

A scoping review of the role of mindful parenting in youth's emotional, behavioral, and social adjustment, coping, and emotion regulation

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Abstract

Mindful parenting involves parents' moment-to-moment awareness during parent–child interactions and nonjudgmental acceptance of children. There is not yet an extensive history of research on the impact of mindful parenting on youth's adjustment and well-being, but the last decade has seen an increase in attention. This growth suggests the need for a scoping review to summarize the current state of the research, to identify research gaps, and to suggest future directions for research. Electronic databases were searched, which identified 31 studies of mindful parenting and youth's (aged 12 to 25 years) emotional, behavioral, or social adjustment; coping with stress; and/or emotion regulation. Mindful parenting was associated with better youth adjustment in most studies, including fewer emotional and behavioral problems (23 and 20 studies, respectively), and better well-being (three studies) and life satisfaction (three studies), with parenting and youth adjustment reported by parents, youth, or both. Only one study reported associations of mindful parenting with better social adjustment, and two studies found associations with more adaptive and positive coping and/or emotional regulation. Twenty-one studies investigated indirect pathways, with mindful parenting related to youth adjustment through numerous youth characteristics, parent characteristics, or relationship factors. Four studies included tests of whether the link between mindful parenting and youth's adjustment differed depending on a third variable (e.g., gender). Two studies found significant moderation, but the effects were small and sometimes counterintuitive. There was very little replication across studies. Future research could draw upon this review to develop a model that links mindful parenting to youth's adjustment, while considering other aspects of parenting, as well as parent and child characteristics as precursors, covariates, and mediators.

Keywords

Youth, mindful parenting, internalizing symptoms, externalizing symptoms, social problems, coping

Adolescence through early adulthood, a time of life collectively referred to as "youth," is a period known for the onset of various mental health disorders and the deterioration of psychological well-being (Duffy et al., 2019; Jones, 2013; Moreira & Canavarro, 2018). Approximately one in five adolescents will experience their first psychiatric disorder, such as depression, panic disorder, agoraphobia, or substance use disorder (Costello et al., 2011). In addition, new or comorbid disorders often emerge during emerging or early adulthood (Pedrelli et al., 2015).

Given these mental health challenges that confront youth, theories and a great deal of supporting research identify parents as a proximal social resource that provides the necessary support for youth to avoid significant mental health problems (Bornstein et al., 2018; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby, 1992; Skinner et al., 2005). Parents are knowledge models, socializers, and educators in adaptive coping and emotion regulation skills. They can also channel youth into activities and other relationships that can

define their futures. Thus, parents have widespread influence on children's accumulation of personal and social resources for resilience (Collins et al., 2000; Flynn et al., 2018; Jensen et al., 2024). Most of these ideas, and subsequent research, are grounded in well-established parenting and social-psychological theories from the 1960s and 1970s, such as parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983), attachment (Bowlby, 1977), and social learning (Bandura & Walters, 1977). In fact, across 1000s of studies of children and adolescents (see Clayborne et al., 2021; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Skinner et al., 2005),

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positive parenting practices (e.g., warmth and support), and effective parenting styles—such as authoritative parenting that presents with a mix of warmth with clear guidance—have been associated with children’s emotional adjustment. These associations include links with fewer internalizing symptoms (e.g., depression and anxiety) and externalizing problems (e.g., aggression, delinquency) and better social competence.

Mindfulness and Mindful Parenting

Recently, studies have emerged identifying mindfulness as a positive source for parenting that is also linked to the emotional and social well-being of children and adolescents (Ahemaitijiang et al., 2021; Duncan et al., 2009; Zimmer-Gembeck, 2020). Mindfulness, in the context of psychological science, has been defined as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Mindfulness as a personal trait (i.e., a naturally occurring individual differences variable) is often referred to as dispositional or trait mindfulness. The acknowledgment of mindfulness as a trait complements theory and research on mindfulness as a skill or technique that can be taught and practiced. This skill, in turn, can be positive for emotional and social adjustment and other aspects of well-being (Cheang et al., 2019; Mera et al., 2023). While much of the early research on mindfulness in psychology has concentrated on adults, interest has been growing in understanding the positive roles that mindfulness might play in the lives of children and youth (Moreira et al., 2018). In addition, a more relational approach to mindfulness has been described as essential (Stanley, 2012). Some advocate for mindfulness-based interventions that focus on the entire family system, including mindfulness in parents, parenting, and children or youth. This holistic approach aims to enhance family relationships, parenting practices, and children’s developmental pathways (Bögels & Emerson, 2019).

The concept of mindful parenting has grown out of an understanding of parenting blended with views on mindfulness as a resource for positive well-being. Mindful parenting has been described as “a framework whereby parents intentionally bring moment-to-moment awareness to the parent–child relationship” (Duncan et al., 2009, p. 255). Conceptions of mindful parenting align with expressions of mindfulness and compassion, including emphasizing the importance of parents’ ability to listen to their children with full attention, self-regulate their emotional reactivity in the parenting relationship, act non-judgmentally toward themselves and their children, and show emotional awareness and compassion toward themselves and their children. Bringing these aspects together, mindful parenting is best described as a form of positive parenting that includes providing not only a warm environment and support for children but also incorporating further useful characteristics and practices of parents.

Although the definitions of mindful parenting and the measures used in research to operationalize it can vary, Duncan et al. (2009) described five aspects that have had a major influence on research and measures with the development of the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting Scale. These parental aspects included (1) attention by being present during parent–child interactions, (2) non-reactivity by regulating their emotions, (3) non-judgment by showing acceptance of themselves and their children, (4)

awareness by being emotionally in tune to their own and their children’s states of mind, and (5) compassion by showing kindness and understanding toward themselves and their children during challenging or rough times. Although research studies show relations of higher mindful parenting with more positive parenting practices (e.g., warmth and affection) and fewer negative parenting practices (e.g., ineffective discipline) (Duncan et al., 2009; Parent et al., 2016, 2021), the conceptualization of mindful parenting appears to be unique in some ways from these other practices in terms of the focus on not only specific behaviors that reflect positive parenting practices but also involving other aspects of parenting. These other aspects include listening to children with full attention, acting non-judgmentally toward them, being emotionally aware of their experiences, and showing them compassion and acceptance during difficult times. Thus, it has been argued that the current conceptualizations and measures of mindful parenting capture more than specific parenting practices or behaviors and may also reflect aspects of a positive family climate and interactions that children can model in their relationships inside and outside their home (Mera et al., 2025).

There is not an extensive history of research on mindful parenting. Yet, mindful parenting has drawn increased attention over recent years with the development, marketing, and popularity of a range of mindful parenting programs (Altmaier & Maloney, 2007; Bögels & Restifo, 2014; Coatsworth et al., 2010; Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 2014; refer to Kil & Antonacci, 2020 for a review). These mindful parenting interventions coincide with the emerging empirical evidence that mindful parenting relates to better psychological well-being and fewer mental health problems for parents receiving mindful parenting support within clinical settings (Bögels et al., 2008; Coatsworth et al., 2018; Emerson et al., 2019; Meppelink et al., 2016; Potharst et al., 2018) and community groups (Parent et al., 2016, 2021). In addition, interventions to improve mindful parenting have gained popularity and have shown positive outcomes not only for parents but also for their children and/or youth (Bögels et al., 2008; Emerson et al., 2019; Meppelink et al., 2016; Potharst et al., 2018).

Overview and Purpose of This Review

Only one previous review (including research up to the year 2020) has summarized the research relating to the personal and social adjustment correlates of mindful parenting (Ahemaitijiang et al., 2021). This was a broad narrative review of measures, theory, and general findings of studies of mindful parenting as related to any parent or child outcome. In this review, mindful parenting was described as beneficial to parents’ well-being, children’s adjustment, and the family environment. However, since this review was published, the field of research on mindful parenting has expanded substantially, with studies of mindful parenting as related to youth’s adjustment a particularly prominent area of study. Thus, the number of available studies in this area means that it is timely to conduct a scoping review to more comprehensively describe what is known regarding mindful parenting, focusing only on indicators of youth’s adjustment—including emotional, behavioral, and social adjustment, as well as related outcomes of youth’s coping and emotion regulation. Although growing in number, the still relatively small number of studies allowed us to provide details of the findings of each study and to report effect size variability

across studies, which is a contribution before moving toward a meta-analysis. We also present these research findings to allow for the identification of research gaps and to propose new research into the future.

We concentrated on studies of youth (mean age ranged from 12 to 25 years) and targeted the outcomes of emotional adjustment, social adjustment, coping with stress, and emotion regulation (referred to below as psychosocial adjustment). Our focus on youth was purposeful and designed to identify the role of mindful parenting at a time of life when clinical levels of adjustment problems and mental health issues can first emerge and will often escalate (Costello et al., 2011; Duffy et al., 2019; Jones, 2013; Moreira & Canavarro, 2018; Pedrelli et al., 2015). We note that we had identified nine studies with children average age under 12, four studies of children age under 6 and five studies of children age 6 to 11 (see Appendix 1).

Studies were also limited to those that had drawn participants from general/community samples, including a questionnaire measure of mindful parenting (as reported by parents, youth, or both). We focused on general/community samples to identify relations of mindful parenting among youth regardless of their mental health or other status. We summarize findings for general associations between mindful parenting and youth's psychosocial adjustment outcomes, but also summarize what is currently known about how these associations may be mediated (or moderated) by parent-child relationships, parent characteristics, or child characteristics, which are consistent with many published models regarding how mindful parenting may have its influence through complicated family and personal pathways (see Ahemaitijiang et al., 2021 for a review of such models).

Method

Search Strategy and Eligibility Criteria

Electronic searches of PsycInfo and PubMed were conducted on 1 March 2025 to identify studies reporting on the association of mindful parenting with indicators of youth's adjustment. The following search terms were used: ("mindful parent*") and (adol* OR child* OR youth OR "emerging adult" OR "young adult") and (well-being OR symptoms OR "mental health" OR emotion* OR behav* OR coping OR adjustment OR regulation OR stress). The reference lists of included articles were also searched. Dissertations were included, but gray literature was not included. Inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) human subjects, (2) empirical research that was not part of an intervention study, (3) inclusion of at least one quantitative measure of mindful parenting and one quantitative measure of youth's emotional, behavioral or social positive or negative adjustment, positive youth development, coping or emotion regulation, (4) participants reported to be an average of between 12 and 25 years, (4) general/community sample, and (5) written or translated to English. No human research ethics (HREC)/internal review board approval was needed for this review, given there was no primary interaction or intervention with human subjects.

Study Information

The search resulted in 262 unique publications and a final inclusion of 31 publications reporting on 30 unique samples. Exclusions

were for the following reasons: 99 studies focused on interventions, 14 studies collected data from a sample who had children with a particular diagnosis or condition, 32 studies were reviews or commentaries, 77 studies did not measure mindful parenting or the outcomes of interest, and 9 studies were focused on children less than 12 years. Data summarized from each study (see Supplemental Table 1) included country/location of the study, the design, sample size, and demographic characteristics, study aims, primary and other youth outcomes measured, mindful parenting measure employed, summary of the correlational findings for mindful parenting and youth adjustment, and other findings. When available, correlations between mindful parenting and youth's adjustment were also extracted and reported in Supplemental Table 1 (under the heading correlational findings).

Of the 31 publications, nine studies used a longitudinal design, and all others used a cross-sectional design (one study reported on both; Royuela-Colomer et al., 2024). Below, we use k to indicate the number of studies and N (or n) to indicate sample sizes across or within studies. Regarding participants, 23 studies collected data from both parents and youth (or from triads; $N=8,989$ with youth data, with some studies reporting smaller numbers of parent participants), five studies (with four unique samples) collected data from parents only ($N=1,753$), and three studies collected data from youth only ($N=2,202$). Most studies reported associations of mindful parenting and youth's internalizing or externalizing symptoms in some form ($k=23$ and 20, respectively). Three studies reported on mindful parenting and youth's general well-being (Medeiros et al., 2016; Mera et al., 2023; Moreira et al., 2018) and three reported on mindful parenting and life satisfaction (Benton et al., 2019; Li et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2021). One study reported on positive youth development (e.g., connection and caring; Ju et al., 2024), one study reported on youth's social adjustment outside the home (Mera et al., 2023), and two studies reported on coping-related measures (Liu et al., 2021; Moreira & Canavarro, 2020).

There were six core measures of mindful parenting used across the studies, with 21 of the studies using some form of the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting scale for parents or a revised form for youth (either the original version, an expanded version, or a translated version; see Supplemental Table 1). The other measure used in more than one study was the Mindfulness in Parenting Questionnaire (MIPQ, parent or youth report) used in six studies. Other measures were used in one study each, including the Mindful Parenting Inventories for Parents and for Children (MPIP, MPIC), the Mindful Parenting Observational Scales—parent and youth report (MPOS), the Bangor Mindful Parenting Scale—parent report (BMPS), and the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale—parent report (MAAS).

Results

Youth's Emotional Adjustment

Emotional (or personal) adjustment reflects a person's general feeling of positive well-being based on the subjective evaluation of their lives, including a high level of emotional well-being or pleasant affect (e.g., joy, pride, affection, and happiness) or a low level of emotional problems or unpleasant affect (e.g., anger, guilt, anxiety, and depression; Diener et al., 1999; Diener & Ryan, 2009). Below, we summarize studies that measured youth's

depression and anxiety, psychological well-being, or life satisfaction as indicators of emotional adjustment.

Youth's Internalizing Symptoms. Twenty-three studies measured youth's symptoms of depression, anxiety, or combined these to indicate internalizing symptoms (see Supplemental Table 1). Of these, 12 studies reported that mindful parenting (using one or more subscales or the total score) was associated with fewer youth internalizing symptoms. Most often significant associations were small (e.g., $r=-.25$ or weaker), but the association was stronger than $r=-.35$ in three studies of British/American parents, who reported on mindful parenting and their children's symptoms (Acet et al., 2024, UK sample; Bluth & Wahler, 2011, USA sample; Thamrin, 2024, USA sample) and in two other studies, one of Spanish parents' report of mindful parenting and adolescent report of depression on the CES-D (Calvete et al., 2021, $r=-.54$) and one of Chinese parents' report of mindful parenting and adolescent report of social anxiety (Chong-Wen et al., 2022, $r=-.45$).

In opposition to the general pattern of findings, one study reported that two mindful parenting subscales (parents' self-regulation and emotional awareness) were associated with *more* youth internalizing symptoms (Vernon & Moretti, 2024, Canada) and another study found a *positive* association of one subscale (observing) with youth report of depression (Calvete et al., 2021, Spain). Finally, three studies reported no significant association. One had a sample size of 30 and reported similar effect sizes as in other studies (rs of about $-.20$ to $-.30$; Benton et al., 2019) and the other two reported small negative associations in Chinese families (parent-adolescent dyads with adolescents' mean age of 12.5 or 13 years; Wang et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2022).

In addition, three studies analyzed total problem scores, which combined emotional and behavioral problems (Larrucea-Iruretagoyena et al., 2024; Larrucea-Iruretagoyena & Orue, 2023; Li et al., 2024), with all finding that mindful parenting was associated with fewer problems among adolescents. Finally, four other studies had measured internalizing symptoms but did not report zero-order correlations between mindful parenting and youth's internalizing symptoms.

Youth's Well-Being and Life Satisfaction. Six studies investigated mindful parenting as a correlate of youth's well-being, life satisfaction, or positive development (including competence and caring). All studies (see Supplemental Table 1) found that mindful parenting did covary with more positive adjustment in youth. In the three studies of psychological well-being, mothers' mindful parenting and fathers' mindful parenting were associated with youth's better well-being ($r=.15$ and $r=.18$, respectively; Medeiros et al., 2016, Portugal), parent report of mindful parenting was associated with adolescent report of better well-being ($r=.22$; Moreira et al., 2018, Portugal), and mindful parenting was associated with better well-being in a study of older adolescents ($r=.39$; Mera et al., 2023, Australia).

In the only two studies of life satisfaction, one reported a small positive association between mothers' reports of mindful parenting and young adolescents' life satisfaction at T1 ($r=.14$) and T2 ($r=.25$; Li et al., 2024, Hong Kong). A significant association was also found in the second study ($r=.36$; Liu et al., 2021, China). Finally, in a youth report study, Ju et al. (2024, China) reported a strong positive association between mindful

parenting and youth's positive youth development measured as competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring ($r=.50$).

Youth's Behavioral Problems

Behavioral problems are most often measured as aggression, delinquency, or other antisocial acts of youth. Of the 20 studies of mindful parenting and youth's behavioral adjustment (see Supplemental Table 1), behavior problems were most often measured as externalizing symptoms combining delinquency with aggressive behavior (15 of the studies). As an alternative approach, two studies measured aggressive behavior (Calvete et al., 2021; Yue et al., 2022), two studies measured substance use and undesirable behaviors (Maglica et al., 2021; Turpyn & Chaplin, 2016), one study measured antisocial behavior (Royuela-Colomer et al., 2024 Study 2), and one study of substance use that also separately measured sexual risk behavior (Turpyn & Chaplin, 2016). Four studies did not report zero-order correlations. As reported in the previous section, three studies reported results of analyzing total problem scores, which combined emotional and behavioral problems (Larrucea-Iruretagoyena et al., 2024; Larrucea-Iruretagoyena & Orue, 2023; Li et al., 2024), finding that mindful parenting was associated with fewer problems among adolescents.

Therefore, 13 studies were identified with results to summarize, and all reported that mindful parenting (using one or more subscales or the total score) was associated with lower externalizing symptoms, aggression, undesirable behaviors, substance use, and risky sexual behavior. Like the findings for emotional problems, most often the associations were small (about $r=-.25$ or weaker). The association was stronger than $r=-.35$ in two studies of parents, who reported on mindful parenting and their children's symptoms (Bluth & Wahler, 2011; Thamrin, 2024) and two studies of dyads with mindful parenting reported by parents and behavioral problems reported by adolescents (Acet et al., 2024, Turkiye and UK samples; Benton et al., 2019, $n=30$, USA).

Youth's Social Adjustment

Social adjustment has been defined as "the degree to which children get along with their peers; the degree to which they engage in adaptive, competent social behavior; and the extent to which they inhibit aversive, incompetent behavior" (Crick & Dodge, 1994, p. 82). In the only study of mindful parenting and youth's social adjustment that was located (see Supplemental Table 1), social adjustment was measured as friendship quality, prosocial behavior, and friendship conflict-related compromise in a sample of 458 Australian youth, with all measures (reported by youth) having small positive associations with mindful parenting (r ranged from .09 to .12; Mera et al., 2023).

Youth's Coping With Stress or Emotion Regulation

Coping has been defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). In contrast,

emotion regulation has been described as “the process of modulating the occurrence, duration, and intensity of internal states of feeling (both positive and negative) and emotion-related physiological processes” (Morris et al., 2017, p. 233). Two studies were located that had measured mindful parenting and coping-related or emotion regulation outcomes among youth (see Supplemental Table 1). One study considered coping self-efficacy and defined it as a person’s confidence in using problem-focused coping, suppressing unpleasant emotions and thoughts, and seeking support from family and friends (Liu et al., 2021), while the other study measured coping indirectly through parents’ ability to encourage and support their children to cope with situations that trigger anxiety for them (Moreira & Canavarro, 2020). In the first study (Liu et al., 2021, China), parent-reported mindful parenting was positively associated with adolescents’ report of their own coping self-efficacy, which in turn was positively associated with their life satisfaction. In the second study (Moreira & Canavarro, 2020, Portugal), mothers’ mindful parenting was associated with fewer difficulties with emotional regulation in adolescents ($r = -.23$), which included a subscale measuring strategies used to manage emotions. Also, mindful parenting was negatively associated with youth’s psychological inflexibility ($r = -.18$). Thus, no previous study has examined mindful parenting as related to youth’s ways of coping with stressors that they encounter in their everyday lives, such as problem-solving or support-seeking when they confront academic, social, or other stressful events.

Mediators and Moderators

This section summarizes the mediating and moderating effects across all the 31 located studies of mindful parenting and youth’s psychosocial adjustment. Twenty-one studies investigated the mediational effects of parent, youth, and/or relationship factors, and four studies investigated moderating effects of the associations of interest in this review (see Supplemental Table 1).

Mediators. Among the 21 studies that investigated the mediational effects of parent, child, or relationship factors (see Supplemental Table 1), 16 studies (76%; 94% cross-sectional) investigated the mediating role of parent-child relationships (e.g., secure attachment, parent-child affective quality, and parent-child communication), youth characteristics (e.g., dispositional mindfulness, self-compassion, and self-esteem), or parent characteristics (e.g., mindful awareness) between mindful parenting and indicators of youth’s adjustment. In general, across these studies, mediation was often supported. Overall, nine studies supported a mediational role for parent-youth relationship factors, and 10 studies supported a mediational role for youth characteristics. For parent-youth relationship factors, there was support for mediation relating to the association of mindful parenting with youth adjustment via mother-adolescent affective quality, shared parent-adolescent positive emotion, mother-adolescent communication, parent-child conflict, attachment anxiety, adolescents’ perceived secure attachment with their parents, perceived maternal warmth, perceived parental acceptance, adolescent’s report of physical abuse, and psychological aggression as various features of the parent-child relationship that were more positive (or less negative). For youth characteristics, there was support for mediation relating to the association of mindful parenting with youth adjustment via adolescents’ self-esteem,

dispositional mindfulness, self-compassion, interpersonal mindfulness, satisfaction of basic psychological needs, coping self-efficacy, psychological inflexibility, avoidance, self-disclosure, and self-coldness as various outcomes of higher (or lower) mindful parenting, which in turn were associated with fewer (or more) youth problems.

Other mediators were examined, but with less frequency. There was support for maternal dispositional mindfulness as a parent factor that was more positive when mothers experienced or reported less effort in their mindful parenting, which was, in turn, was associated with fewer youth internalizing (but not externalizing) problems (Bluth & Wahler, 2011). Furthermore, the tested mediational effect was not supported for youth’s dispositional mindfulness, where this trait was found not to mediate the relationship between mindful parenting (as reported by parents) and youth’s general well-being (Moreira et al., 2018). Finally, the relationship between the mindful parenting subscale of interaction with full attention and youth’s aggression was mediated by youth’s report of less physical abuse and psychological aggression among male (but not female) youth (Yue et al., 2022).

Three studies of families in China tested serial mediation, with one focused on multiple adolescent characteristics as chain mediators (Ju et al., 2024) and the other two focused on the parent-youth relationship and youth characteristics as mediators (Wang et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2022). Ju et al. (2024) found that adolescents’ self-compassion and satisfaction of basic psychological needs mediated the relationship between mindful parenting and positive youth development separately and through a chain-like mediation. In the other two studies, maternal mindful parenting was indirectly associated with adolescents’ lower emotional problems (Wang et al., 2018) or fewer internalizing and externalizing problems (Yang et al., 2022) through the serial mediating effects of adolescents’ perceptions of greater maternal warmth followed by adolescents’ greater dispositional mindfulness in the first case and via mother-adolescent communication followed by adolescents’ self-disclosure in the second case.

The remaining five studies that tested mediation examined the role of mindful parenting as a mediator linking parenting characteristics (e.g., dispositional mindfulness, anxiety, and self-control) or the family environment (e.g., household chaos) to youth’s outcomes (e.g., positive adjustment and behavioral difficulties) and all showed significant mediating effects, especially for maternal mindful parenting. Three of these studies examined the association between household chaos (Acet et al., 2024), maternal self-control (Lietal., 2024), or maternal anxiety (Larrucea-Iruretagoyena & Orue, 2023) with better youth’s adjustment or lower youth’s problems as facilitated by mindful parenting. The latter two studies only found mediating effects for maternal mindful parenting (and not paternal mindful parenting). The remaining two studies among the five studies found support for serial mediating effects involving both mindful parenting and other parenting practices. A cross-sectional study (Parent et al., 2016) and a related longitudinal study (Parent et al., 2021) found mindful parenting and negative parenting practices to sequentially mediate the relationship between parental mindfulness and youth’s internalizing and externalizing problems. In these studies, higher parental mindfulness was the precursor of more mindful parenting, which in turn was associated with fewer negative parenting practices. It was then negative parenting practices that had the direct effect on youth problems. Thus, parent mindfulness and mindful parenting are

associated with fewer youth problems because they play a role in reducing negative parenting practices.

Moderators. Four studies investigated whether the association of mindful parenting (or its practices) with indicators of youth's adjustment was moderated by youth characteristics (e.g., age, gender, and race/ethnicity), parental characteristics (e.g., depressive symptoms), and/or family factors (e.g., financial strain). Two of these four studies found significant moderating effects. In the first study (Tak et al., 2015), two 3-way interactions were found suggesting that the associations of the mindful parenting dimensions of compassion for the child and emotional awareness of self with adolescents' depressive symptoms were contingent upon adolescents' gender and parental depressive symptoms. For girls, parents' compassion for the child was associated with lower adolescents' depressive symptoms when parents were low in depression, but compassion was associated with higher adolescents' depressive symptoms when parents were high in depression. For boys, somewhat of the opposite was found, whereby parents' compassion for the child was associated with higher adolescents' depressive symptoms when parents were low in depression, but compassion was associated with lower adolescents' depressive symptoms when parents were high in depression. There was also a three-way interaction for parents' emotional awareness of self, but the findings were somewhat the opposite; emotional awareness of self was associated with higher depression symptoms for girls when parents were low in depression, and no significant associations were found among boys. In the second study (Wynsma, 2021), it was found that Latinx and Asian adolescents' interdependent self-construal and their heritage language fluency moderated some of the indirect associations of mindful parenting and adolescents' internalizing problems. These indirect associations occurred through higher levels of adolescent mindfulness, perceived parental acceptance, and adolescent self-compassion, as well as lower adolescent coldness. For the moderations, mindful parenting was related to adolescents' internalizing problems through perceived parental acceptance only for adolescents lower (relative to higher) in interdependent self-construal or heritage language fluency. Also, mindful parenting was related to internalizing problems through self-compassion only for adolescents higher (relative to lower) in heritage language fluency.

In the two studies (Medeiros et al., 2016; Park et al., 2020) that did not find factors that moderated the mindful parent–youth outcome link, the first found that the association between both parents' mindful parenting and adolescents' well-being (as mediated by adolescents' perception of secure attachment) was not moderated by adolescents' age (Medeiros et al., 2016). The second found that the link from mindful parenting to internalizing and externalizing problems at T3 (1 year later) via recurrent conflict at T2 (2–3 months later) was not moderated by youth's gender, race/ethnicity, or family financial strain (Park et al., 2020).

Discussion

Mindful parenting is a set of positive parenting practices that has emerged following decades of research on positive parenting (Baumrind, 1966; Bornstein et al., 2018; Bowlby, 1977; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby, 1992; Maccoby & Martin, 1983;

Skinner et al., 2005). Although the research on the impact of mindful parenting on young people's adjustment is still limited relative to other parenting research, it has burgeoned in recent years resulting in a good base of evidence for this scoping review that focused on its relations with indicators of youth's psychological and behavioral adjustment. Adolescents and emerging adults were the age groups of focus, given the rise in mental health problems during these periods of life (Costello et al., 2011; Duffy et al., 2019; Jones, 2013), the increased exposure to life stressors across personal, educational, and social settings that can often be pervasive and challenging for their adjustment, coping and emotion regulation (Compas et al., 2017; Dvořáková et al., 2019; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2016), and the extended period of time that youth now seek and value support from parents (Arnett, 2015).

We located 31 studies that met the criteria for this scoping review. Together, the studies provide a great deal of support for the associations of mindful parenting practices (when reported by parents or perceived by youth), with multiple indicators of youth's adjustment. The positive correlates of mindful parenting include less depression and anxiety, lower aggression and delinquency, increased well-being and life satisfaction, better social adjustment in the form of more supportive friendships and prosocial behaviors, and better coping self-efficacy and regulation of emotions.

Most of the located studies concentrated on mindful parenting and youth's emotional problems or related aspects of well-being, with the majority supporting the benefits of mindful parenting. In addition, there were 13 studies reporting results specifically for youth's externalizing symptoms, which all found that mindful parenting was associated with fewer problems among youth. Thus, mindful parenting practices of listening to children with full attention, being emotionally non-reactive in the parent–child interactions, acting non-judgmentally toward them, being emotionally aware of themselves and what their children might be going through, and showing compassion and acceptance toward themselves and their children during difficult times appear are linked to more positive mental health and well-being, as well as fewer behavior problems among youth.

Building on such findings, we also located studies that acknowledged the complex ways that mindful parenting may link to or combine with other aspects of the family or characteristics of family members to support youth's positive adjustment and behavior. In particular, nine studies reported pathways from mindful parenting to youth's outcomes that involved parent–youth relationship factors, such as mother–adolescent affective quality, perceived maternal warmth, parent–child conflict, and attachment anxiety. These studies showed how mindful parenting relates to better parent–adolescent relationships marked by more warmth and security and less conflict, which in turn partly explains youth's better emotional and behavioral health. Relatedly, five studies modified this possible pathway to test mindful parenting as the link between parent characteristics (e.g., self-control) or the family environment (e.g., household chaos) with youth's outcomes, and they all showed significant effects in the expected directions. Two of these studies showed serial mediating effects of higher mindful parenting and lower negative parenting practices in the relations between parent's dispositional mindfulness and youth's internalizing and externalizing problems using cross-sectional (Parent et al., 2016) and longitudinal (Parent et al., 2021) designs.

Ten studies involved testing pathways involving youth's characteristics, such as their dispositional mindfulness, self-compassion, self-esteem, or self-disclosure, in the association between mindful parenting and youth's adjustment, with most supporting these linkages. Three studies showed support for serial mediating effects between mindful parenting and positive youth's outcomes through multiple youth's characteristics (i.e., self-compassion and satisfaction of basic psychological needs; Ju et al., 2024) or both parent–youth relationship and youth characteristics (i.e., perceived maternal warmth and youth's dispositional mindfulness; Wang et al., 2018; mother–adolescent communication and youth's self-disclosure; Yang et al., 2022).

Four studies tested some form of moderation of the link between mindful parenting and youth's adjustment, considering certain youth characteristics (e.g., age, gender, and race/ethnicity), parental characteristics (e.g., depressive symptoms), and/or family factors (e.g., financial strain) that could moderate the links between mindful parenting (or its practices) and youth's outcomes. Two studies found at least one significant moderation among the possibilities that were considered. Overall, these findings for mediation and moderation were intriguing and highlighted many factors that could be involved in the associations of mindful parenting with youth's adjustment, such as personality, skills, or other characteristics of the parent or the child, as well as markers of a more positive parent–child relationship such as communication.

Synthesis and Future Research

Recommendations

Although we located a number of studies on mindful parenting and indicators of youth's adjustment, almost all studies had a unique focus when compared to others, with little replication or direct extension across studies. This was especially the case when testing pathways or conditions that may modify such associations. Most striking, each of the studies of mediation or moderation was unique from all others. Thus, although this may reflect a newer area of research and is informative for building a base of evidence to support theoretical changes and new frameworks for parenting research, all studies require replication. In fact, the findings of the two studies that supported moderation are in most need of replication, given that findings were particularly complex and sometimes counterintuitive.

As such, we recommend that mindful parenting be better integrated into existing parent socialization theories to guide further research in this area, including well-established general parenting models (Morris et al., 2007) or more recent models of mindful parenting (Townshend, 2016; see Ahemaitijiang et al., 2021 for a review of these models). However, these extensions could still benefit from research that addresses: (a) how mindful parenting behaviors overlap or supplement more widely studied parenting behaviors, practices, or styles, and (b) what youth value among mindful parenting behaviors. Although there is evidence that mindful parenting has a strong association with measures of warm and involved parenting behaviors (Parent et al., 2016, 2021), it is unclear how mindful parenting relates to parental autonomy support. Autonomy support has been defined as the degree to which parents (or others) support and encourage youth's agency, such as the capacity to take actions based on

personally endorsed values and interests (Soenens et al., 2007; Van der Giessen et al., 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2011). This includes providing opportunities for children to express their beliefs, opinions, and attitudes, which often involves expressing and being supported for their own unique feelings, parents' provision of meaningful choice whenever possible, their consideration of the child's frame of reference, and their provision of a rationale when choice is limited (Grolnick, 2003; Rowe et al., 2015; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2018). Some aspects of mindful parenting, such as accepting children as they are and listening with full attention, seem to be preconditions for autonomy support and lack of overly intrusive parenting.

Given the evidence presented here that mindful parenting is associated with many aspects within the family and with youth's mental and social adjustment, we also recommend additional longitudinal research. This research could (a) determine whether mindful parenting may evolve as youth get older and (b) how it may be both a precursor and an outcome of parents' and offsprings' characteristics and long-term mental health.

Finally, many studies included in this review were focused specifically on mindful parenting as related to a range of indicators of youth's emotional or behavioral health and well-being. In contrast, there were almost no studies of other youth outcomes that may also be important to their overall positive developmental pathways into the future, including youth's social adjustment, coping with stress, and emotional regulation. Therefore, generalizations around the wider benefits of mindful parenting for these outcomes are constrained by the limited number of studies located in these areas. As such, this is a knowledge gap that awaits further research.

Conclusion

Adolescence and emerging adulthood are periods of life marked by the first onset of mental health disorders and the deterioration of psychosocial adjustment for many young people. It is, therefore, not surprising that such a period is critical for the delivery of effective mental health prevention and/or intervention programs to both youth and their parents to prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead. The general conclusion from the current scoping review is that mindful parenting (and some of its practices) is beneficial for the general health and well-being of adolescents and emerging adults. Such practices have been shown to be facilitated by various parent, child, and/or relationship factors suggesting that helping parents to learn practices of mindful parent–child interactions could enable better parent–child relationships and build more effective skills (e.g., mindfulness, self-compassion, and self-esteem) in youth, which in turn could facilitate better emotional, behavioral, and social adjustment, coping with life stressors, and use of emotional regulation strategies in the face of challenges. This may be particularly relevant as youth transition to new settings and face novel challenges in adolescence and emerging adulthood. While support for such findings was found across both cross-sectional and longitudinal research, and many studies had the benefit of involving multiple family members, further work is still needed in this area to examine the benefits of mindful parenting in a wider range of youth's psychosocial adjustment outcomes.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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Appendix I

Studies of Children that Met All Other Inclusion Criteria

Children age 7–13 years: Bi, S., Huang, J., Cui, L., Zhou, H. (2024). Within-family associations between parental psychological control and externalizing problems among Chinese children: Links to between-family mindful parenting. *Research on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology*, 52(1), 65–77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-023-01101-9>

Children age 6–12 years: Cummins, C. A. (2024). *Examining the impact of parental adverse childhood experiences on the relationships between mindful parenting, parental mental health, and children's emotion regulation* [Dissertation]. California School of Professional Psychology.

Children age 6–12 years: Han, Z. H., Ahemaitijiang, N., Yan, J., Hu, X., Parent, J., Dale, C., DiMarzio, K., Singh, N. N. (2021). Parent mindfulness, parenting, and child psychopathology in China. *Mindfulness*, 12(2), 334–343. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01111-z>

Children age 4: Henrichs, J., van den Heuvel, M. I., Witteveen, A. B., Wilschut, J., Van den Bergh, B. R. H. (2021). Does mindful parenting mediate the association between maternal anxiety during pregnancy and child behavioral/emotional problems?

Children age 9–13 years: Ma, R., Chen, D., De Alwis, J., Xu, W. (2024). Mindful parenting, internalized and externalized problem behaviors among children: A latent cross-lagged model. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 161, Article 107667. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107667>

Pre school age children: Maglica, T., Ercegovac, I. R., Ljubetic, M. (2020). Mindful parenting and behavioural problems in preschool children. *Hrvatska Revija Za Rehabilitacijska Istrazivanja*, 56(1), 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.31299/hrri.56.1.4>

Child average age 11: Wen, K., Xie, R., Zhang, Y., Peng, J., Li, W. & Ding, W. (2024). Bidirectional longitudinal relationship between perceived paternal and maternal mindful parenting and depressive symptoms in children. *Mindfulness*, 15(9), 2307–2320. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-024-02432-0>

Children age 5: Zhang, W., Liu, T., Zhang, S., Li, X. (2022). The mutual role of mindful parenting on parents' subjective well-being and young children's emotional regulation through reducing perceived parenting daily hassles. *Mindfulness*, 13(11), 2777–2787. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-022-01994-5>

Children age 3–6: Zhang, W., Wang, M., Ying, L. (2019). Parental mindfulness and preschool children's emotion regulation: The role of mindful parenting and secure parent-child attachment. *Mindfulness*, 10(12), 2481–2491. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01120-y>