

Mindful Parenting and Psychological Well-being in Single Mothers

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ABSTRACT

Single mothers face various challenges that can potentially worsen their psychological well-being. This study aims to examine the relationship between mindful parenting and psychological well-being in single mothers. The hypothesis posited a positive relationship between mindful parenting and psychological well-being among single mothers. Participants included mothers who have been the sole caregivers following a divorce or the death of a spouse, within a timeframe of one to five years. Data collection was conducted using the Mindfulness In Parenting Questionnaire (MIPQ) and a psychological well-being scale. The method of data analysis employed was the product moment correlation. Results revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.413 with $p=0.000$ ($p < 0.050$). These findings indicate a positive relationship between mindful parenting and psychological well-being, suggesting that higher levels of mindful parenting are associated with higher levels of psychological well-being, and conversely, lower levels of mindful parenting are associated with lower levels of psychological well-being in single mothers.

Keywords : mindful parenting, psychological well-being, single mothers

Introduction

Single motherhood is a role filled with challenges and demands that increase the burden and psychological issues these women face. Single mothers encounter multiple challenges including the pressure of multiple roles, parenting stress, financial difficulties, lack of social support, and time management problems. Research suggests that single mothers generally have poorer health compared to those with partners (Rousou et al., 2013).

The stress faced by single mothers tends to be high due to the numerous roles they need to fulfill, such as being the sole breadwinner, caregiver, and decision-maker for their children. Parenting stress is likely to occur in single mothers due to exposure to unique environmental stressors (Copeland & Harbaugh, 2005). Additionally, single mothers are at a higher risk of experiencing increased anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and alcohol use problems (Kim et al., 2018; Kim & Kim, 2020; Kong et al., 2017).

Financial difficulties are a common issue for single mothers, as they bear the primary responsibility for supporting the family (Kim et al., 2018). Limited financial resources and potentially no financial support from a partner can lead to stress and feelings of insecurity (Stack & Meredith, 2018).

Social support is often lacking for single mothers (Rousou et al., 2013), resulting in a lack of emotional support and practical household help, which can cause feelings of isolation and impact parenting (Taylor & Conger, 2017). Moreover, single mothers often face prejudice and discrimination (Youngblut et al., 2000).

The myriad of challenges experienced by single mothers leads to lower quality of life and life satisfaction, and poorer health conditions compared to mothers with partners (Kim & Kim, 2020; Meier et al., 2016; Rousou et al., 2013). These issues result in lower psychological well-being (Meier et al., 2016).

Ryff (1989) defines psychological well-being as an individual's ability to accept oneself, make independent decisions, regulate one's behavior, have life goals, find meaning in life, create and manage an environment suited to one's needs, and have the desire to explore and develop oneself. Ryff and Keyes (1995) explained that living well is not merely about being satisfied with life, but also about how an individual integrates self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, mastery over life, and self-determination.

Low psychological well-being in single mothers can lead to an inability to maintain a life similar to when they had a husband, poor relationships with others, and a lack of future life goals. This low well-being can have negative effects on physical and mental health (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2019). Therefore, psychological well-being is crucial for single mothers to foster good relationships with others, accept their strengths and weaknesses, be independent, master their environment, and develop personally to achieve future life goals.

The presence of children can affect a parent's psychological well-being (Ryff, 2014). Parenting can enhance an adult's psychological well-being, especially if the child is well (Ryff, 2014). Thus, single mothers with high psychological well-being will likely view parenting as important and commit to nurturing their children effectively.

Mindful parenting, recommended for fostering secure parent-child relationships (Kiong, 2015), involves continuous and purposeful parenting actions that increase parental awareness and presence (Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 2014). Mothers skilled in mindful parenting are likely to experience less parenting stress and are more able to appreciate their children's opinions and actions (Mubarok, 2016). Research shows that mindful parenting can reduce the daily parenting stress (Nurhamidah & Retnowati, 2018).

Implementing mindful parenting has been shown to reduce parenting stress in mothers of children with normal development (Gani & Kumalasari, 2019; Kumalasari & Fourianalistyawati, 2020) and can increase happiness, reduce anxiety, stress, and depression (Fuller & Fitter, 2020). If practiced consistently, mindful parenting can lead to effective communication and foster positive family relationships (Sofyan, 2018).

Given the background outlined, this study poses the question: Is there a positive relationship between mindful parenting and psychological well-being in single mothers? The aim of this research is to explore this relationship.

Methods

In this research, we adopted a correlational design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the relationship between mindful parenting and psychological well-being among single mothers. The study focused on a specific demographic—single mothers who had been divorced (either due to the death of a spouse or separation) within the last one to five years and were actively parenting one or more children. Using social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter for recruitment, we successfully enrolled 123 participants who met these criteria.

Data collection was facilitated using two primary instruments: (1) the Mindfulness in Parenting Questionnaire (MIPQ) and (2) the Psychological Well-being Scale. The Mindfulness in Parenting Questionnaire (MIPQ), originally developed by Prihandini et al. (2019), is based on the principles of mindful parenting outlined by Kabat-Zinn and Kabat-Zinn (2014). Adapted for an Indonesian context, the MIPQ comprises 13 items. Each item is assessed on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This scale has demonstrated excellent reliability, evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.965.

The Psychological Well-being Scale, developed based on Ryff's (1995) psychological well-being dimensions, was psychometrically validated in Indonesia by Fadhil (2021). It includes 28 items, with responses also measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The internal consistency of the scale varied, with coefficients ranging from 0.543 to 0.828, reflecting moderate to high reliability.

The questionnaires were distributed electronically via Google Forms to participants through the aforementioned social media channels. Before participation, each participant was provided with detailed information about the study's aims and procedures, and electronic consent was obtained. The collected data were then subjected to Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between mindful parenting and psychological well-being among single mothers.

Results

The participant pool for this study comprised 123 single mothers. A substantial majority of the participants had undergone a divorce while still alive, as opposed to being widowed, with 65.9% reporting such a status. The distribution of ages at the time of divorce was relatively even, with the majority of divorces occurring within the first and second years of marriage, each accounting for 22.8%..

Table 1. Participant characteristic (N=123)

Characteristic	n	%
Divorce status		
Divorced (Alive)	81	65.9
Widowed	42	34.1
Years since divorce		
1 year	28	22.8
2 years	28	22.8
3 years	24	19.5
4 years	19	15.4
5 years	24	19.5

Before hypothesis testing, normality and linearity tests were conducted. The normality test confirmed that the data distribution for the Mindfulness in Parenting Questionnaire (MIPQ) and the psychological well-being scale adhered to a normal distribution. The linearity test revealed a linear relationship between psychological well-being and mindful parenting, with an F-value of 24.378 and a significance level of $p < 0.001$.

The correlation analysis using Pearson's product moment yielded a correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) of 0.413 with a p-value of <0.001 . This result indicates a positive relationship between mindful parenting and psychological well-being among single mothers. Interpretatively, higher levels of mindful parenting are associated with higher levels of psychological well-being. Conversely, lower levels of mindful parenting correlate with lower levels of psychological well-being among single mothers.

Discussions

The findings from this study affirm that mindful parenting is significantly correlated with psychological well-being among single mothers. This correlation is consistent with previous research suggesting that individuals who are capable of focusing their attention and awareness on their present circumstances exhibit higher levels of psychological well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindful parenting, which involves a conscious approach to both parenting and personal emotional awareness, can diminish parenting stress and enhance a parent's emotional understanding of their child (Townshend et al., 2016). Tegawati (2016) found that parents who practice mindful parenting were better able to control emotions, accept their own and their children's conditions, and listen to their children, which are key aspects of psychological well-being.

These results provide significant contributions to understanding the relationship between mindful parenting and psychological well-being in single mothers. The findings indicate that mindful parenting practices are associated with higher levels of psychological well-being. Recognizing the unique psychological challenges faced by single mothers, including the dual

pressures of managing childcare responsibilities while maintaining emotional and financial stability, the impact of mindful parenting practices becomes particularly salient (Agnafors et al., 2019; Kim & Kim, 2020; Stack & Meredith, 2017).

Mindful parenting, which entails full awareness and acknowledgment of both the child's needs and the parent's reactions and emotions, appears to be beneficial in meeting the needs of single mothers. These practices may help single mothers manage stress, regulate emotions, and foster better relationships with their children. By feeling more emotionally connected to their children and reducing stress levels, single mothers can experience an overall increase in psychological well-being (Fuller & Fitter, 2020).

Mindful parenting practices reduce stress by teaching the ability to remain present in the moment and cope with emerging stressful feelings. By responding rather than reacting impulsively to situations, single mothers can diminish emotional tension that may disrupt psychological well-being.

Additionally, mindfulness in parenting helps single mothers recognize and manage negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, or exhaustion. By acknowledging these emotions without judgment or suppression, single mothers can avoid the accumulation of negative emotional states that can deteriorate psychological well-being (McKee et al., 2017).

Single mothers may feel guilty for not having enough time for their children or feel inadequate in providing sufficient attention. Mindful parenting teaches self-acceptance and enhances empathy towards oneself, which can help alleviate feelings of guilt and improve well-being (Burgdorf et al., 2022).

This study aligns with prior research identifying the benefits of mindful parenting practices in various populations (Donovan et al., 2022; Duncan et al., 2009). Developing the ability to be fully present in interactions with children and manage daily feelings and stresses can have a broad positive impact on psychological well-being.

The implications of this study suggest the development of psychological support programs focused on enhancing mindful parenting skills for single mothers. Such programs could assist single mothers in managing stress, regulating emotions, and improving psychological well-being. These could take the form of workshops, classes, or group therapy sessions offering practical guidance on implementing mindful parenting practices in daily life.

Mindful parenting can serve as a potent preventive tool to mitigate the risk of poor psychological well-being among single mothers. By helping single mothers manage stress, emotions, and develop better connections with their children, these practices can reduce the risk of psychological disorders such as depression or anxiety.

This study employed an online sampling method via social media, which could introduce bias in respondent selection, as only individuals with higher technological access and skills might participate. Additionally, generalizing the findings to the entire population of single mothers

might be limited, given that the characteristics of the respondents may not represent the entire population.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between mindful parenting and psychological well-being in single mothers. Specifically, higher levels of mindful parenting are associated with higher levels of psychological well-being. Conversely, lower levels of mindful parenting correlate with lower psychological well-being among single mothers.

Given these findings, the development of training programs or workshops focused on mindful parenting practices could be highly beneficial. Such programs can assist single mothers in developing the skills and awareness necessary for child-rearing, which in turn positively impacts their psychological well-being. Disseminating information about the benefits and practices of mindful parenting through various channels, including social media, seminars, and educational literature, could further aid single mothers in becoming more conscious and engaged in positive parenting practices.

Future studies should delve deeper into understanding the specific mechanisms linking mindful parenting to psychological well-being. Mediating and moderating factors that influence this relationship could be explored further. Additionally, future research should consider using a more diverse and representative sample. Employing random or stratified sampling methods could help reduce bias in respondent selection. Moreover, utilizing various communication platforms to distribute questionnaires could reach a broader population.

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Not applicable

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