



## Relationship between Mothers' Mindfulness and Self-efficacy with Mother-Child interaction of Primary School Children during Coronavirus-Induced Home Quarantine (Covid-19)

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### ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

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The corona pandemic is a health issue, and the resulting home quarantine, family, and relationships between families have been affected. This study aims to determine the relationship between mothers' awareness and self-efficacy with mother-child interaction during quarantine caused by Coronavirus.

The research design was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population of the study included all mothers with children aged 6 to 12 years in Rasht in the February of 2021, from which 205 people were selected by the available sampling. They completed the (FMI-S), (PSAM), and the mother-Child Relationship Scale. Data were analyzed using SPSS-24, Pearson correlation coefficient, and stepwise regression. The results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between parents' mindfulness and mother-child relationship, and the relationship between parents' self-efficacy and mother-child interaction is positive and significant. Finally, data showed that Parental awareness and self-efficacy play a significant role in explaining the mother-child relationship. The results have practical implications for psychologists and family counselors regarding the quarantine and pandemic conditions such as coronavirus \_ by improving the level of mindfulness and self-efficacy of mothers, the quality of mother-child relationships can be improved.

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## Introduction

Corona pandemic is one of the health and treatment issues. Iran's health system and Iranian society have been severely affected by this pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020). Coronavirus (Covid19) is a large family of viruses that can cause respiratory infections from colds to more severe diseases such as MERS and Sars. Recently, this virus has been named COVID-19; the outbreak of the new virus started in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (World Health Organization, 2020). Coronavirus also spread in Iran and quickly endangered physical and mental health. The symptoms of this virus vary from mild to severe and include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing (Wu & Mc. Cogan, 2020). The onset of the disease can have psychological effects on people, leading to psychological distress and also experiencing fear and anxiety of getting sick or dying. Psychological disorders such as anxiety, fear, depression, emotional changes, insomnia, and post-traumatic stress disorder are common in these patients (Shahyad & Mohammadi, 2019). The school closures and home quarantine of students due to the prevalence of corona disease also affects the physical and mental health of children (Wang et al., 2020). The decrease in children's physical activity, the emergence of stressful stimuli at home, such as long-term fear of contracting the coronavirus, unpleasant thoughts, lack of communication with classmates, friends, and teachers, lack of suitable space at home, and in some cases problems Parents' finances can have lasting effects on the mental health of children and adolescents (Brooks et al., 2020).

In addition, recent studies on the coronavirus have shown that the anxiety caused by the corona disease and quarantine make families and children prone to symptoms of psychological disorders (Shahyad & Mohammadi, 2019; Alipour et al., 2018).

Parent-child relationship refers to strong and effective interaction, mutual understanding and acceptance between parents and children, and meeting the real needs of children (Ronsan et al., 2012). Carnes Holt (2012) believes that parent-child interaction is an important and vital relationship for creating security and love, which consists of a combination of behaviors, feelings, and expectations that are unique to a particular parent and a particular child. This interaction is the first representative of the world of communication for the



child, and the feeling of love, security, and intimacy is directly rooted in these relationships.

The parent-child relationship is one of the protective factors against the risk of children's psychological and behavioral problems (Golamo Romanes et al., 2006).

Parental interactions play an important role in the healthy development of children. The quality of parent-child interaction reduces the likelihood of academic achievement and low self-esteem in children (Bard & Poly, 2017). Studies have shown that positive parent-child interactions are associated with fewer externalizing symptoms (Levin et al., 2012), reduced levels of antisocial behaviors (Dualos et al., 2005), reduced depression (Yu et al., 2006), and aggression. (Mirzaei Kotnai et al., 2016).

Mother-child interaction should be considered one of the most important factors affecting the psychological and social development of every child; Because the family is the first and most important platform for all-round human development, and the quality of mother-child interaction in the early years of childhood lays the foundation for the child's cognitive, social and emotional development (Mantima, 2006). During the quarantine, mothers and fathers faced several tasks such as daily care of children while managing work duties, attending to online education, demands, and balancing the needs of different family members (Prime et al., 2020). In addition, children have been reported to experience higher levels of emotional, self-regulation, and behavioral problems compared to before the outbreak of the coronavirus (Di Giorgio et al., 2020; Jiao et al., 2020; Orgiles et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020).

The factor that may potentially affect the parent-child interaction during the corona pandemic is mothers' mindfulness because it seems that mindfulness leads to a person's focus in order to reduce the tensions experienced, including Corona pandemic and quarantine. Mothers' mindfulness can lead to the promotion of positive interactions between parents and children, as well as happiness and satisfaction with mothers' parenting (Singh et al., 2010). In recent years, mindfulness is a concept that has attracted the attention of psychologists, psychotherapists, and researchers under the influence of Buddhist thought.

Mindfulness is defined as a state of aroused attention and awareness of what is happening in the present moment. This attention is purposeful attention, along with non-judgmental acceptance of ongoing experiences. Mindfulness allows a person to respond with thought and reflection instead of responding to events involuntarily and thoughtlessly (Emanuel et al., 2010). Mindfulness is a way to live better, relieve pain, and enrich and make life meaningful (Siegel, 2010), well-being (Coles et al., 2009), and high life satisfaction (Baster et al., 2016). An increase in mindfulness is associated with an increase in psychological well-being. Mindful people are more capable of recognizing and managing and solving everyday problems. Mindfulness has positive consequences on psychological health and leads to an increase in happiness (Blin, 2015). On the other hand, mental well-being including (psychological, emotional, social) and mind awareness have a close relationship (Malinovsky & Lim, 2015; Carmody & Beer, 2007).

Yi et al. (2019) investigated the positive effects of mindfulness on well-being and mental health in research and came to the conclusion that mindfulness improves people's mental health. Parental awareness has an effect on parenting styles, parental tension (Julaiyeh et al., 2017), and parent-child relationships (Duncan et al., 2009). Mindful parenting program has an effect on children's well-being and happiness (Bagheri et al., 2017). The results of Potartes et al.'s (2020) research showed that mindful parenting has an effect on the quality of parenting behavior and mother-child interactions.

One of the variables that can help in the psychological support of mothers for children and creating positive experiences during the quarantine period is parental self-efficacy; because previous studies have reported a relationship between mothers' self-efficacy and improved parent-child interactions (Bahadri & Khosrowshahi, 2016). Mothers who feel efficient in their parenting role have close and regular relationships with their children, which leads to the formation of healthy parent-child relationships (Jamalinejad, 2013). Parents with low parenting self-efficacy experience more stress and physiological arousal when facing difficult and complex parenting situations (Holloway et al., 2016). Parental self-efficacy refers to parents' beliefs in their ability to perform. Self-efficacy beliefs in parents play an important role in adaptation to changes, motivation to invest and energy in various parental activities; care and creating positive interactions with children, perseverance



in the face of problems, decision-making, and emotional well-being (Bandura, 2001). Parental self-efficacy is an important cognitive structure in relation to parenting performance and it refers to parents' assessment of their abilities in fulfilling their role as a father or mother (Cohen & Carter, 2006). Mothers and fathers with a high level of parental self-efficacy strive for appropriate parenting skills and effectively deal with problems related to the development of their children, while parents with a low level of parental self-efficacy are able to restrain themselves in difficult situations (Jones & Prinz, 2005) and they are more likely to communicate with their children in an aggressive and hostile manner (Mohajiri et al., 2013).

Parental self-efficacy is related to mother-child interaction (Bahadori Khosrowshahi, 2016). The study by Gambin et al. (2020) showed that the role of parental self-efficacy in parent-child interaction during the coronavirus quarantine is significant. In general, parental stress has increased in quarantine, which has led to parents being harsh with children at home (Chang et al., 2020) and has affected the favorable mother-child interaction. Therefore, it can be said that the mother's interaction with her children will be at the optimal level when the anxiety in the family system is low and the parents have a good relationship with their family members. Considering the conditions of quarantine and the increasing responsibility of mothers in this era, it is very important to identify the psychological capabilities of mothers during the pandemic and home quarantine, which, in addition to positive effects on the mental health of mothers, improves their interactions with their children. Therefore, taking care of a child and having good interaction with him requires abilities such as the mother's awareness and self-efficacy. There is very little research evidence regarding parent-child interactions in the Corona pandemic, but there is a research gap regarding the role of variables affecting it, especially the role of the mother in the country, so the current research aims to answer the question of whether is there a relationship between parents' mindfulness and self-efficacy with parent-child interaction during the quarantine period of the Corona epidemic?

## Methods

The present research is a descriptive correlation type that was carried out in the framework of a correlation scheme. The statistical population of the

research included all the mothers with elementary school children (6-12 years old) living in Rasht city in the winter of 2019, out of which 220 people were selected by sampling method. Due to the lack of access to the size of the statistical population of mothers and because the minimum sample size for each variable in correlation studies is 50 people (Delavar, 2016), and previous similar studies, and the possibility of dropping questionnaires, the sample size 220 people were selected. Due to the special conditions of the society, the limitation of traffic and social relations during the quarantine, and the impossibility of conducting it in person, the research questionnaires are made in the form of a link and it was published through social networks (Telegram and WhatsApp) in virtual groups of primary schools in Rasht, and finally, 205 questionnaires were analyzed by screening the questionnaires and discarding the distorted ones.

It should be mentioned that the criteria for entering the research were explained at the beginning of the questions and mothers were asked to be the only people who can proceed to complete the questionnaire based on the criteria for entering the research by the researcher. The criteria for entering the study were: having a child between 6 and 12 years of age, having at least one cycle of education, not taking psychiatric drugs by the mother or the child, quarantine of the mother and the child during the corona epidemic, no history of psychological disorders in the mother and the child. Before the spread of the coronavirus, the criteria for leaving the research included incomplete completion of the questionnaires.

## Measurements

### *Parent-child Relationship Questionnaire*

This questionnaire was prepared in 1983 by Fine et al. (1983), which contains 48 questions \_ 24 questions for the relationship with the mother and 24 questions for the relationship with the father. In this research, 24 questions related to the relationship with the mother were used. On this scale, a score from 1 to 7 is considered for each question. Questions 9, 13, and 14 are graded in reverse. This scale was implemented by Fine et al. (1983) on 241 students (100 men and 141 women). The parent-child interaction scale with alpha coefficients of .61 to .94 for the subscales related to the mother, as well as the overall alpha of .96, has an excellent internal consistency of the questions. The



validity of the parent-child interaction scale benefits from well-known groups and good predictive validity and differentiates children of divorced and integrated families meaningfully (Khazadeh & Mirzaei Kotnai, 2017). In the research of Khazadeh and Mirzaei Kotnai (2017), Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine reliability, and the values of the alpha coefficient for the subscales related to the mother were .61 to .91, and the alpha coefficient was .92 for the overall relationship of the parents. In the research of Nowrozi and Asadi Majreh (2017), the reliability of this questionnaire was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method of .81. The internal homogeneity coefficient in the present study was .85.

### ***Freiburg Mindfulness Scale (FMI-SF)***

The Freiburg Mindfulness Scale (FMI) was designed by Buchhild et al. (2001) and had 30 questions. Later, the short form (14 items) of this questionnaire, which is more suitable for use in the general population, was designed by Wallach et al. (2006). The short form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Questionnaire has 14 questions and is organized on a 4-point scale: rarely (1), sometimes (2), often (3), and always (4). All questions except question 13 are scored directly. Regarding question 13, scoring will be from rarely (4) to always (1). This scale gives a total score for mindfulness that ranges from 14 to 56 and a higher score indicates more mindfulness. Wallach and colleagues (2006) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale as .86. The study of Ghasemi et al. (2014) investigated the psychometric properties of the short form of the Freiburg Mind-Awareness Scale in a study on 400 students of Yasouj University who were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. In order to check the concurrent validity, the correlation coefficients of the mindfulness questionnaire with the emotional regulation subscale and the self-control scale were used. The correlation of this scale with the self-control questionnaire was .69 and with the emotion regulation questionnaire was .73. In this research, the retest reliability of the short form of the Freiburg Mindfulness Questionnaire based on the results of the test twice was .83 and its internal consistency according to Cronbach's alpha coefficients was .92 in the case of the sample group. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis confirm that the structure of the questionnaire has an acceptable fit with the data. The results of their research showed that the short form questionnaire of

the Freiburg Mindfulness Questionnaire is a suitable tool with acceptable psychometric properties to measure the level of mindfulness of people in Iranian society. In this research, the homogeneity of the instrument was obtained with Cronbach's alpha method of .81.

### ***Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale (PSAM)***

This scale was used for the first time by Domka et al (1996). This scale includes 10 statements (5 positive and 5 negative statements) and measures parents' general sense of confidence in their role as parents. Its scoring is based on the Likert scale from rarely (1) to always (7). The minimum score of this scale is 10 and the maximum score is 70. Tyler (2006) announced the reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha of 0.54. In Iran, Talei et al. (2011) reported its reliability as .70. In the research of Ashuri et al. (2014), the validity of this scale was reported as .79 and its reliability as .73. In this research, the homogeneity of the tool was obtained by Cronbach's alpha method .79.

The research was conducted in such a way that among all the mothers with children aged 6 to 12 living in Rasht city, those who met the criteria for entering the research were selected by available sampling. The questionnaires were given to the participants (mothers of the students) and they were asked to answer the questions honestly. The implementation was individual and there was no time limit to complete the questionnaires. The research data were analyzed using SPSS-20 statistical software. In order to provide descriptive information, average and standard deviation statistics were used, and in the inferential part, the data were analyzed with the help of Pearson's correlation coefficient and step-by-step regression methods.

### **Finding**

The mothers were in the age range of 23 to 46 years with an average age of 39.11. 68.7% of mothers were housewives and 30.3% worked in the private and public sectors. 42.65% of the mothers had a diploma, 39.2% had a bachelor's degree, and 18.15% had a master's degree. In Table 1, the descriptive indices and correlation matrix of the research variables are presented.



**Table 1. Descriptive indices and correlation matrix of research variables**

Variables	Average	standard deviation	Mindfulness	Self-efficacy
Mindfulness	27.61	9.71	-	
Self-efficacy	40.19	7.63	.16*	-
Mother-child interaction	78.69	14.63	.77**	.35**
Positive emotion	11.11	3.02	.75**	.36**
Annoyance/ confusion of role	9.19	1.7	-.18*	-.24**
Replication	11.75	2.05	.49**	.09
Communication or conversation	22.43	4.06	.06	.23**

According to the correlation results of the variables in Table 1, there is a positive and significant relationship between parents' mindfulness and mother-child interaction ( $p < .01$ ,  $r = .77$ ) and a high score in mindfulness with a high level of mother interaction \_ The child is accompanied. The relationship between mindfulness and all aspects of mother-child interaction is significant ( $p < .05$ ). There is a positive and significant relationship between parental self-efficacy and mother-child interaction ( $p < .01$ ,  $r = .35$ ), and a high score in parental self-efficacy is associated with a high level of mother-child interaction. The relationship between parental self-efficacy and dimensions of mother-child interaction is significant, except in the dimensions of assimilation ( $p < .05$ ). Stepwise regression was used to predict mother-child interaction based on mindfulness and self-efficacy. At first, the assumptions of the regression model have been examined. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check the normality of the data distribution showed that the significance level of the test is .295 (more than .05) and the hypothesis of the normality of the data  $p/pp0/$  established. Also, Durbin-Watson's statistic with a value between 1.5 and 2.5, showed the independence of the residuals in the model. Also, to check the collinearity between the independent variables, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and the tolerance index were used (was not observed). Also, in order to check the homogeneity of the variances of the residuals, a statistical distribution diagram was used, and after drawing

the above diagram, no trend was observed in the resulting diagram that shows the homogeneity of the variances of the residuals of the model. Therefore, all the conditions of the regression model are satisfied and multiple regression tests can be used to check the hypothesis.

**Table 2. Variance analysis of predicting mother-child interaction based on parents' self-awareness and self-efficacy**

Sources of changes	Sum of Squares	freedom	Average of square	F	<i>p</i>
Regression	28204.038	2	14102.019	25.182	.001
Remaining	15707.695	203	77.38		

According to the results of Table 2, the value of  $F = 182.25$  obtained is significant ( $P < .01$ ); Therefore, we conclude with .99 confidence that the role of parents' mindfulness and self-efficacy in explaining mother-child interaction is significant. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 3. According to the results of Table 3, all predictor variables explain 80% of the changes in mother-child interaction.

**Table 3. The results of the step-by-step regression model of mother-child interaction based on the mindfulness and self-efficacy of parents**

Variable	R	R2	B	Beta	Standard error	<i>p</i>
Mindfulness	.77	.59	1.09	.73	.17	.001
Self- efficacy	.80	.64	.45	.23	.53	.001

The results of Table 3 shows that among the predictor variables, mindfulness variables and self-efficacy were significant predictors of mother-child interaction with explanatory coefficients of .59 and .64 respectively; The beta values listed in Table 3 also show that the standardized coefficient for the mindfulness variable ( $\beta = .73$ ) and with an increase of one standard deviation in the mindfulness variable, the amount of mother-child interaction is .73; (0 standard deviation increases). The standardized coefficient for mothers' self-efficacy variable is ( $\beta = .23$ ) and with an increase of one standard deviation in mothers' self-efficacy variable, the amount of mother-child interaction increases to .23 standard deviations. In other words, the standardized



coefficient results show that the variables of mindfulness and self-efficacy significantly explain the variance of the mother-child interaction variable.

## **Conclusion & Discussion**

The present study was conducted with the aim of determining the relationship between mothers' mindfulness and self-efficacy with parent-child interactions during the quarantine period of the coronavirus epidemic. The first finding of the research showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between mindfulness and the mother-child relationship, and a high score in mindfulness is associated with a high level of mother-child interaction. The connection of mind-consciousness with all dimensions of mother-child interaction is meaningful except for communication (dialogue and listening). The relationship between mothers' awareness and parent-child interactions is positive and meaningful. This finding is consistent with the research results of Pourheidari et al. (2009) and Potartes et al. (2020). In explaining this finding, it can be mentioned that parents' mindfulness affects children's well-being and happiness (Bagheri et al., 2017) and parents' parenting methods (Yaqub Nejad et al., 2018). The skill of mindfulness and mindful parenting improves the ability to self-regulate and manage negative emotions, including anger. Mindfulness is an effortful form of thinking that can have a positive effect on the effectiveness of parenting by reducing child-parent conflict, facilitating more sincere communication, and reducing the conflict of conflicts created between parents or children (Julai et al., 2017). Parents who have high mindfulness ability pay full attention to the interactions, thoughts, and feelings of themselves and their children and receive these feelings more correctly, which in turn reduces conflict and disagreement (Harwas & Lee, 2015). Parents who have high levels of mindfulness, experience less tension (Malveiro, 2013). In the conditions of the coronavirus epidemic and home quarantine, this reduction in stress makes parents better able to understand the needs of their children, to provide them with emotional support.

The findings did not show a significant relationship between the mother's mindfulness scores and the communication component (conversation), which is in agreement with the results of the few previous studies in this field is asymmetrical (Pourheidari et al., 2016; Potarts, 2020). Since mindful

parenting through mechanisms such as listening with full attention, acceptance without judgment, compassion, self-regulation, and emotional awareness, leads to parent-child relationships and, as a result, increases psychological well-being in children. (Bagheri et al., 2017), it was expected that this finding would be obtained in the conditions of corona epidemic and home quarantine, but this finding was not consistent with previous studies. The reason for this disparity can be factors such as cultural differences, social factors such as the level of social support, the socio-economic level of the family, and even characteristics such as the mother's temperament. On the other hand, it can be acknowledged that in the conditions of home quarantine, the responsibility of mothers at home has increased and the stress of parents has increased, and in these conditions, mothers' mind-awareness and focus on themselves can lead to neglecting communication (Be with children). Another finding of the research showed that the relationship between mothers' self-efficacy and mother-child interaction is positive and significant, and a high score in parental self-efficacy is associated with a high level of mother-child interaction. The relationship between parents' self-efficacy and the dimensions of mother-child interaction is significant, except in the dimensions of assimilation. This finding was consistent with the research results of Bahadri (2016) and Gambin et al. (2020). Gambin reported the role of positive experiences including empathy, emotion regulation, self-efficacy, and social support of parents on parent-child relationships during the quarantine of all corona epidemics (Gambin et al., 2020). Also, Maghribi Sinki et al. (2014) found in their study, those mothers who had weaker self-efficacy showed less sensitivity and were weaker during parent-child interaction and in fact, in communicating with their child. On the other hand, mothers who felt more and stronger self-efficacy in their parental role established warm, intimate, and regular relationships with their children. In explaining this finding, it can be said that mothers who feel self-efficacy in their parenting role, have warm and regular relationships with their children, and on the contrary, mothers who feel ineffective have problems in their relationship with their children (Cotronzo, 2006). However, the mother's input affects the child's development in some way, and the child's characteristics are the direct consequences of the mother-child interaction and the communication characteristics of the parents and their self-efficacy. The lower levels of parents' self-efficacy make them



more inclined to use negative methods in raising their children and to benefit less from treatment programs and services provided for their children and also in making decisions about the most appropriate treatment strategies for child failure. This has negative effects on the child's growth and leads to more destructive behaviors (Maghribi Sinki et al., 2016). In fact, parents who set less strict rules with their children and had more positive behaviors and interactions with their children had higher self-efficacy. On the other hand, people with weaker self-efficacy are more likely to communicate with their children in an aggressive and hostile manner, and they rejected their children most of the time (Tranzo, 2006).

The results of the regression analysis showed that the role of parents' mindfulness and self-efficacy is significant in explaining the mother-child relationship, and all predictor variables explain 80% of the changes in the mother-child interaction: (1) The mother's awareness leads to attention, interest and is available to the child and creates a constructive and supportive interaction between the child and the mother. (2) The mother's awareness leads to an increase in the emotional awareness of the mother and her non-judgment towards the child. During the quarantine period of the coronavirus, the mother's awareness can be effective in reducing the tension experienced by the mother during the quarantine period and lead to improved interaction (becoming mother and child). In addition, mothers who have high self-efficacy are better able to establish a constructive relationship with their children, have empathy with their children, and have positive and supportive behavior towards their children, therefore, this structure also plays a decisive role in explaining mother-child interaction. Mindfulness and self-efficacy of mothers are able to positively predict mother-child interaction and have important research and clinical implications for psychologists and counselors active in the field of family and child to improve parent-child interactions. The limitations of the present study are the selection of people in an accessible and nonrandom way, which is of course due to the conditions of the coronavirus epidemic, which suggests that in future similar studies, the selection of people should be done randomly. Also, the lack of control of demographic variables such as the socio-economic status of the family was another limitation of the research; because due to the conditions of the coronavirus epidemic, it was not

possible to select a homogeneous sample in terms of demographic characteristics. Therefore, it is suggested to take these cases into consideration in future similar studies to reveal new patterns of correlations.

**Ethical considerations:** All participants were informed of voluntary participation, and also were assured that personal information would remain anonymous.

**Conflict of Interest:** There are no personal or organizational conflicts of interest in this study.

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