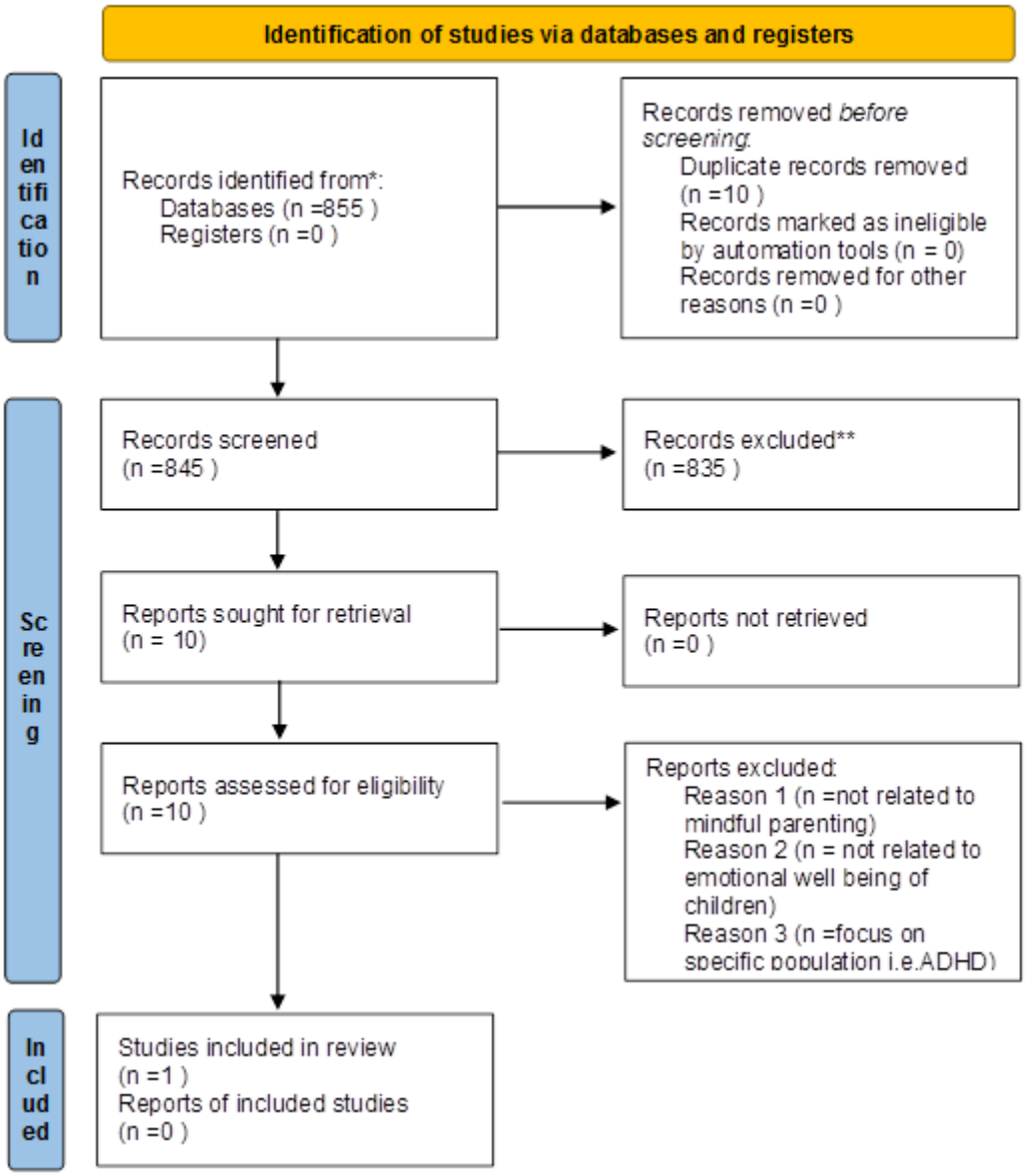
varied depending on the quality of the parent–child relationship, with stronger effects observed when the relationship was closer and less conflictual



5. DISCUSSION

This text discusses the current state of research on mindful parenting and children's emotional well-being. It highlights a gap in the literature, noting that few studies directly examine this relationship. Most existing research focuses on specific populations or parental well-being, rather than children's emotional well-being. This suggests the field is still developing.

Mindful parenting can influence children's emotional well-being both directly and indirectly. When parents develop greater awareness and acceptance of themselves and their children, it encourages children to express their feelings more openly and manage their emotions more effectively. In addition, mindful parenting strengthens the parent-child relationship (Duncan et al., 2009; He et al., 2024) and enhances parents' own well-being, which in turn supports the emotional well-being of their children.

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Based on the theoretical framework and the limited studies available, it can be suggested that mindful parenting is likely to have a positive influence on children's emotional well-being. However, there is still a need for more empirical evidence and access to broader research databases to support this relationship more strongly.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Some relevant studies might have been missed because different researchers use different terms to describe children's emotional well-being. Also, relying on only a few databases may have limited the number of articles identified. In future reviews, using a broader set of keywords and exploring more databases could help gather more relevant studies. This would give a clearer and more complete picture of the topic. More empirical work is needed to build stronger evidence in this area.

7. CONCLUSION

On the basis of theoretical framework and single study identified, there appears to be an association between mindful parenting and emotional well-being; however more empirical evidence is needed to confirm this relationship. This review offers a starting point for understanding the topic and highlights where more work is needed in the future.

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