

The Role of Mindfulness Parenting in Supporting Early Childhood Emotional Development

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of mindful parenting in supporting the emotional development of early childhood. Emotional regulation problems among young children, such as tantrums and behavioral difficulties, are often associated with less responsive parenting practices. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how parenting mindfulness contributes to children's emotional development and to identify the mechanisms underlying this relationship. This research employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design involving 245 parents of children aged 3–6 years. Data were collected using standardized instruments, including the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting Scale (IM-P), Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC), and Parent–Child Relationship Scale (PCRS). The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results indicate that mindful parenting has a significant positive effect on children's emotional development. Parents with higher levels of mindfulness tend to demonstrate greater emotional awareness, non-reactivity, and responsiveness, which foster a supportive emotional environment for children. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the parent–child relationship and parental emotion regulation significantly mediate this relationship. Children of mindful parents show better emotional regulation, with an improvement of approximately 18% compared to those with lower levels of mindful parenting. In conclusion, mindful parenting plays a crucial role in enhancing early childhood emotional development through improved parental emotional regulation and stronger parent–child relationships. This study highlights the importance of integrating mindful parenting practices into parenting education and early childhood programs.

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Introduction

Emotional development in early childhood is a crucial foundation for personality development, social skills, and future psychological well-being. During this phase, children enter a sensitive period where their ability to recognize, express, and regulate emotions begins to develop significantly. Emotional regulation not only impacts children's social relationships but is also linked to school readiness, prosocial behavior, and environmental adaptation (Korucu et al., 2022; Malik, 2022). However, various studies have shown that not all children are able to develop optimal emotional regulation, particularly when the parenting environment is less than supportive.

Families, especially parents, are the primary agents in children's emotional socialization. Parents act as role models, demonstrating how emotions are understood and managed in everyday life. In this context, the quality of parent-child interactions is a crucial determinant of children's emotional development. Responsive, warm, and consistent parenting styles have been shown to improve children's emotional regulation skills, while reactive or insensitive parenting can potentially increase emotional and behavioral problems (Bjørk et al., 2022; Cave-Freeman et al., 2022).

In the development of modern family psychology studies, the concept of mindful parenting, or mindfulness parenting, has emerged as a promising approach to improving parenting quality. Mindful parenting refers to the ability of parents to be fully present in interactions with their children, demonstrating awareness without judgment, and responding with empathy and positive self-regulation (Mera et al., 2026). This approach emphasizes not only the behavioral aspects of parenting but also encompasses the internal dimensions of parental awareness, including emotional management, attention, and acceptance of the child's experiences.

Several recent studies have shown that mindful parenting has a significant relationship with early childhood emotional development. A study by He et al. (2025) found that high levels of mindful parenting in mothers were positively correlated with preschoolers' emotional regulation abilities, with the quality of the parent-child relationship as an important moderating variable. This suggests that mindful parenting does not operate directly, but rather through relational mechanisms involving emotional closeness and minimal conflict in family relationships.

Furthermore, recent longitudinal research has shown that mindful parenting practices contribute to long-term improvements in children's self-regulation skills, including in children with special needs such as ADHD (Townshend et al., 2026). These findings indicate that mindfulness-based parenting has a lasting impact and can be a preventative intervention in addressing emotional developmental challenges.

Mindful parenting-based intervention approaches have also shown positive results. Muratori et al. (2026) found in their experimental study that a mindful parenting program increased awareness, non-reactive attitudes, and reduced negative parenting practices in parents. This increased parental capacity resulted in more supportive and adaptive interactions with children's emotional needs. Thus, mindful parenting not only benefits parents but also creates an emotional environment conducive to child development.

Furthermore, a recent systematic review suggests that mindful parenting is best understood as a relational process that shapes the emotional climate within the family, rather than simply a parenting technique (Al Adawiyah et al., 2026). Within this framework, parental emotion regulation is the primary mechanism mediating the relationship between mindful parenting and children's emotional development. Children learn through co-regulation, which is repeated interactions with parents that help them gradually understand and manage their emotions.

Other research also shows that mindful parenting contributes to various aspects of child development, including school readiness, social-emotional competence, and adaptability. Pratiwi and Jabar (2025) found that mindful parenting, along with emotional regulation, significantly influenced children's readiness to enter kindergarten. This confirms that mindful parenting has a broad impact on various domains of early childhood development.

However, there are several gaps in research related to mindful parenting. First, many studies still isolate variables such as parenting stress, parental emotion regulation, and child development without examining the integrative relationships between these variables. Second, most studies still use cross-sectional designs, thus failing to comprehensively explain causal relationships. Third, the dominance of Western cultural contexts in mindful parenting research limits the generalizability of findings to other cultural contexts, including Indonesia (Al Adawiyah et al., 2026).

This research problem stems from the need to more comprehensively understand how mindfulness parenting plays a role in supporting early childhood emotional development, particularly through parent-child interaction mechanisms. In the stressful context of modern life, many parents experience stress, emotional exhaustion, and limitations in responding sensitively to their children's needs. These conditions have the potential to hinder optimal emotional development in children if not balanced with effective parenting strategies.

As a solution, mindful parenting offers a holistic, self-awareness-based approach. By enhancing parents' ability to manage emotions, attend to their children's needs, and respond reflectively, this approach can strengthen the emotional bond between parents and children. This safe and responsive relationship is a crucial foundation for developing children's emotional regulation and healthy social-emotional development.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of mindfulness parenting in supporting early childhood emotional development and to identify the mechanisms underlying this relationship. It also aims to integrate recent empirical findings into a more comprehensive conceptual framework, particularly within a relevant cultural context.

Based on the theoretical and empirical studies that have been described, the hypotheses of this research are: (1) there is a positive relationship between mindfulness parenting and the emotional development of early childhood; (2) mindfulness parenting influences children's emotional regulation abilities by improving the quality of parent-child interactions; and (3) parental emotional regulation and the quality of parent-child relationships act as mediators in this relationship.

Thus, this research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in the development of a more effective mindfulness-based parenting model, as well as become a basis for interventions in improving the quality of emotional development in early childhood.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory correlational research design. This design was chosen to examine the relationships and influences between variables, specifically the role of mindfulness parenting in supporting early childhood emotional development. The quantitative approach allows for objective measurement of variables and analysis of causal relationships through measurable statistical models (He et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2025).

Types and Design of Research

This study used a cross-sectional survey design, where data was collected at a single point in time from respondents representing the study population. This design is widely used in mindful parenting studies to identify relationships between parenting variables and child development (Mera et al., 2025; Sansone, 2024).

Furthermore, this study adopted a mediation model, where parent-child relationship quality and parental emotion regulation were tested as mediators in the relationship between

mindful parenting and children's emotional development. This model is based on empirical findings showing that the influence of mindful parenting on children's emotional development occurs through relational and psychological mechanisms (He et al., 2025; Vernon & Moretti, 2025).

Research Variables

The variables in this study consist of:

- 1) Independent variable (X): Parenting Mindfulness
Defined as the ability of parents to be fully present, non-judgmental, and responsive to their children in everyday interactions (Mera et al., 2026).
- 2) Dependent variable (Y): Early Childhood Emotional Development
Includes children's ability to recognize, express, and regulate emotions adaptively (Sansone, 2024).
- 3) Mediator variable (M):
 - o Parental emotion regulation
 - o Quality of parent-child relationship

This mediator variable was chosen based on research showing that parental emotion regulation and relationship quality are the main mechanisms in the co-regulation process (Huang et al., 2025; Sansone, 2024).

Research Population and Sample

The population in this study was parents of young children (3–6 years old). This age group was selected based on the critical developmental phase in the development of children's emotional regulation (Korucu et al., 2022).

The sampling technique used probability sampling with a stratified random sampling method to ensure equitable representation based on socioeconomic background and region. This approach aligns with longitudinal research that uses stratification to increase external validity (Huang et al., 2025).

The sample size in this study is planned to be 200–300 respondents, referring to SEM analysis standards which require a minimum sample size of 5–10 times the number of indicators (Hair et al., 2022).

Method of Collecting data

The data in this study were collected using a structured questionnaire compiled based on standardized instruments, namely:

- 1) Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting Scale (IM-P)
Used to measure the level of mindful parenting in parents (Mera et al., 2026).
- 2) Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC)
To measure the emotional regulation abilities of early childhood
- 3) Parent-Child Relationship Scale (PCRS)
To measure the quality of parent-child relationships

Data collection was conducted both online and offline to increase participant response rates. This survey method is widely used in mindful parenting research because it is efficient in reaching a wide population (Pratiwi & Jabar, 2025).

In addition, the validity and reliability of the instrument were tested using the construct validity test and Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, with a minimum value of 0.70 as an indicator of good reliability (Hair et al., 2022).

Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis in this study used an inferential statistical approach with the aid of SEM-PLS (Structural Equation Modeling – Partial Least Squares) software. This method was chosen because it can examine complex relationships between variables while simultaneously testing mediation effects within a single model (Hair et al., 2022).

The analysis stages include:

- 1) Test Outer Model (Measurement Model)
 - Convergent validity test (loading factor > 0.7)
 - Discriminant validity test (AVE > 0.5)
 - Reliability test (Composite Reliability > 0.7)
- 2) Inner Model Test (Structural Model)
 - Path coefficient test
 - Significance test (bootstrapping)
 - Test of coefficient of determination (R^2)
- 3) Mediation Test

To determine whether mediator variables (parental emotional regulation and parent-child relationship) strengthen or bridge the relationship between mindfulness parenting and children's emotional development (He et al., 2025; Vernon & Moretti, 2025).

The use of SEM-PLS in mindful parenting research has been widely applied because it is flexible to sample size and non-normal data distribution (Huang et al., 2025).

Research Ethics

This study adhered to ethical research principles, including informed consent, data confidentiality, and data use for academic purposes only. This is crucial in research involving parents and children as subjects (Townshend et al., 2026).

Results and Discussion

Preparation Stage

The preparation phase of this research included instrument planning, data collection, initial data analysis, and formulation of research findings. During the planning phase, researchers developed standardized scale-based instruments such as the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting Scale (IM-P), the Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC), and the Parent-Child Relationship Scale (PCRS), which have been widely used in international research on mindful parenting and children's emotional development (Mera et al., 2026; He et al., 2025).

Next, the instrument's validity and reliability were tested before distributing the questionnaire. The test results showed that all indicators had loading factor values >0.70 and Cronbach's Alpha >0.70, thus declaring the instrument valid and reliable (Hair et al., 2022).

During the data collection phase, 245 respondents, parents of early childhood children (3–6 years old), were successfully collected. The characteristics of the respondents indicated that the majority were female (mothers) at 68%, with diverse educational backgrounds.

Descriptive analysis showed that the level of parenting mindfulness was in the moderate to high category (mean = 3.87), while children's emotional development was in the fairly good category (mean = 3.75). These findings align with research by Wen et al. (2024) which states that increased parenting mindfulness correlates with children's social-emotional development.

Implementation Stage and Analysis

The implementation phase involved data collection using questionnaires and limited observations of parent-child interactions. This process lasted approximately two months. Additionally, brief interviews were conducted to strengthen the interpretation of the quantitative data.

1) Assumption Test

Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests were conducted to check for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. The results showed that the data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), there was no multicollinearity ($VIF < 5$), and no evidence of heteroscedasticity was found.

2) Measurement Model Test (Outer Model)

The following table shows the results of the construct validity and reliability tests:

Table 1. Measuring Instrument Validity and Reliability

Variable	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Mindful Parenting	0.72–0.89	0.91	0.65
Parent Emotion Regulation	0.70–0.87	0.88	0.62
Parent-Child Relationship	0.73–0.90	0.92	0.67
Child Emotional Development	0.71–0.88	0.89	0.64

Source: Processed data (2026)

These results indicate that all constructs meet the criteria of convergent validity and reliability (Hair et al., 2022).

3) Structural Model Test (Inner Model)

The results of hypothesis testing using SEM-PLS are shown in the following table:

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
H1: PM → ED	0.42	6.78	<0.001	Supported
H2: PM → PCR	0.51	7.95	<0.001	Supported
H3: PCR → ED	0.36	5.12	<0.001	Supported
H4: PER → ED	0.29	4.87	<0.001	Supported

Source: Processed data (2026)

The results showed that mindful parenting had a positive and significant effect on children's emotional development ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$). This finding is consistent with He et al. (2025) who stated that mindful parenting improves children's emotional regulation through responsive interactions.

Furthermore, the parent-child relationship has been shown to be a significant mediator. According to Sansone (2024), “mindful parenting fosters co-regulation processes that support children's emotional development,” which emphasizes the importance of emotional relationships within the family.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The evaluation was conducted by comparing conditions before and after the measurement and analyzing respondents' perceptions. The results showed an 18% increase in the average score for children's emotional development in the group with high levels of mindful parenting compared to the group with low levels.

In addition, based on the questionnaire results, 72% of respondents showed an increase in parenting awareness and emotional management skills after applying mindful parenting principles.

Interview results also showed that parents with high levels of mindfulness tended to be more patient, less reactive, and better able to understand their children's emotions. This aligns with research by Muratori et al. (2026), which showed that mindful parenting interventions improved the quality of family interactions.

According to Vernon and Moretti (2025), parental emotion regulation is key to creating a healthy emotional environment for children. Therefore, improving mindful parenting not only impacts parents but also their children's overall development.

Obstacles or Other Problems Encountered

In carrying out this research, there were several obstacles faced, including:

- 1) Limited understanding of respondents
Some respondents were not familiar with the concept of mindfulness, so additional explanation was needed when filling out the questionnaire.
- 2) Subjective bias
Data obtained from questionnaires has the potential to contain social desirability bias, where respondents tend to give answers that are considered good.
- 3) Limitations of cross-sectional design
This study cannot fully explain long-term causal relationships.
As a solution, researchers suggest:
 - Use of longitudinal design in further research
 - Combination of quantitative methods and direct observation
 - Development of a mindful parenting education program for parents

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that mindfulness parenting plays a significant role in supporting early childhood emotional development. These findings support the emotion socialization theory, which states that children learn to regulate their emotions through interactions with their parents (King et al., 2023).

Specifically, this study found that the influence of mindful parenting on children's emotional development was mediated by the quality of the parent-child relationship and parental emotion regulation. This suggests that effective parenting depends not only on external behaviors but also on parents' internal psychological states.

These findings are also consistent with a study by Wu et al. (2024), which showed that mindful parenting acts as a protective mechanism against children's emotional problems. Furthermore, this approach is relevant in the modern context where parents face various psychological pressures.

Thus, mindful parenting can be used as an effective intervention approach to improve the quality of child care and development.

Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the role of mindfulness parenting in supporting early childhood emotional development and identify the mechanisms underlying this relationship. Based on the results, it can be concluded that mindfulness parenting plays a significant role in enhancing early childhood emotional development. Parents who are fully present, non-reactive, and responsive to their children's emotional needs have been shown to create an environment that supports the development of adaptive emotional regulation.

Furthermore, this study shows that the influence of mindfulness parenting on children's emotional development is not solely direct, but rather mediated by the quality of the parent-child relationship and the parents' emotional regulation skills. A warm, safe, and responsive relationship is a key factor in the co-regulation process, where children learn to understand and manage their emotions through interactions with their parents.

Thus, it can be affirmed that mindfulness parenting is an effective parenting approach to supporting the social-emotional development of early childhood. This approach focuses not only on parenting behaviors but also on self-awareness and emotional management in parents as the primary foundation for building healthy relationships with their children.

The findings of this study highlight the need to develop mindful parenting education and training programs for parents, as well as the integration of this approach into early childhood education practices. Furthermore, further research is recommended using a longitudinal design and a mixed-methods approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between parenting and children's emotional development.

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