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Investigating the Relationship between Mindful Parenting and Behavioral Problems with Parenting Stress, Quality of Mother-Child Relationship and Health

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ABSTRACT:

This study aimed to investigate the mediating role of parenting stress, quality of the mother-child relationship, and maternal mental health in the relationship between mindful parenting and behavioral problems of preschool children. This research was carried out spatially in Ardabil and in terms of time in the fall of 2020. The type of research is descriptive-correlation. The statistical population of the study is 433 mothers of preschool children in Ardabil schools. The sample size was 204 people and they were selected by simple random sampling. Five questionnaires including general health, child-parent relationship, stress-parenting, child behavioral checklist, and mindful parenting questionnaire were distributed among the research samples. The results show that the relationship between mindful parenting with parenting stress, mindful parenting with maternal mental health, and also mindful parenting with the quality of the mother-child relationship is significant (sig <0.05).

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Introduction:

The family is the first and most enduring factor that is known as the builder and foundation of the child's personality and subsequent behaviors, and even according to many psychologists, the root causes of many personality disorders and mental illnesses should be sought in the initial upbringing of the family. Among family members, since the mother is the first person whom with the baby communicates, so it plays the most important role in developing the child's psychological and emotional characteristics and is considered the center of health and disease (Jalali, 2008). The quality of the initial mother-child relationship is related to the child's subsequent communication, adjustment, emotional regulation, and conflicting responses of the child to other peers and lions (Shaw and Karkia, 2001; Strasberg, Dadge, Petit, & Butz, 1994, quoted in Huang, 2007).

The positive or negative nature of a child's mother relationship is confirmed by theories of child development. Grolling, Desa, and Rinn (1997) stated that mother-child interactions are characterized by two criteria of grammar conflict that are considered in children's motivation and behavioral internalization. On the one hand, if a mother and child have a warm and intimate relationship with each other, it may be a positive experience (Eccles, 1993, quoted in Sandra, 2006). On the other hand, the length of time a parent and child engage in a conflicting relationship may be less enjoyable and may even have a detrimental effect on the child's beliefs (Sandra, 2006).

Although it is difficult to differentiate between common behavioral problems and persistent problems in children, many children clearly show signs of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, conduct disorder, and neurodevelopmental problems. (Egger and Wangeld, 2006). Studies show that between 13 and 20% of all children suffer from psychological problems and the prevalence of these problems among preschool children is 10% (Burns et al, 1995. Jellinek et al, 1999) In fact, the initial health problems affect the growth of the child because they disrupt brain development patterns and the learning of cognitive and social skills, and because mental health has such a vital impact on children's development, study Based on the mental health of infants is essential.

Mindfulness parenting is a new approach to parenting designed to raise parents' awareness of their stress and mild pathology in response to their children's behaviors. In this approach, parents are asked to adopt a more receptive and less reactive attitude towards their children's behavioral problems, and on the other hand, to take more care of themselves. (Bugels and Restifo, 2014). Some early intervention studies have shown that mindfulness parenting education improves parental mental health and the quality of parent-child interaction and reduces parenting stress and the symptoms of child psychological pathology and behavioral problems (Bugels, Wellmans, Wenderson, Roemer and Vander Mullen, 2013).

Despite the growth of theoretical perspectives and studies of effectiveness in the field of mindful parenting, literature has examined the mediating factor. On the other hand, few studies have been done on the relationship between mindful parenting and other variables related to parenting. Therefore the proposed research, while introducing the desired concepts, will seek to answer the question of whether the variables of parenting stress, quality of the mother-child relationship, and maternal mental health mediate the relationship between mindful parenting and child behavioral problems or not?

Materials and Methods:

This research is of explanatory-correlation type. The statistical population of the study was all mothers of preschool children in Ardabil schools in the fall of 2020. The statistical population was 433 people and the sample size was calculated as 204 people using Cochran's formula. A simple random method was used to select the research samples and research samples were randomly selected from different areas of Ardabil. The research tool in this research is a questionnaire and the method of data collection has been in person. The questionnaires used are described below:

Child Behavior Inventory: The questionnaire assesses the problems of children and adolescents in 9 factors: anxiety/depression, isolation/depression, physical complaints, social problems, thinking problems, attention problems, ignoring consistency and aggressive behavior. Ignoring the rules and aggressive behavior are the second

factor in externalizing problems. This test has four different forms and examines sleep problems, anxiety, aggression, focused attention, withdrawal, and quasi-physical problems. These symptoms are used to diagnose ADHD and attention deficit disorder, coping behaviors, mood disorders, and anxiety disorders. This list should be completed by the parent or caregiver or anyone who deals with the child in a quasi-family setting and knows him or her well.

Parenting Stress Questionnaire: The index has three minor comparisons of parental confusion, problematic child characteristics and dysfunctional parent-child interactions. Wisdom Measures parental turmoil by measuring parents' sense of parenting stress concerning other personal stresses. The scale of problematic child characteristics reflects children's behaviors that make parenting easier or more difficult.

Finally, the subscale of dysfunctional parent-child interactions addresses parents' expectations of children to what extent the child's behavior enhances parenting behavior (Dehghani, Tahmasian, & Farhadi, 2010). Child-Parent Relationship Scale: The items in this scale are based on attachment theory and research background in mother-child relationships. To assess the quality of the mother-child relationship, mothers are asked to rate each substance on a five-point Likert scale. Conflict includes negative aspects of the relationship such as conflict with each other, anger towards each other, disobedience and rejection of restraint and unpredictability; Positive relationships emphasize close and intimate child-parent relationships, and the third factor assesses the degree of abnormal child-mother dependence.

General Health Questionnaire: The General Health Questionnaire is a self-reported screening questionnaire used in the clinical setting to track people with a mental disorder, designed and developed in 1972 by Goldberg. In this questionnaire, two main categories of phenomena are considered: the inability of a person to have a healthy functioning and the emergence of new phenomena with a disabling nature. The General Health Questionnaire can be considered as a set of questions that consists of the lowest levels of common symptoms that exist in various mental disorders.

Mindfulness Parenting Questionnaire: Developed by McCaffrey, Rittman and Black in 2015. This scale includes two factors: training the conscious mind and being in the present with the child.

Findings:

Mean and standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores of research variables are shown in Table (1). Among these, the average variable of conscious parenting has the highest score. Also, the lowest average is related to behavioral problems.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum score of research variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	The lowest Score	The highest Score
Conscious mindful parenting	97.66	13.39	31	121
Parenting Stress	40.44	12.20	24	109
The quality of the mother-child relationship	71.72	9.82	51	112
Mental health	82.35	15.52	43	91
Behavioral problems	63.36	24.33	27	136

Also in Table (2), the results show that the data are normal (Sig> 0.05)

Table 2. Test results for normality of variables

Row	Significance
1	0.09
2	0.07
3	0.14
4	0.68
5	0.12

Also, in the table (3), the correlation matrix of the variables is shown that the results indicate that all correlation coefficients are significant at the level of 5%.

Table 3. Correlation matrix of variables

Row	1	2	3	4	5
1. Conscious mindful parenting	1				
2. Parenting Stress	-0.52*	1			
3. The quality of the mother-child relationship	0.56*	-0.61*	1		
4. Mental health	0.31**	-0.41*	0.24*	1	
5. Behavioral problems	-0.28*	0.55**	-0.48*	-0.39*	1

Significance at the 5% level

Significance at the 1% level

Table 4 also presents the standardized direct, indirect, and total coefficients. The results show that the relationship between mindful parenting with parenting stress, mindful parenting with maternal mental health, and also mindful parenting with the quality of the mother-child relationship is significant.

Table 4. Standardized direct, indirect and total coefficients

	Direction	Direct Impact	Indirect Impact	Total effect
Conscious mindful parenting	Behavioral problems	-0.088	0.29	0.36
	Parenting Stress	-0.41**	-	-0.41
	Mental health	0.25**	-	0.25
	Quality of the mother-child relationship	0.44*	-	0.44

Significance at the 5% level

Significance at the 1% level

Discussion and Conclusion:

The results showed that maternal mental health plays a mediating role in the relationship between mindful parenting and behavioral problems in children. The study showed that although mindful parenting had no direct effect on children's behavioral problems, this effect was shown indirectly through the mother's mental health. This means that if mothers act consciously in their parenting style, their mental health will increase and this will reduce their children's behavioral problems.

Teaching Cognition-based Mindfulness Therapy by helping people to better understand themselves and experience a non-judgmental, receptive, patient and kind attitude, causes people to become aware of relationships with others and increase their social contacts and affect their interpersonal behaviors (Taherifard & Mikaeili, 2019). On the other hand, mindfulness in the context of parenting causes parents to pause and reflect before any reaction in parental interactions and the mind is in a state to be more self-regulated, which in turn reduces parental anxiety and increases their mental health is effective. Also, a review of research shows that mothers need an optimal level of mental health, emotional and social well-being to care for and raise their children, and if this is not provided, the parent-child relationship will be disrupted. High anxiety and feelings of anger and depression in the mother affect the quality of maternal care and directly and indirectly affect the child's behavior. This study, like any other study, faced limitations, including the fact that this study was conducted only on mothers of preschool children in Ardabil, so the generalization of the results to other mothers of children and other educational environments should be done with caution. Also faces the limitation of generalizing results to fathers. It is suggested that this study be reviewed on other mothers of preschool children in different cities as well as on fathers to generalize the results with more confidence.

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