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## Self-Compassion, Dispositional Mindfulness, and Parenting Stress:

### The Mediating role of Mindful Parenting\*

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#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine whether mindful parenting mediates the relationship between self-compassion, dispositional mindfulness, and parenting stress. A total of 208 parents participated, with 156 being female and 52 being male. Participants completed the Self-Compassion Scale, the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), the Parenting Stress Scale, and the Mindfulness in Parenting Questionnaire (MIPQ). The findings revealed that mindfulness in parenting plays a mediating role between self-compassion, dispositional mindfulness, and parenting stress. These results indicate that higher levels of dispositional mindfulness and self-compassion may facilitate the practice of mindful parenting, potentially leading to a corresponding reduction in parenting-related stress. These findings underscore the importance of actively addressing and alleviating parenting stress as a crucial factor in fostering the development of self-compassion, mindfulness, and the application of mindful parenting.

**Key Words:** Self-compassion; dispositional mindfulness; parenting stress; mindful parenting

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## **Öz-anlayış, Bilinçli Farkındalık ve Ebeveynlik Stresi: Ebeveynlikte Bilinçli Farkındalığın Aracı Rolü**

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### **ÖZET**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ebeveynlikte bilinçli farkındalığın öz-anlayış, bilinçli farkındalık ve ebeveynlik stresi arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık edip etmediğini incelemektir. Çalışmaya 156'sı kadın ve 52'si erkek olmak üzere toplam 208 ebeveyn katılmıştır. Katılımcılar, Öz Anlayış Ölçeği, Bilinçli Farkındalık Ölçeği, Ebeveynlik Stres Ölçeği ve Ebeveynlikte Bilinçli Farkındalık Ölçeği'ni doldurmuştur. Bulgular, ebeveynlikte bilinçli farkındalığın öz-anlayış, bilinçli farkındalık ve ebeveynlik stresi arasında aracı bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymuştur. Bu sonuçlar, daha yüksek düzeyde bilinçli farkındalık ve öz-anlayışın ebeveynlikte bilinçli farkındalık uygulamalarını kolaylaştırabileceğini ve potansiyel olarak ebeveynlik stresinde bir azalmaya yol açabileceğini göstermektedir. Bu bulgular, öz-şefkat, farkındalık ve bilinçli ebeveynlik uygulamasının geliştirilmesinde önemli bir faktör olarak ebeveynlik stresinin aktif olarak ele alınması ve hafifletilmesinin öneminin altını çizmektedir. Ebeveynlik stresini etkili bir şekilde azaltmak için öz-anlayış, bilinçli farkındalık ve ebeveynlikte bilinçli farkındalık uygulamalarının geliştirilmesinin önemli bir faktör olduğunu göstermektedir.

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### **MAKALE BİLGİSİ**

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### **Introduction**

Raising children is a major responsibility in the life of an adult. The role of parenting, greatly influenced by individuals' personality traits and their available physical resources, entails complex demands rooted in emotional and psychological needs (Craig & Churchill, 2018). The challenges and obstacles encountered while assuming this role and fulfilling its requirements can often lead to stress in the lives of parents. This specific type of stress, triggered by the demanding responsibilities and demands of parenthood, is referred to as

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parenting stress (Abidin, 1990). Some individuals, driven by a strong need for self-sufficiency, may find it challenging to assume a parenting role. Additionally, parents who feel uncomfortable with close relationships and perceive that their freedom might be constrained due to the heavy responsibilities of parenting may also struggle with this role. Furthermore, difficulties encountered while fulfilling the role of parenting can result in heightened parenting stress.

Heightened levels of parental stress may have adverse consequences for the mother-child bond, as well as for the overall quality of parenting and family functioning (Aydoğan & Özbay, 2017). Research indicates that parents of children with developmental disabilities often have elevated levels of parenting stress. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that parents of kids who are normally developing may also endure substantial levels of parenting stress (Öztürk, 2020). The absence of self-compassion can lead parents to feel ill-equipped to handle the demands of parenting. Self-compassion involves how individuals relate to themselves (Neff, 2003a). It can be a crucial resource for coping with negative life situations. Individuals with elevated self-kindness and self-compassion have a decreased tendency to see unpleasant experiences as catastrophic, feelings of anxiety in response to stressors, and avoid challenging tasks due to fear of failure. According to Moreira et al. (2015), it is justifiable to hypothesize that the way parents engage with themselves significantly influences their self-perception as parents and their approach to handling the demands of parenting. Individuals who possess heightened degrees of self-compassion are more likely to demonstrate warmer feelings, concern, and support for their children. Additionally, they are expected to encounter fewer levels of stress when faced with the challenges of parenting. Self-compassion in parenting is fundamental for psychological well-being within families, as it equips parents to better cope with stress and uncertainty (Coyne et al., 2020). Empirical research has shown that programs designed to improve self-compassion among parents have a significant impact on reducing stress levels (Potharst et al., 2017; Shams et al., 2021).

Practicing mindfulness may lead parents to experience a sense of adequacy when dealing with the challenges of parenting. Mindfulness is a concept that has been considered and explained by many pioneers. Kabat-Zinn (2005) defines mindfulness as the intentional process of focusing one's attention on their current experiences in a way that is accepting and absent of judgment. Dispositional mindfulness, as defined by Brown et al. (2007), pertains to the ability or tendency to be alert and sustain concentration on the current situation. The existing literature consistently demonstrates that mindfulness mitigates stress and its related problems, contributing to mental well-being. Research suggests a negative relationship between mindfulness and stress levels (Bossi et al., 2022; Corthorn & Milicic, 2016; Guardino et al., 2014; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Parenting stress is reduced by mindfulness-based parenting interventions, according to experimental research (Anand et al., 2021).

Mindfulness is a notion that includes two main aspects: intrapersonal mindfulness and interpersonal mindfulness. Intrapersonal mindfulness pertains to the capacity for non-judgmental awareness of one's own emotions, thoughts, and bodily senses. Conversely, interpersonal mindfulness refers to an individual's ability to be fully aware of the present moment and engage with others without making judgments (Duncan, 2007; Pratscher et al.,

2019). Lately, researchers have broadened the scope of dispositional mindfulness to include its impact on interpersonal dynamics within the family setting (Zhang et al., 2019).

The concept of mindfulness in parenting focuses on the significance of interpersonal awareness in the context of parent-child interactions. It entails a parent integrating awareness into their emotions, thoughts, and parental behaviors. Mindfulness in parenting is defined as a parent evoking their presence in the parent-child relationship by regulating their behaviors with acceptance, affection, and kindness (Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 1997). Interpersonal mindfulness involves a parent attentively listening to their child, having self-awareness of their own feelings and thoughts, accepting them, providing non-judgmental responses to their child's behaviors, and displaying compassion toward their child (Duncan, 2007; Duncan et al., 2009).

Mindfulness is essential in parenting since it is crucial for developing effective parental behaviors, changing inefficient parental attitudes, and decreasing parental stress and reactivity (Bögels et al., 2010). It improves the emotional aspect of the relationship between adolescents and their parents, enhances communication between parents and children, facilitates positive relationships between parents and adolescents, and reduces parental stress by minimizing negative responses to parental complaints (Gouveia et al., 2016; Lippold et al., 2015). Lippold et al. (2015) highlight the lack of understanding of the relationship between mindful parenting and different parts of the parenting process. This study focuses on parents with children whose ages range from 9 to 17 years old. According to Sawyer et al. (2018), the first indications of adolescence generally become apparent at around 10 years of age. This life stage is known for its crisis-prone nature within families, making it one of the most challenging periods for parents and potentially leading to increased stress. Communication with adolescents can further elevate stress levels. Adolescents tend to experience greater emotional fluctuations and higher levels of negative mood compared to adults and children (Schweizer et al., 2020). These emotional states are believed to have an impact on parents. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how dispositional mindfulness and self-compassion, considered internal processes within parents with children aged 9 to 17, manifest in communication and relationships (interpersonal mindful parenting) and their association with parental stress.

### **The present study**

An individual's internal processes are linked to dispositional mindfulness and self-compassion, while interpersonal mindfulness is evaluated in the interpersonal relationship process that emerges in the way the parent communicates with his or her child. Duncan (2007), while talking about the concept of interpersonal mindfulness in parenting, emphasized the interactions within the parent-child connection. Duncan emphasized that internal mindfulness may be insufficient in determining an individual's awareness of the social interaction process. As a result of the research developed in the focus of these explanations, in their study, Gouveia et al. (2016) found a direct relationship between higher levels of self-compassion and mindfulness and an improvement in mindfulness in parenting. This improvement in mindfulness then resulted in a reduction in the levels of stress experienced by

parents. In addition, Fernandes et al. (2021) performed a longitudinal investigation that specifically examined women during the postpartum phase. Their study revealed a correlation between the self-compassion of mothers and the establishment of a strong attachment between mother and newborn. This emphasizes the crucial impact of mindful parenting and parental stress on this relationship. The aim of this research is to analyze the theoretical framework of mindful parenting as given by Duncan et al. (2009) and investigate the link between dispositional mindfulness, self-compassion, interpersonal mindfulness, and parental stress. This cross-sectional research aims to investigate the relationship between raised self-compassion, dispositional mindfulness, increasing mindful parenting. Consequently, this research will answer the following research questions(RQ).

RQ1: Does mindful parenting have a mediating role in the relationship between self-compassion and parenting stress?

RQ2: Does mindful parenting have a mediating role in the relationship between mindfulness and parenting stress?

## **Methodology**

### **Participants and procedure**

The study was reached 208 parents (156 of whom are female and 52 male) residing in Turkey. To qualify for inclusion in this research, participants had to meet the following criteria: they must have had at least one child aged between 9 and 17 years, and they must not have had any severe and long-lasting health issues or disabilities that affect development. This criteria was prioritized due to the fact that taking care of a kid with special needs often involves distinct obstacles, factors to consider, and obligations that might affect the connection between the parent and child. In terms of educational background, 62 individuals completed secondary school, 121 have an undergraduate degree, and 25 hold a postgraduate degree. The parent participants in the research had ages ranging from 33 to 59, with an average age of 40.60. Table 1 illustrates the frequency and percentages of demographic information for parents who participated. The data collection instruments were consolidated electronically using Google Forms, which served as the platform for crafting the research questionnaire. The research data were collected through the convenience sampling method. Participants who have children between the ages of 9 and 17 and who can fill out the form electronically were recruited from the researchers' environment. Informed consent was included in the research form for the participants to obtain information about the research and to participate in the study voluntarily. All participants in the study participated voluntarily, and no incentive or reward was provided to the participants for their participation in the study. It took about 15 minutes to complete the research form.

### **Table 1**

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*Participants' Characteristics*

Variables	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	156	75
Male	52	25
<i>Parents Ages</i>		
30-39 ages	49	23.6
40-49 ages	135	64.8
50-59 ages	24	11.6
<i>Number of Child</i>		
1 Child	67	32.2
2 Children	107	51.4
3 Children or above	34	16.4
<i>Education</i>		
Secondary	62	29.8
Undergraduate	121	58.2
Post-Graduate	25	12
<i>Children Years</i>		
9 years	28	13.5
10 years	27	13.0
11 years	21	10.1
12 years	14	6.7
13 years	32	15.4
14 years	23	11.1
15 years	17	8.2
16 years	10	4.8
17 years	36	17.3

**Measures**

***Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS).*** The MAAS scale was first developed by Brown and Ryan (2003) and then translated into Turkish by Özyeşil et al. (2011). The scale, which is a 6-point Likert-type (*1 = almost always; 6 =almost never*) rating, comprises 15

items and is designed to assess an individual's overall inclination to be attentive and mindful of present-moment experiences in their daily life. The MAAS was used to measure dispositional mindfulness in this study. One of the sample items on the scale is “*I may experience certain emotions without realizing it for a certain period of time.*” High scores on the scale indicate a high level of mindfulness. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated at .80. MAAS had a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2/df = 2.086$ , GFI = .93, RMS = .06, RMSEA = .06, GFI = .93, AGFI = .91).

**The Mindfulness in Parenting Questionnaire (MIPQ).** The MIPQ scale was first developed by McCaffrey et al. (2017) and then translated into Turkish by Gördesli et al. (2018). MIPQ is a 24-item, two-factor scale that measures parents' interpersonal mindfulness in parenting. One of the sample items on the scale is “*You noticed that you were thinking about your child's behavior before reacting to it.*” The scale, rated as a 4-point Likert-type (*1 = rarely; 6 = almost always*), consists of being in the moment with the child and parental self-efficacy as sub-dimensions. Higher scores on the scale show that the interpersonal mindfulness level in parenting is high. The Turkish adaptation of the MIPQ has acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .73 to .87 and acceptable validity ( $\chi^2/df = 1.927$ , GFI = .90, RMSEA = .04, CFI = .90, IFI = .90).

**Parenting Stress Scale (PSS).** The PSS was developed by Aydoğan and Özbay (2017) to measure the stress level experienced by the parents. The scale consists of 18 items and has a single-dimension structure that includes parents, the parent-child relationship, and the characteristics of the child. One of the sample items in the scale is “*I find myself inadequate when it comes to being a parent.*” PSS is a 4-point Likert-type (*0 = doesn't describe at all; 4 = describes very well*) measurement instrument. The higher the score, the more likely it is that the parenting stress level is high. The scale is a measurement tool that can be easily applied to parents who have at least one child at the primary and higher education levels. The reliability research revealed that the scale's Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was .96 and the results of CFA found an adequate fit ( $\chi^2/df = 2.37$ , CFI = .99, NNFI = .89, RMSEA = .06, GFI = .85).

**Self-Compassion Scale (SCS).** Neff (2003b) developed the Self-compassion Scale, and Deniz et al. (2008) carried out reliability and validity studies in Turkish. The purpose of the scale is to determine self-compassion levels. The result showed that a 5-point Likert-type (*1 = almost always; 5 = almost never*) of 24 items was a valid measurement tool. One of the sample items on the scale is “*When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that many people experience the same feelings of inadequacy about themselves.*” A high score on the scale signifies elevated levels of self-compassion in the individual being assessed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the Turkish version of the scale. The correlation coefficient between .89 and test-retest reliability was determined to be .83.

## Data analysis

Initially, by using IBM SPSS Statistics version 20, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to investigate the relationship between variables. Descriptive statistics, such as the standard deviations, mean, kurtosis, and skewness, were also analyzed. The measurement model was analyzed to represent latent variables through its indicators. Second, via maximum likelihood estimation, a structural model was tested in the AMOS Graphics. Hu & Bentler (1999) suggested indices ( $\chi^2/df$  ratio, RMSEA, SRMR, GFI, CFI, and TLI) to assess the adequacy of the model. These values were used to decide if the model was a good fit or not. AIC and ECVI were also calculated to prove better the model's congruence. The estimation of 95% confidence intervals (CIs) was conducted using the bootstrapping technique using 10.000 bias-corrected bootstraps. The bootstrapping method generates an empirical approximation of the population by repeatedly sampling from the sample to replicate the initial sampling procedure, as described by MacKinnon et al. (2004).

## Findings

### Correlation and descriptive statistics of variables

Table 2 demonstrates that all variables exhibited a normal distribution, as shown by the skewness and kurtosis values. As expected, there was a negative relationship seen between self-compassion and parenting stress, mindfulness and parenting stress, as well as mindful parenting and parenting stress. Furthermore, a positive correlation was seen between self-compassion and mindful parenting, mindfulness and mindful parenting, and self-compassion and mindfulness. These results provide the prerequisites for structural equation model analysis.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities for The Study Variables*

Variable	Descriptive Statistics				Correlations			
	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4
1. Parenting stress	10.97	9.68	.999	.185	–			
2. Self-compassion	84.29	17.73	-.413	-.298	-.24**	–		
3. Dispositional mindfulness	64.56	12.52	-.446	-.316	-.38**	.44**	–	
4. Mindful parenting	80.98	8.93	-.412	-.270	-.37**	.25**	.24**	–

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

### Measurement model



The measuring model has four latent variables, namely self-compassion, mindfulness, mindful parenting, and parental stress, along with eight observable variables. The fit indices of the measurement model were assessed ( $\chi^2$  (14, N = 208) = 22.351,  $p < .001$ ; CFI=.99; GFI=.97; RMSEA=.054, TLI=.98; SRMR=.023; C.I. [.046, .066]. The measurement model's fit indices were sufficiently well-fit. All the indicators exhibited significant loadings on their latent variables (ranging from .723 to .978,  $p < .001$ ).

### **Structural model**

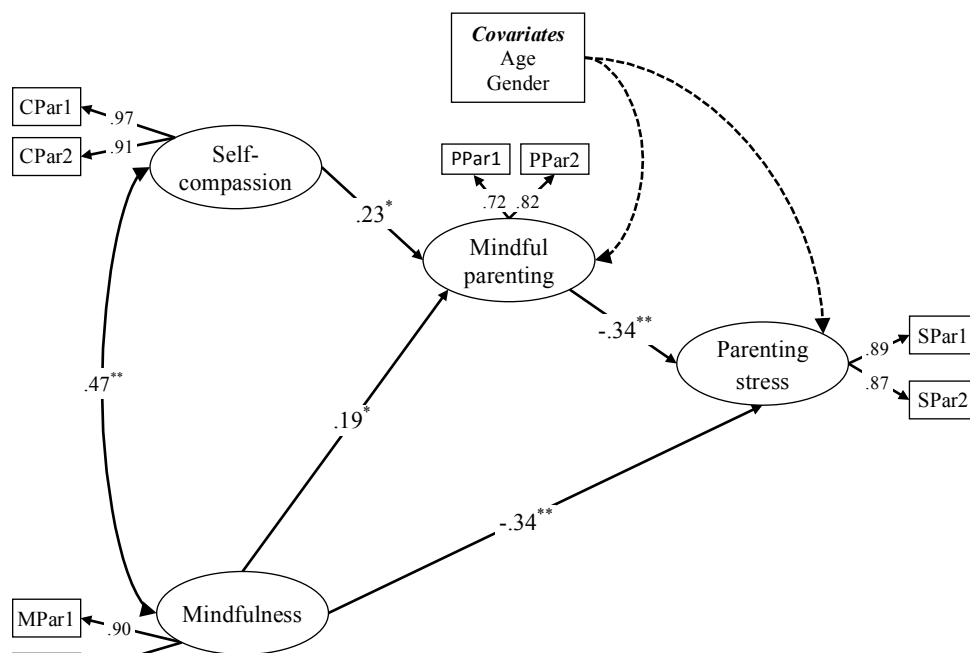
Initially, it was investigated whether mindful parenting may serve as a mediator between self-compassion, mindfulness, and parental stress (Model I). This model showed that the fit indices were ( $\chi^2$  (26, N = 208) = 43.51,  $p < .001$ ; GFI =.96; CFI =.98; TLI =.97; RMSEA =.057; SRMR =.045; C.I. [.024, .086]; AIC =101.51; ECVI =.490). An evaluation was conducted on the model; however, this path was removed since there was no significant pathway from self-compassion to parenting stress (Model II). The fit indices of Model II were satisfactory ( $\chi^2$  (27, N=208) = 43.53,  $p < .001$ ; GFI =.96; CFI =.98; TLI =.97; RMSEA =.054; SRMR =.045; C.I. [.020, .083]; AIC=99.53; ECVI =.48). The second model revealed a significant correlation between self-compassion and parental stress, which was mediated by mindful parenting. Additionally, through mindful parenting, dispositional mindfulness has shown a negative association with parental stress on both a direct and indirect level.

### **Alternative models**

Alternative models were examined as the data are cross-sectional in nature. These various models involve a variety of relationships between these variables. The current theoretical model would be supported if the fit indices produced by these models were lower. In one alternative model, the role of dispositional mindfulness and self-compassion as mediators between mindful parenting and parenting stress was tested (Model III). The result of model III showed that there were non-significant paths between the variables, and especially the SRMR and RMSEA values were not acceptable ( $\chi^2$  (26, N = 208) = 86.30,  $p < .001$ ; GFI =.92; CFI =.93; TLI =.88; RMSEA =.106; SRMR =.096; C.I. [.082, .131]; AIC =144.29; ECVI =.69). Another alternative is the role of parenting stress as a mediator between dispositional mindfulness, self-compassion, and mindful parenting (Model IV). As a result of Model IV, the fit indices were not acceptable, in particular the SMR and RMSEA values  $\chi^2$  (27, N = 208) = 80.60,  $p < .001$ ; GFI =.92; CFI =.94; TLI =.90; RMSEA =.098; SRMR =0.94; C.I. [.074, .123]; AIC =136.59; ECVI =.66].

### **Figure 1.**

*Standardized Factor Loadings for The Structural Model II.*



Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  CPar Parcel of self compassion; MPar Parcel of mindfulness; PPar Parcel of Mindful parenting; Spar Parcel of parenting stress

Among all the models, Model II demonstrated a superior fit up to the current date (Figure 1). Eventually, the model suggests that mindful parenting serves as a mediator in explaining the relationship between self-compassion, dispositional mindfulness, and parenting stress.

### Result and Discussion

Raising a child encompasses a multitude of difficulties, resulting in elevated levels of stress. Parenting stress refers to the adverse emotions experienced by both the child and parent. Parents in many contexts and from all sociodemographic groups can experience this type of stress (de Maat et al., 2021). The findings revealed that mindfulness in parenting was found to have a mediating role between self-compassion, dispositional mindfulness, and parenting stress. The findings indicate that greater levels of self-compassion and dispositional mindfulness could potentially enhance the practice of mindful parenting, consequently leading to a potential reduction in parenting-related stress.

The findings indicate that elevated self-compassion and dispositional mindfulness may lead to greater engagement in mindful parenting, which, subsequently, could reduce parenting stress. In this current research, self-compassion had a significant association with parenting stress, and this relationship was mediated by mindful parenting (only indirectly through mindful parenting). There are consistent research results that have found that self-compassion increases mindfulness in parenting (Gouveia et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2020). Mindful

parenting can be described as engaging in focused and attentive listening actively and being fully attuned to their emotions, being accepting, and not judging the child's emotions and thoughts, being able to respond to the child's behavior effectively and without reacting, being able to regulate oneself, and being compassionate for oneself and the child when interacting with a child (Duncan, 2007; Duncan et al., 2009). As seen from the theoretical point of view of the concept, to be a mindful parent, the parent should adopt self-compassion. In this research, mindful parenting, which develops because of increased self-compassion, also reduces parenting stress. Fernandes et al. (2021) longitudinal research result showed that postpartum mothers who demonstrate kindness and self-compassion toward themselves are more inclined to exhibit mindful parenting behaviors, leading to a lower parenting stress level and, as a result, cognitive responses, and healthier emotional responses to their infant. In their study, Lathren et al. (2021) conducted a thorough analysis of existing literature on close relationships and self-compassion. A significant correlation was discovered between greater levels of self-compassion and positive parenting behavior, less stress, and improved coping abilities among parents. Another noteworthy result was that elevated dispositional mindfulness was negatively correlated with parenting stress. This indicates that persons who possess a higher degree of dispositional mindfulness are more likely to have reduced levels of parenting-related stress, both directly and indirectly via mindful parenting. Mindfulness can also be said to contribute to personal development to a great extent. An individual experiences the present moment because mindfulness occurs now. Being in the present moment refers to the act of living-right now rather than only living for the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Being preoccupied with a specific event or memory from the past or having concerns and dreams about the future keeps the individual away from the present moment. While people are fulfilling several tasks at once or when they are upset due to their concerns, their attention and awareness of the present moment weaken (Brown & Ryan, 2003). A parent can fully focus on the present moment during his relationship with his child. One of the dimensions of mindfulness is acceptance (Baer, 2003; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown et al., 2007), and another is being non-judgmental (Baer, 2003; Baer et al., 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown et al., 2007). Being curious, tolerant, and accepting of his experiences (Bishop et al., 2004) and not criticizing or judging one's own emotions and thoughts are of primary importance (Baer et al., 2006). Also, Corthorn and Milicic (2016) discovered that low levels of parenting stress are the main predictor of being a mother who does not make any judgments and accepts herself as she is. When a parent is in the present moment of his relationship with his child and is accepting and avoids being judgmental, the result is less parenting stress.

Mindfulness might help individuals regulate their behaviors and minimize automatic behaviors that are unwittingly developed due to certain habits (Bishop et al., 2004). Acting intuitively and automatically means a low level of mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness also contributes to individuals' attempts to regulate their emotions. Thanks to emotion regulation, individuals take problems less personally and manage their stress more effectively; they act non-reactively when angered or inhibited, and their emotions and thoughts flow more smoothly (Gambrel & Piercy, 2015). Mindfulness also increases individuals' emotional awareness, which might help them think before they display automatic reactions. Thus, parents use their self-regulation skills while interacting with their children

(Gouveia et al., 2016). In this respect, we might conclude that emotional awareness and self-regulation skills reduce parenting stress levels. Indeed, the studies that found that mindfulness alleviates parenting stress (Chan & Lam, 2017; Corthorn & Milicic, 2016; Gouveia et al., 2016) align with the findings of the present study.

Mindfulness involves an individual's present-moment focus on internal experiences, his awareness, acceptance, non-judgmentalness and non-reactivity. Intrapersonal mindfulness contributes to the development of interpersonal mindfulness. In their research, Corthorn & Milicic (2016) investigated the association between mindfulness and mindfulness in parenting, revealing a robust link between the two variables, particularly regarding parental stress. To clarify, mindfulness is mostly associated with one's own stress levels, while mindful parenting is more focused on the parenting elements. The literature also lists some studies that found that mindfulness promotes interpersonal mindfulness, which, in turn, alleviates parenting stress. For instance, Gouveia et al. (2016) investigate parents with children aged 8 to 18 years. They propose a positive correlation between elevated levels of mindfulness and self-compassion and heightened levels of mindfulness in parenting, resulting in a reduction in parental stress levels. In the same way, in their research, Parent et al. (2016) discovered that engaging in mindfulness enhances the presence of mindfulness in parenting among parents of teenagers. This increase in mindfulness, in turn, results in fewer instances of negative parenting. A minimal degree of adverse parenting, thus, results in a reduced occurrence of difficulties in the lives of children. All these results and explanations align with the findings of the current study, and mindfulness and mindfulness in parenting are effective in alleviating parental stress for parents who have children between 9 and 17 years old. Research indicates that mindful parenting has a favorable impact on communication between adolescents and parents (Lippold et al., 2015; Coatsworth et al., 2015). Parent-adolescent conflict and miscommunication are known to increase parenting stress. Since effective communication can be achieved through mindful parenting, it is understandable that mindful parenting reduces stress. It can be said that mindful parenting is as important as mindfulness and self-compassion in reducing parenting stress, especially for families with children between 9 and 17 years old.

It is reported that mindfulness in parenting allows parents to focus on their children attentively, notice existing distractors, bring their attention back to their children, become aware of their own internal responses, and understand their point of view (Potharst et al. 2017). Mindfulness in parenting minimizes parenting stress, reactivity, impulsivity, and preoccupation. It improves parents' functional behaviors and alters their non-functional habits and schemes. In addition, it improves the functionality of marriage as well as the quality of partnership between spouses, which in turn promotes parent-child interaction (Bögels et al., 2010). Similarly, research by Moreira & Canavarro (2018) shows a medium-level significant negative correlation between parenting stress and the following dimensions of mindfulness in parenting: being fully present and attentive when listening to the child, demonstrating empathy and understanding toward the child's experiences and emotions, avoiding harsh judgment of one's own parenting abilities and choices, being attuned to and recognizing the child's emotional states, and maintaining self-control and composure when dealing with parenting challenges. Furthermore, the research findings suggest that elevated levels of self-

critical thinking in mothers are linked to increased parenting stress due to their lack of acceptance of their own parental performance without judgment. Corthorn and Milicic (2016) assert that mindful parenting exhibits a robust and consistent association with various facets of stress that are specific to the maternal role, encompassing parent-child interactions as well as perceptions about their child.

### **Limitations**

The study has several limitations. One of them is that the study was conducted with self-reported measures and a cross-sectional method. Using different methods (e.g., observations of parent-child interaction and child evaluation) may be valuable to examine the level of interpersonal mindfulness and parent stress. Furthermore, the research used a cross-sectional design, making the interpretation of the data challenging. To explore these relationships more comprehensively, employing longitudinal analysis, as recommended by Maxwell and Cole (2007), can be invaluable. It enables a more in-depth investigation of the mediating role of variables over time, providing a richer understanding of their dynamics. Furthermore, conducting experimental research, especially with interventions implemented over time, can unveil causal effects and the impact of time on these relationships, offering valuable insights into the processes at play. Finally, the distribution of men and women in the research sample is not homogeneous. The research can be repeated by increasing the number of male participants.

### **Implications**

The studies show that family-focused interventions that allow healthy parent-child relationships by benefiting from mindfulness theories and interventions improve parent-child relationships (Anand et al., 2021). The studies reveal that interventions carried out within the framework of mindfulness in parenting reduce parenting stress (Potharst et al., 2017). Using systematic and meta-analytic methodologies, Anand et al. (2021) conducted a thorough and comprehensive review to measure the efficacy of mindfulness-based programs for parents. The results showed that these programs had a modest impact on lowering parental stress. In a similar vein, a separate systematic review and meta-analysis carried out by Burgdorf et al. (2019) showed that mindfulness interventions had a modest level of effectiveness in reducing parental stress, especially when evaluated after a 2-month period. These findings highlight the potential benefits of mindfulness programs for parents in mitigating stress related to parenting responsibilities. Moreover, there is a strong correlation between self-compassion and healthy functioning in intimate relationships, namely within the setting of the family. It is important to mention that several studies examining the impact of self-compassion on mindful parenting or parental performance often use cross-sectional designs and depend on self-report measures (Lathren et al., 2021). Similarly, the results of the research support this trend, indicating that an elevation in both self-compassion and mindfulness leads to more thoughtful parenting and simultaneously decreases parental stress. This research highlights the importance of mindfulness, self-compassion, and mindful parenting in reducing parental stress. Enhancing

self-compassion and mindfulness treatments is crucial, as is examining the impact of mindful parenting on stress levels. Hence, self-compassion and mindfulness-based programs may serve as efficacious approaches to enhance mindful parenting and alleviate parental stress. Parents experiencing elevated stress levels may also be advised to consider self-compassion and mindfulness treatments. Especially in family and counseling centers, families' participation in these programs can be facilitated.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, a model of parental stress was examined in parents with children aged 9 to 17. The study's analysis offers data that supports the importance of mindful parenting in moderating the link between self-compassion, dispositional mindfulness, and parental stress. This is consistent with Duncan's (2007) model that mindful parenting develops as a consequence of heightened levels of mindfulness and self-compassion. As an individual's levels of mindfulness and self-compassion increase, their abilities in mindful parenting tend to improve, resulting in a decrease in parental stress. This study underscores the interconnectedness of these variables and their relations to parental stress in this specific demographic.

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