

The Effectiveness of Mindfulness Training for Mothers on Parenting Stress and the Quality of the Parent–Child Relationship in Families with a Child with Autism

Farbod Amin. Anaraki^{1*}

1. Department of Assessment and Measurement (Psychometrics), CT.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: farbod.aminanaraki@iau.ir

E d i t o r

Seyyed Mohsen Asgharinekah
Associate Professor, Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran
asghari-n@um.ac.ir

R e v i e w e r s

Reviewer 1: Hajar Torkan
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Isfahan, Iran. h.torkan@khuisf.ac.ir
Reviewer 2: Sara Nejatifar
Department of Psychology and Education of People with Special Needs, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.
Email: s.nejatifar@edu.ui.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction paragraph stating that “mothers, who are often the primary caregivers in many family systems, [are] under continuous psychological, emotional, and practical pressure,” the manuscript should avoid implying that caregiving burden is naturally or universally maternal. The authors should either support this sociocultural claim more carefully or rephrase it to indicate that the present study focused on mothers because, in the study context, they were more accessible as primary caregivers or were more involved in the child’s daily care.

In the Introduction paragraph beginning “Parenting a child with autism may differ from parenting typically developing children,” the comparison with typically developing children is useful but remains general. The authors should more explicitly explain why parenting stress in autism may be qualitatively different from general parenting stress, particularly in relation to chronicity, unpredictability of behavioral challenges, need for specialized services, social stigma, and future-oriented uncertainty regarding independence and adaptive functioning.

In the Introduction paragraph discussing the quality of the parent–child relationship, the sentence “A positive parent–child relationship is characterized by emotional warmth, acceptance, responsiveness, mutual engagement, conflict resolution, and the parent’s ability to recognize and respond sensitively to the child’s needs” is conceptually strong, but it should be aligned more closely with the instrument used in the study. Since the Parent–Child Interaction Questionnaire appears to assess conflict resolution and acceptance, the Introduction should emphasize these two dimensions more explicitly so that the theoretical framework corresponds to the operational measurement of the variable.

In the Introduction paragraph stating “Mindfulness has emerged as one of the promising psychological approaches for improving parental adjustment and parent–child interaction,” the rationale is persuasive, but the manuscript should distinguish between general mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindful parenting. The current intervention appears to include both MBSR elements and parenting-specific applications; therefore, the theoretical background should clarify whether the expected effects arise from stress reduction mechanisms, mindful parenting mechanisms, or a combination of both.

In the Methods section under Study Design and Participants, the sentence “The present study was applied in terms of its objective and quasi-experimental in terms of its implementation method” should be revised for publication style. A clearer formulation would be: “This applied study used a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design with a two-month follow-up and a control group.” This revision would reduce redundancy and improve methodological clarity.

In the Study Design and Participants section, the manuscript states that “30 eligible mothers were selected through purposive sampling and were then randomly assigned.” This distinction is important, but the authors should clarify that the study involved nonprobability recruitment followed by random allocation. The phrase “randomly assigned” should not be interpreted as random sampling from the population; therefore, the sampling and allocation procedures should be described separately and explicitly.

In the Study Design and Participants section, the sentence “The sample size was determined according to the quasi-experimental nature of the study, a 95% confidence level, a moderate effect size, and a statistical power of 0.83” is insufficiently detailed for reproducibility. The authors should report the software or formula used for sample size estimation, the assumed effect size value, the alpha level, the number of groups, the number of repeated measurements, and whether the calculation was based on a repeated-measures interaction effect.

In Table 2 of the Findings section, the F value for the group \times time interaction effect on parenting stress is reported as 38.71, whereas the later narrative in the original results states “ $F = 34.92$.” This discrepancy must be resolved. The authors should ensure that all values in the table and text are identical, including F statistics, degrees of freedom, p values, and effect sizes.

In the repeated-measures ANOVA table, the same sum of squares and mean square values are reported for the time effect and the group \times time interaction effect for parenting stress. Although this may theoretically occur in rare cases, it is statistically unusual and should be verified. The authors should recheck the SPSS output and ensure that the sums of squares, degrees of freedom, mean squares, and effect sizes were transcribed correctly.

In the assumptions paragraph, the manuscript states that the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, Levene’s test, and Mauchly’s test were examined and all assumptions were met, but no test statistics are reported. For methodological transparency, the authors should provide at least the key statistics and p values for these assumption tests, either in the text or in a supplementary table. This is particularly important because the sample size is small, and normality and sphericity assumptions can influence the interpretation of repeated-measures ANOVA.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the inclusion criteria paragraph, the criterion “obtaining a high score in parenting stress and a low score in the quality of the parent–child relationship at the screening stage” should be operationalized more rigorously. The manuscript later states that scores above or below the initial sample mean were used as cutoffs, but this procedure should be justified. Using the sample

mean as a clinical or eligibility threshold may be arbitrary unless supported by normative data, previous studies, or a clear methodological rationale.

In the Data Collection Tools section, the Autism Parenting Stress Index paragraph states that “Total scores range from 0 to 140,” while the items are described as being scored from 1 to 5 across 28 items. This creates a scoring inconsistency, because a 28-item scale scored from 1 to 5 should have a possible range of 28 to 140 unless items are scored from 0 to 5 or transformed. The authors should verify the original scoring procedure and correct the range accordingly.

In the Data Collection Tools section, the phrase “The Autism Parenting Stress Index developed by Fetroswan and Miles (2009)” should be checked for bibliographic accuracy and transliteration. The reference name appears unusual and may be a transliteration issue; the authors should ensure that the scale title, author names, year, and citation are consistent with the original source and with the reference list.

In the Parent–Child Interaction Questionnaire paragraph, the manuscript describes both the child form and parent form, but the present study appears to have collected data only from mothers. The authors should explicitly state which version was used in this study. If only the mother-report form was administered, the details about the child form and father form should be shortened or moved to a psychometric background sentence to avoid confusion about the actual measurement procedure.

In the Parent–Child Interaction Questionnaire paragraph, the sentence “The scores of mothers and fathers are calculated separately” is not directly applicable to the present sample if only mothers participated. The authors should revise this sentence to reflect the current study design, for example by stating that “In the present study, only the mother-report form was used, and higher scores indicated a more positive mother–child relationship.” This would improve coherence between the tool description and the participant characteristics.

In the Intervention Protocol section, the manuscript states that the content was “developed based on Kabat-Zinn’s mindfulness-based stress reduction model” and “simplified and implemented in eight 90-minute sessions according to the needs and conditions of mothers of children with autism.” The adaptation process should be described more scientifically. The authors should specify who adapted the protocol, whether experts reviewed the session content, whether a treatment manual was used, and how fidelity to the intervention protocol was monitored.

In the Intervention Protocol section, the eighth session description states that “At the end of the session, the posttest was administered.” This may introduce immediate post-session response bias, because participants may complete the posttest directly after a supportive group experience. The authors should clarify whether the posttest was administered immediately after the final session or in a separate assessment session, and they should discuss the possible influence of timing on self-report outcomes.

In the Findings section, the demographic table contains a likely numerical error in employment status: the experimental group is reported as “employed: 4 (26.67)” and “housewife: 1 (73.33).” Since the experimental group includes 15 participants, the number of homemakers should apparently be 11 rather than 1. This error should be corrected because demographic accuracy is essential for confirming baseline equivalence between groups.

In the Findings section, the marital status categories are reported as “married” and “single,” but the study population consists of mothers. The category “single” may not adequately capture the participants’ actual marital status and could refer to divorced, widowed, separated, or never-married mothers. The authors should revise the category labels to reflect the actual questionnaire options and avoid ambiguous or socially imprecise terminology.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.