

## **A Research on Parental Resilience: Mindful Parenting and Parental Stress**

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## **Abstract**

The resilience of the family to difficult life events is a topic that has been recently researched in the literature. The factors of parenting that are related to parental resilience are an important issue that needs to be focused more. This research aimed to investigate the role of mindful parenting and parental stress on parental resilience. In the study, parents of 0-6 year old children (N = 183) filled out the Family Resilience Scale, Mindful Parenting Scale and Parental Stress Scale via the online platform. According to the research results, parental resilience was positively correlated to mindful parenting and negatively correlated to parental stress. Mindful parenting and parental stress were negatively correlated to each other. According to the regression analysis results, parental stress and mindful parenting predicted parental resilience. The results have shown us that parental resilience can be contributed by addressing and improving parenting from every aspect. Another purpose of this study is to lay the foundation for creating a parenting program based on the results. According to the results, the intervention focusing on mindful parenting aims to reduce parental stress and increase parental resilience.

**Keywords:** Mindful parenting; parental resilience; parenting stress; parenting; resilience

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of resilience has gained increasing interest and is being discussed within the context of family dynamics. Parental resilience, which consists of individual resilience and family dynamics, shows the ability of families to cope with difficulties. “Family resilience refers to the capacity of the family system to withstand and rebound from adversity, strengthened and more resourceful” (Walsh, 2016, p. 617). Resilience highlights the differences and similarities within families, and research has delved into what sets resilient family systems apart. Parenting is a researched and essential issue in parental resilience. However, it has been observed that the concepts of parenting and parental resilience need to be researched more in the literature (Fernandez et al., 2013). Mindful parenting is a parenting style that has been of great interest lately. The parents communicate with their child nonjudgmentally and empathetically, staying in the moment with the child (Aday et al., 2021; Cowling & Van Gordon, 2021). Mindful parenting contributes to parental resilience regarding flexibility and acceptance of situations. However, more research in the literature needs to be done about mindful parenting and parental resilience (Carly & Gordon, 2021). At the same time, the stress experienced by parents is a concept that is emphasized in parenting, and its relationship with resilience is investigated. Duca (2015) added the stress variable to the study to better understand the resilience of parents of autistic children. The researcher found that family resilience is related to positively optimistic couple harmony and couple coping strategies. It is negatively related to parental stress. In these issues, this thesis aims to research the relationship between mindful parenting and parental stress and parental resilience.

The world is currently at a point of economic and social change; even when we look at the recent past, the earthquake we experienced in 2023, the previous coronavirus crisis, and the recent economic crisis have increased stress. Moreover, each family may experience individual difficulties. Recently increasing divorce, the loss of a loved one, sudden illnesses, and death are among the issues that have attracted research attention in the context of the concept of resilience, applying it to the family as a system. It is essential to carry out studies to increase the family's resilience, an important unit of society, in the face of these stressors and traumas. At the same time, this thesis aims to contribute to parenting and family research, which has increased the importance of training for families in the context of parenting and improving parenting practices. Zakeri et. al. (2010), Black & Lobo (2008), and Fernandez et. al. (2013) have previously conducted studies on resilience and parenting, but mindful parenting and

parenting stress were not emphasized. This study will contribute to parental resilience and parenting research in the literature.

## RESULTS

To assess the size and direction of the linear relationship between parental resilience scores and mindful parenting, a Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated. The correlation between these two variables was positive,  $r(181) = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ .

The Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated in order to assess the direction and intensity of the linear relationship between parental stress and parental resilience scores. With a moderately negative correlation of  $r(181) = .40$ , the Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables was negative. At  $p < .001$ , it was determined that this link was statistically significant.

In conclusion, to examine the size and direction of the linear association between mindful parenting scores and parent stress, a Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was computed. The correlation between these two variables was negative, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r(181) = .38$ , indicating a moderate negative correlation. This correlation was statistically significant at  $p < .001$ .

The model of the correlations is reported in Table 1.

The hypothesis of the present study was that mindful parenting and parental stress predict parental resilience. Standard multiple regression analysis was performed to test predictor role of mindful parenting and parent stress on criterion variable as parental resilience. In combination, mindful parenting and parent stress accounted for significant 33% of the variability in parental resilience,  $R^2 = .33$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .32$ ,  $F(2, 180) = 43.92$ ,  $p < .001$ . Unstandardized ( $B$ ) and standardized ( $\beta$ ) regression coefficients for each predictor in the regression model are reported in Table 2.

Independent sample t-test was conducted to determine differences between gender in terms of variables of the study. Firstly, the normality test was conducted, according to the results, it was seen that the resilience and mindful parenting variables were normally distributed ( $p > 0.05$ ), but the parent stress variable was not normally distributed ( $p < 0.05$ ). For this reason, independent sample t test was conducted for normally distributed variables and Man withney U test was conducted for the other variable.

An independent samples t-test was used to compare the parental resilience score reported by participants in the 'woman' condition ( $n = 160$ ) to the parental resilience score reported by those in the 'man' condition ( $n = 23$ ). The t-test was not statistically significant, with the 'woman' group ( $M = 139.04$ ,  $SD = 20.99$ ) and the 'man' group ( $M = 135$ ,  $SD = 19.55$ ),  $t(181) = .87$ ,  $p = .386$ .

An independent samples t-test was used to compare the mindful parenting score reported by participants in the 'woman' condition ( $n = 160$ ) to the parental resilience score reported by those in the 'man' condition ( $n = 23$ ). The t-test was statistically significant, with the 'woman' group ( $M = 78.34$ ,  $SD = 9.38$ ) and the 'man' group ( $M = 70.78$ ,  $SD = 9.79$ ),  $t(181) = 3.59$ ,  $p < .001$

A Mann-Whitney U test indicated that differences of the parent stress score of man and woman. According to the results there are no significant differences between two groups  $U = 1833,50$ ,  $z = -.027$ ,  $p = .978$ , two-tailed.

## **DISCUSSION**

The primary purpose of this study is to determine whether mindful parenting and parental stress predict parental resilience in participants with children aged 0 to 6 years. This part of the study aims to discuss the findings. First, the correlational relationship between parental resilience mindful parenting and parental stress will be discussed, and then the predictive relationship will be discussed. Then, demographic variables that will be deemed meaningful were included. Finally, the limitations of the study and clinical applications will be suggested.

### **Interpretation of correlational analyses**

One of the hypotheses of the study was that there is an negative correlational relationship between parental resilience and parental stress. The findings showed that parental resilience is negatively and significantly correlated with parent stress. That is, parents with high parental stress are less likely to be resilient. These results are consistent with research conducted with parents who have autism spectrum disorders (ASD) by Pastor - Crezuala et. al., (2016, 2021) and Duca (2015). Pastor - Crezuala et al. (2016) selected 42 ASD diagnosed and 42 undiagnosed children aged 5-8 and their families as participants, and conducted the study in Valencian state schools. In this study examining the parental stress, resilience, child

IQ, and severity of autism, perceived parental stress was found to be significantly higher in parents of children with ASD. Parents described themselves as more resilient and described less stress related to their parenting role. In another study with 97 parents in 2021, participants were divided into three groups as down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder and typical development. In this study, intergroup parental stress was found to be high in parents of children with autism spectrum disorder and no significant difference was found in terms of resilience for these three groups (Pastor Crezuala et al. 2021). From a resilience perspective, no significant difference was found between the groups. Another finding is that high resilience and low parent stress are noted in parents who have children with down syndrome. The study shows that families define themselves as resilient and see themselves as able to cope with this situation. In the study conducted by Duca (2015) parents of children with autism spectrum disorder were selected as participants. It was found that the variables family communication, problem solving and make meaning of adversity, which are related to parental resilience, were associated with low parent stress. In Kavatolis's study (2017), which explored parental resilience and parental stress with a focus on social support within families with autistic children, it was observed that various facets of parental resilience, including positive outlook, family communication and problem-solving abilities, utilization of social and economic resources, family connectedness, family spirituality, and the ability to derive meaning from adversity, were correlated with parental stress. Furthermore, social support was identified as having a negative association with parent stress and a positive association with resilience

Another hypothesis of the study was that there is a positive correlation between parental resilience and mindful parenting. The findings showed that parental resilience is positively and significantly correlated with mindful parenting. That is, parents who have mindful parenting components as listening with full attention, self-compassion etc. predisposes to high levels of parental resilience. Since the concept of mindful parenting is a subject that has just begun to be researched, there are not many studies on this subject in the literature. In addition, there are intervention programs and research in the literature to increase the child's resilience by enhancing mindfulness of parent. A holistic Model of Compassion, Mindfulness, and Resilience in Parental Caregiving has been developed by Cousineau (2019). In the intervention proposal, which aims to increase parenting resilience through mindfulness and self-compassion, it is aimed to foster resilience by focusing on emotional regulation, coping strategies, compassion-focused meditations and self-compassion (Cousineau et. al., 2019). Researchers indicate that developing compassion and mindfulness skills fosters parental

resilience. In another study consisting of mothers with deaf children, it was aimed to investigate the effect of mindful parenting on resilience and attachment. In the study conducted in Iran, the participants of which were 30 hearing mothers, an 8-session mindful parenting program was applied to the intervention group. The content of the intervention consists of awareness exercises, breathing exercises, noticing automatic behaviours and yoga practices. It was found that the mindful parenting program increased the resilience and attachment of hearing mothers of deaf children (Aghaziarati et al., 2023). In parallel with these findings, it aimed to prepare an mindful parenting and parental stress intervention based on the results of this thesis research.

According to current study, mindful parenting and parent stress was significantly and negatively correlated. Namely, parents who have mindful parenting skills may have low levels of parent stress. In fact, mindfulness is a topic that emerged to manage stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2015) and Dumas (2005) suggested how to integrate the mindfulness techniques into the family systems and parents. In a study conducted by Kumalasari (2020), the relationship between parent stress and mindful parenting in mothers who have early age children was examined. Parental stress and mindful parenting were found to be negatively correlated as is the case in this study. Namely, mindful parenting can be used as a tool to manage parental stress. Parents can manage their stress by focusing on and making space for their own and their child's emotions and thoughts. In a study conducted with mothers of adolescent. According to the results of the research conducted by Chaplin et al., it was found that mindfulness skills can reduce parental stress and improve the parent-child relationship. Chaplin et. al., conducted research with parents of children of adolescence age, by organizing an intervention based on mindful parenting, it reduced parental stress by increasing the mindfulness of mothers by increasing emotional awareness and strengthening the parent-child relationship. In addition, it was improved parent-adolescent relationship quality (Chaplin et al., 2018). According to Bögels et al. (2010), mindful parenting supports the executive functions of parents because mindful parenting navigates parents to be aware of attention and to react slowly. This has the effect of making planning and organization easier. In parallel, as a result of this study, mindful parenting and resilience were found to be related. As mentioned before, executive function sustainability is one of the important building blocks. In other words, mindful parenting contributes indirectly to resilience.

In summary, the results of the research are compatible with the literature. Mindful parenting, parenting stress, and parental resilience are interconnected concepts that revolve around the positive parenting, well-being and functioning of families. These concepts are

interconnected in that mindful parenting practices can help reduce parenting stress by promoting self-awareness, emotional regulation, and effective coping strategies. Additionally, fostering parental resilience involves cultivating mindful approaches to communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution within the family unit. By practicing mindfulness in parenting and nurturing resilience, families can enhance their overall well-being and strengthen their bonds.

### **Interpretation of regression analyses**

The hypothesis was parental stress and mindful parenting will predict parental resilience. The multiple regression analysis showed that mindful parenting and parental stress predict parental resilience. While the direction of the regression relationship between parental stress and parental resilience was found to be negative, the direction of the regression relationship between conscious parenting and parental resilience was found to be positive. The reason for the conduct of the research was that parental resilience could not be attributed to a single factor. According to the ecosystemic view interaction between individuals, families, communities, and larger systems contributes to parental resilience because each family engages in micro or macro interactions with other families and society (Walsh, 2016). Based on this, the current study has contributed to the literature as research that examines both the individual factor as stress and relational factor as mindfulness and the relationship between parenting-related variables and parental resilience. In addition to the correlation analyses discussed, when viewed as a whole both variables as mindfulness and stress strongly predicted resilience. In a study conducted by Mohammadi et al. (2020), a training intervention session comprising mindful parenting skills and psychological capital training was administered to mothers of blind children. The findings revealed that the mindful parenting program led to a reduction in parental stress and an increase in parental flexibility. This program, which included techniques such as self-compassion, quick relaxation, focusing on situations rather than thoughts, and three-minute breathing breaks, proved effective in achieving these outcomes. However, in a separate study conducted with parents of school-age children during the COVID-19 pandemic, the relationship between mindful attention awareness and parental resilience in predicting parent stress was examined. Interestingly, the results of this study did not align with the findings of the aforementioned thesis.



According to results of the study, mindfulness was not significantly associated with parenting stress. On the other hand, in line with the thesis results, mindfulness and parental resilience were found to be associated (Nabila et al., 2022).

### **Interpretation of socio-demographic variables**

Firstly, some analyses were conducted for the variables of some socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. And this comparison of analysis is discussed based on literature.

The current study found that there were no significant differences in the scores of the parental resilience between participants based on gender. This finding is in line parallel with literature. In the literature women's resilience levels equal men's resilience levels. Namely, men are more vulnerable to risk factors as negative events, stress, parent's disorders, poverty (Bernard, 1996; Luthar, 1999) on the other hand woman express negative problems easily (Ari & Çarkıt, 2020). In a study conducted with 83 Greek parents' relationship between parental resilience, resilience, family well-being and differences between mother and father was researched. According to results, there were no significant differences between mother and father in parental resilience, resilience and family well-being (Aivalioti & Pezirkianidis, 2020). Parental resilience studies have been conducted with mothers, and in studies that also include fathers, the distribution between groups is unequal. The participation rate of mothers in studies is higher than that of fathers. The same pattern was seen in current study. This pattern may depend on many variables such as gender roles, the meaning given to parenting, and the meaning given to research.

### **CONCLUSION**

Despite the difficult situations experienced, protective factors that play a role in the development of families and support both the individual resilience of family members and the relationships between family members are of great importance. In the context, the result of the research shows that mindful parenting and parental stress predict parental resilience. It is thought that the results of the research will contribute to studies on parental resilience and parenting. Moreover, the present research has revealed results that can be used in training, support, and intervention practices to be applied to parents to enhance resilience.

NOTE: This preprint reports new research that has not been certified by peer review and should not be used as established information without consulting multiple experts in the field.

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## TABLES

**Table 1.**

*Correlation Coefficients between the Study Variables*

	1	2	3
1. Parental Resilience	1	.530*	-.401*
2. Mindful Parenting	.530*	1	-.379*
3. Parent Stress	-.401*	-.379*	1

\* $p < 0.01$

**Table 2**

*Unstandardised (B) and Standardised ( $\beta$ ) Regression Coefficients for each predictor in a Regression Model predicting parental resilience*

Variable	B	$\beta$
Mindful Parenting	.95	.45
Parent Stress	-.64	-.25

Note.  $N=183$ ,  $R^2=.33$  for the model

NOTE: This preprint reports new research that has not been certified by peer review and should not be used as established information without consulting multiple experts in the field.

$p < .05$

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