



The Effect of mindfulness-based parenting training on interpersonal mindfulness among mothers of adolescent girls

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Abstract

Mindfulness parenting involves parents be able to pay attention to their adolescent and their own reactions to statements and behaviors of adolescents without judgmental attitude. It is also expected that parents who have greater mindfulness in their interpersonal interactions with their adolescent also children would be more likely to exhibit discipline practices which are accordance to cultural norms for effective discipline. The study aimed to evaluate Mindfulness-based parenting training on interpersonal mindfulness among mothers of adolescent girls. The study population was all of mothers of high school adolescent girls in Tehran city. Participants were selected by using multistage cluster sampling method that 50 mothers were selected randomly. They were placed into the experimental group (N=25) and control group (N=25), also they completed questionnaire of Interpersonal Mindfulness interpersonal mindfulness in parenting scale (IEM-P) before and immediately after 8-weeks training. After intervention, covariance analysis indicated significant difference between the experimental and the control groups in Interpersonal Mindfulness. The results showed that mindfulness parenting had significant effect in increasing interpersonal mindfulness in mothers of experimental group. Interpersonal Mindfulness score mean improved from 29.16 to 32.72 in the experimental group and 0.39 of variance of individual differences in mother's interpersonal mindfulness related to mindfulness parenting training. The results showed that mindfulness-based parenting training was effective on interpersonal mindfulness in mothers of adolescent girls.

Keywords: Adolescent, Girl, Mindfulness, Parenting

Introduction

The recent decade has seen an upsurge in the use of mindfulness-based interventions which teach mindfulness skills to promote psychological and well-being health. Mindfulness is particular method of attention which was described by Kabat-Zinn [1] as; awareness that emerges

through paying attention on purpose in the present moment and non- unfolding of experience' judgmentally [2,3].

Mindfulness has received significant attention in different fields of psychology and medicine but it got little attention in research about

children and families [4]. Theoretically because of an increased ability to draw distinctions between separate cognitive and affective experiences, mindfulness practice over time may lead to greater cognitive complexity and increased emotional awareness [5]. Mindfulness has been associated with reduction in ruminative thinking [6,7] by allowing person to disengage from automatic train of thought and focus on the present moment [8]. Mindfulness allows for greater flexibility and accuracy in perception of what is happening in the moment (found through no longer being unaware), as well as greater acceptance and less reactivity to whatever is taking place on a somatic, cognitive, affective, or behavioral level (and therefore no longer avoidant). According to recent Western psychological theory, mindfulness is “receptive attention and awareness of present events and experience” which allows for full awareness of what is happening in the moment [9,10]. In this view, compatible with Eastern tradition, mindfulness is quality of consciousness posited to encompass both clarity of awareness and ability to flexibly shift between broad awareness and focused attention during moment by moment experience [11].

Mindfulness parenting has been described as fundamental parenting skill or practice [12,13] and it has been proposed that fostering everyday mindfulness in the context of parenting and parent training is one avenue for improving the effect of parenting interventions [14]. Mindfulness parenting defined here as “awareness that emerges by g attention, on purpose, in the present moment and unfolding of experience moment by moment nonjudgmentally” [15] and unfolding of social context of parent–child relationships [16].

Research about determinants of parenting indicates that complex array of self and child-oriented cognitions and emotions include social cognitions [17] and perceived parenting stress [18] which can influence parenting behavior so it may affect adolescent outcomes. In addition, the effects of parent-child relationships can be bidirectional and are nested by multiple

layers of ecological context (e.g., parents’ work and other family relationships [19]. If the key developmental task of adolescence is not successfully negotiated by parents, (e.g., if discipline practices become inconsistent or parental monitoring efforts become ineffective) adolescents may be placed at higher risk for negative outcomes (e.g., conduct problems) [20].

The first significant discussion of use of mindfulness parenting was published by Jon Kabat-Zinn [21]. This pioneering work described their recommendations for extending and integrating into family's life that practices of mindfulness had been taught for Stress Reduction Clinic in University of Massachusetts Medical Center. The Kabat-Zinns [22] suggested daily practice of mindfulness parenting that should take into account the change developmental needs of the child from birth to young adulthood. A next step was taken by Dumas [23] in a groundbreaking paper that described mindfulness training as one avenue for parents to damage the “automaticity” of maladaptive parenting interactions. There have been very few published studies that evaluated the effects of mindfulness parenting programs, although mindfulness parenting is growing in appeal as focus for clinical practice with families, [24]. Mothers’ satisfaction with their parenting skills and with their parenting interactions increased markedly when they began using mindfulness on a daily basis and remained high [24,25]. The main purpose of this research is to study the Effect of mindfulness parenting training on interpersonal mindfulness in mothers of adolescent girls.

Mindfulness parenting is hypothesized to be comprised of three facets that are expected to be important for understanding quality parenting of adolescents: a) awareness and present-centered attention directed toward one’s internal experience and toward one’s adolescent during parenting interactions; and b) openness and nonjudgmental receptivity to adolescent’s thoughts and emotions; and c) non-reactivity to culturally-accepted

adolescent behavior. The mindfulness parenting is expected to predict certain other dimensions of parenting (e.g., specific parenting practices) and would be related to indicators of adolescent adjustment such as; problem behaviors and adaptive functioning. Mindfulness parenting is conceptualized as higher order construct that encompasses parent social cognitions, meta-cognition, emotions and meta-emotion taking place in parenting context. This construct is intended to extend the internal process of mindfulness to the interpersonal interactions during parenting. As such, assessment of mindfulness in parenting is hypothesized to capture qualities of the cognitive-affective interface occurring for parents during parenting interactions with their adolescents [26,27]. Parents who are more mindfulness will exhibit less bias in their attributions due to greater openness to and non-judgmental acceptance of their adolescent children's behavior. This is not to suggest that parents will accept all behaviors that their children exhibit, but more mindfulness parents are expected to have more reasonable expectations of their children that are in accordance with accepted cultural norms. Mindfulness parenting involves parents being able to pay attention to their adolescent and their own reactions to statements and behaviors of adolescents without judgmental attitude [28]. Mindfulness parenting suggests that the quality of parent-child relationships will be improved by promoting parents' ability to bring present-moment awareness to their parenting that includes listening with full attention, bringing emotional awareness and nonjudgmental acceptance to their parenting interactions, and practicing self-regulation and compassion in their parenting relationships. Mindfulness parenting is not simply new skill-set; it is new epistemological orientation. In another study of mindfulness parenting training results showed significant increase of mindfulness awareness and reduction of parental over reactivity [28]. Research about mindfulness interventions especially for parents has barely begun while research on mindfulness approaches with adults has occurred for decades and

mindfulness research with children and adolescents is developing. Mindfulness parenting involves parents being able to pay attention to their adolescent and their own reactions to statements and behaviors of adolescents without judgmental attitude. If parents have this ability so it may be reasonable to expect that they will then be able to maintain consistency in their discipline practices, adequately monitor their adolescent, improve the quality of time spent with their adolescent, and maintain a warm and affectionate relationship. It is also expected that parents who incorporate greater mindfulness in their interpersonal interactions with their adolescent children will be more likely to exhibit discipline practices that are in accordance with cultural norms for effective discipline. Interpersonal mindfulness will capture three factors of mindfulness parenting: present-centered awareness and attention; non-judgmental receptivity; and no reactivity—and these three facets will represent a higher order factor of mindfulness parenting [28]. This research aimed to assess the effect of mindfulness parenting training on interpersonal mindfulness in mothers of adolescent girls. This study provided evidence that mindfulness parenting among mothers is important for understanding specific parenting behaviors and certain adolescent outcomes for certain youth. This is an important first step in the extension of mindfulness to the interpersonal domain of parent-child relationship and expands new vision to future study of mindfulness parenting.

Method

The present study is semi-experimental research with control group and pretest-posttest design which was conducted among mothers of high school adolescent girls in Tehran. The study population includes all of the mothers of high school adolescent girls in 2013-2014 in Tehran city. According to Duncan's study [28], sample size of the study was estimated 25 people in each group based on the formula

for comparison of two means, confidence interval of 95%, dropout rate of 10%, and test power/rigor of 90% (regarding mean and standard deviation of 4.1 and 39.90 for the experimental group, and 4.0 and 37.47 for the control group). Furthermore, the participants were selected by using multistage cluster sampling. 2 Educational regions of Tehran were selected randomly and then 2 female high schools were chosen randomly and 50 mothers were selected randomly. They were placed into the experimental group (N=25) and control group (N=25) randomly. Inclusion criteria of selecting participants were explained as following: 1) age of the mothers was between 30-50; 2) their social-economic statuses were middle-class. Exclusion criteria of selecting participants were as: 1) students suffer severe physical illnesses and mental disorders. 2) Drug abuser students or parents.

3) single parent's students. Participants were chosen after assessing their documents, demographic information, and mental status. Privacy of the information about families was retained. Needed conditions and facilities such as the place, class arrangement, and schedule were provided in order to implement the research. Experimental group received the intervention, but control group received no treatment. Before receiving the intervention, a pre-test was given. A posttest was also conducted after intervention finished. Basic demographic information (e.g., education, income) was assessed by using standard items. Participants were measured before and immediately after Mindfulness Parenting Training. Mindfulness Parenting is based on adaptation of Mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT). It introduces all of the formal meditation practices such as the body scan; mindfulness of the breath, body, sounds and thoughts, and emotions; choice less awareness; mindfulness seeing; mindfulness walking and yoga in roughly the same progression. 8 mindfulness parenting training sessions were held for mothers in

experimental group.

The content of the sessions for Mindfulness Parenting training included the following: First session: Introduction, Automatic Parenting, awareness of each moment, getting to know each other, raisin exercise, body scan. Second session: the description of Beginner's Mind Parenting, perception vs. interpretation, sitting meditation. Third session: the education of reconnecting with Our Body as Parent, watching the body during parenting stress, mindfulness seeing. Fourth session: teaching Responding Rather than Reacting to Parenting Stress and 3min breathing space. Fifth session: Description of Parenting Patterns, recognizing patterns, responding with acceptance to self and child. Sixth Session: Teaching Conflict and Parenting, dealing with difficult emotion. Seventh session: Introduction of Love and Limits, rupture and repair exercise for parent-child conflicts. Eighth Session: Describing A Mindfulness Path through Parenting, what has been learned and the future. Both groups completed Interpersonal Mindfulness in parenting scale. Parents' interpersonal mindfulness was measured with the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting scale (IEM-P) [28]. The IEM-P contained 10 items regarding three domains: present-centered awareness and attention (4 items); non-judgmental receptivity (3 items) and non-reactivity (3 items)—and these three facets were expected to represent a higher order factor of mindfulness parenting. Researchers reported the reliability of this scale to be 0.72. Interpersonal mindfulness was measured by 10 items with appropriate internal consistency coefficient and test-retest coefficient ($\alpha=0.86$, $p=0.001$, $r=0.91$) [28]. Basic demographic information (e.g., education) was assessed by using standard items. The questionnaires were filled out in the researcher presence. None of the information will be released individually and the respondents were anonymous and all the information was kept confidential in

this study. The participants were free to leave the study at any time.

Descriptive and inferential analysis of data was conducted by SPSS-20. Mean and standard deviation were used at descriptive level and covariance analysis test of ANCOVA was utilized to eliminate the effects of pre-test at inferential level.

Results

In this study, the mean age of the participants was 35.5 ± 0.82 . Their education level was from Diploma to Bachelor; include 18 participants with high school diploma (27.9%), 32 participants with Bachelor’s degree (73%). In terms of employment, 6 participants (14%) were unemployed and 42 participants (86%) were employed (Table 1).

Table1 Demographic characteristics of mothers

| Demographic characteristics | Frequency | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|----|
| Age | 30-39 | 38 |
| | 40-50 | 14 |
| Education level | Diploma | 18 |
| | Bachelor’s degree | 32 |
| Employment Status | Unemployed | 6 |
| | Employed | 42 |

Table2 Means and standard deviation (SD) for interpersonal mindfulness and it’s subscales in participants

| | Group | | Mean | SD |
|--|--------------|----------|-------|------|
| Interpersonal mindfulness (Totally) | Experimental | pretest | 29.16 | 2.70 |
| | | posttest | 32.72 | 3.37 |
| | Control | pretest | 28.12 | 3.77 |
| | | posttest | 27.76 | 2.98 |
| Awareness & Present-Centered Attention | Experimental | pretest | 12.64 | 2.05 |
| | | posttest | 14.60 | 2.16 |
| | Control | pretest | 12.40 | 2.25 |
| | | posttest | 11.88 | 1.92 |
| Non-judgment | Experimental | pretest | 7.92 | 0.90 |
| | | posttest | 9.04 | 1.74 |
| | Control | pretest | 7.76 | 1.30 |
| | | posttest | 8.92 | 1.25 |
| Non-reactivity | Experimental | pretest | 8.60 | 1.25 |
| | | posttest | 10.20 | 2.10 |
| | Control | pretest | 7.96 | 1.13 |
| | | posttest | 8.12 | 1.50 |

As Table 2, means of experimental group had significant increase in posttest in interpersonal mindfulness and its subscales. According to Kolmogorov-Smirnov ($p=0.81$ Statistic and $p=0.80$) and Levine ($F=0.97$ and $p=0.83$), box

($F=1.33$ and $p=0.23$) Mauchly and Sphericity ($p=0.60$), based on a set of assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variances, and covariance, there were the requirements for use of ANCOVA test.

Table 3 *The results of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) for the effectiveness of mindfulness parenting on interpersonal mindfulness in mothers:*

| Variable | Statistical indicator | SS | df | MS | F | P | Effect size |
|--|-----------------------|----------|----|--------|-------|------|-------------|
| Interpersonal mindfulness (Totally) | pretest | 134.86 | 1 | 137.86 | 17.96 | 0.01 | 0.27 |
| | group | 229.63 | 1 | 229.63 | 30.59 | 0.01 | 0.39 |
| | error | 352.73 | 47 | 7.50 | | | |
| | total | 46518.00 | 50 | | | | |
| Awareness & Present-Centered Attention | pretest | 41.09 | 1 | 41.09 | 12.46 | 0.05 | 0.21 |
| | group | 77.73 | 1 | 77.73 | 23.58 | 0.05 | 0.34 |
| | error | 148.30 | 45 | | | | |
| | total | 9058.00 | 50 | | | | |
| Non-judgment | pretest | 0.96 | 1 | 1.96 | 0.81 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| | group | 0.68 | 1 | 0.68 | 0.29 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| | error | 106.80 | 45 | 2.37 | | | |
| | total | 4143.00 | 50 | | | | |
| Non-reactivity | pretest | 0.16 | 1 | 0.16 | 0.05 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| | group | 34.81 | 1 | 34.81 | 11.73 | 0.01 | 0.20 |
| | error | 133.47 | 47 | 2.96 | | | |
| | total | 4410.00 | 50 | | | | |

According to Table 3 results showed that mindfulness parenting had significant effect in increasing interpersonal mindfulness in mothers of experimental group and 0.39 of variance of individual differences in mother's interpersonal mindfulness related to mindfulness parenting training.

Discussion

This study evaluated effect of Mindfulness Parenting training on interpersonal mindfulness in mothers of adolescent girls in 50 parents. The main findings of the study were: 1) there was almost no drop-out (1%); 2) improvements occurred on interpersonal mindfulness in experimental group ; 3) improvements occurred on Awareness & Present-Centered Attention subscale in experimental group; 4) improvements occurred on Non-reactivity subscale in experimental group.

The improvements in interpersonal mindfulness were remarkable. Becoming aware of parenting stress and parental automaticity, practicing here-and-now nonjudgmental attention for the child, practicing parental non-reactivity and taking better care of oneself as parent may all contribute to more functional parenting styles such as less rejecting less overprotective and

more autonomy encouraging parenting [5,6]. The improvement in present-centered attention is also remarkable. Current research showed that the goals of mindfulness parenting programs are to facilitate parents to bring non-judgmental, here-and-now attention, and intentionality in parenting. Studies on Mindfulness parenting training suggested that the quality of parent-child relationships will be improved by promoting parents' ability to bring present-moment awareness to their parenting that includes listening with full attention, bringing emotional awareness [4]. Improvement on non-reactivity reflected in mother's reduced reactivity in front of their adolescents was another result of the course. And also enhanced awareness and reduced reactivity of the mothers that followed the course appeared to have influenced the parent-child relationship [5].

Mindfulness Parenting is relatively new concept and for this reason no more than a few case studies and open trials have been conducted on the effects on parents and children. Coatsworth et al. [29] evaluated the efficacy of the Strengthening Families Program that added mindfulness principles and practices to the original program and a

delayed intervention control group. Results showed the parent program that added mindfulness principles generally demonstrated stronger effects on maternal self-report measures of Mindfulness Parenting and mothers and youth reported parent–youth relationships. Another preventive study evaluated the effect of Mindfulness Parenting program on 12 recently divorced or separated parents [4] in an uncontrolled open trial. Potential effects were measured by using questionnaires about the participants' mindfulness. However parents reported that they considered the program overall helpful and thought that it positively affected their relationship with their child. Improvement on awareness in this study is very important. Studies of mindfulness parenting training showed significant increasing of mindfulness awareness and reduction of parental over reactivity [21].

Collectively, the present findings represent an addition to the body of knowledge regarding the parenting of young teens by demonstrating initial evidence of “mindfulness parenting” as a valid and reliable parenting construct. Thus, the current study provided evidence that mindfulness parenting among mothers is important for understanding specific parenting behaviors and certain adolescent outcomes for certain youth. This is an important first step in the extension of mindfulness to interpersonal domain of parent-child relations and opens the door to future study of mindfulness parenting. The current findings suggest that mindfulness parenting may increase intervention efficacy in changing specific parenting behaviors [28].

Results of the present study support the suggestion by Dumas [18] that mindfulness-based intervention techniques may have a great potential for increasing parenting effect by increasing mindfulness in parenting interactions.

Since in this study it has been shown that mindfulness-based parenting training is effective in increasing Interpersonal mindfulness in mothers of adolescents, so it is recommended that health and counseling centers throughout the country keep in mind this

type of training. The limitations of this study can be outlined as: Since this study deals with the education of the limited number of people, conducting the studies with the wider samples leads to more generalized results. Because of the limitations of this study such as the time of subjects and administrative constraints and high risk of sample loss especially in the control group, it can be offered to conduct the follow-up period.

Conclusion

Mindfulness Parenting Training can improve Interpersonal Mindfulness in mothers of adolescent girls. Thus, it can be considered by clinicians and families as simple, effective and low-cost method to improve parent-child relationships.

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Contribution

Study design: MA

Data collection and analysis: MY

Manuscript preparation: MY, AN, AA, GM

Conflict of Interest

"The authors declare that they have no competing interests."

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