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Research Article

Mindful Parenting Training to Reduce Parenting Stress in Mothers of Children with Severe Non-Verbal Autism

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Abstract
This study was intended to assess the effectiveness of mindful parenting training in reducing the level of parenting stress in mothers who have children with non-verbal Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The research design used was Single Case Experimental Design (SCED) with A-B-A approach, involving three mothers as participants. Intervention in the form of mindful parenting training that integrates increased knowledge of yoga concepts and skills was conducted over several sessions. Data were collected through Parental Stress Scale (PSS) instrument, mindful parenting concept knowledge test, and yoga skill observation. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and visual graph analysis. Results showed an increase in scores on aspects of mindful parenting knowledge and skills, accompanied by a decrease in the average parenting stress score from 29.33 to 28.00. Although this decrease was moderate quantitatively, the general pattern showed that two out of three participants experienced a consistent decrease in stress. These findings indicate that mindful parenting training has the potential to improve mothers' cognitive capacity and emotion regulation, and is functionally relevant in supporting the parenting of non-verbal ASD children

Keywords: Mindfulness Parenting, Non-verbal, Parenting Stress

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INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a group of disorders that typically appear in the preschool years and are characterized by difficulties in communication and social interaction,

as well as restricted and repetitive behaviors, interests, and activities (American Psychological Association, 2024). According to the DSM-5-TR, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) involves persistent deficits in social interaction and communication, plus restricted, repetitive behaviors and interests. Symptoms vary widely in type and severity, ranging from mild to severe, affecting individuals differently. Based on the research of (Secinti, 2024), researchers used the Autism Behavior Checklist (ABC) to assess the severity of ASD symptoms and found a significant relationship between more severe symptoms and the level of parenting stress experienced by mothers. In (DAULAY, 2021), states that in severe severity and the number of maladaptive behaviors in the symptoms of children with ASD, it increases the difficulty of mothers in caring for their children, which has an impact on the high parenting stress experienced by mothers.

ASD diagnoses are rising globally, including Indonesia. CDC data shows a 30% increase in ASD prevalence among Asian, Black, and Hispanic children in 2020 versus 2018. For the first time, 8-year-old Asian (3.3%), Hispanic (3.2%), and Black (2.9%) children had higher autism rates than White children (2.4%) (Centers for Disease Control, 2023). According to WHO, about 1 in 160 children in the world has ASD. Meanwhile in Indonesia, based on the Special School Statistics Data Center in 2020, there were 889 students with ASD in Indonesia and there are an additional 500 new cases each year (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021). In 2022, the child population increased to 275.8 million with an estimated 3.3 million autistic children (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020-2022).

With the increase in the number of children with ASD, there is also an increase in the number of mothers who have children with ASD (Rachma Setya Isfani, 2021). According to(Papalia, 2018), mothers act as primary caregivers in the early days of a child's life, which directly affects the child's cognitive, language, and emotional regulation abilities. Several studies on childcare also emphasize the importance of the mother's role in child development, according to (Devi Amelia, 2019), Mothers often accept their children more fully due to intense involvement from pregnancy and breastfeeding, strengthening emotional bonds. Fathers, focused on work, usually have less emotional involvement and often delegate childcare and education responsibilities to mothers. Meanwhile, according to research by (Larasati, 2021), Mothers play a vital role in childcare, especially for children aged 5-12. For mothers of children with ASD, challenges are greater, as they support development while managing complex autism symptoms, making parenting more difficult than for mothers of typically developing children.

According to (Ikhda Izzatul Aqiilah, 2023), ASD behaviors challenging for mothers include hyperactivity like hitting or screaming, social interaction difficulties, speech impairments, playing unusually, and inappropriate emotional expressions such as laughing or crying without clear reasons. In addition, according to (Rachma Setya Isfani, 2021), the challenges faced by mothers of children with ASD include the need for great commitment in lifelong care because the child requires continuous adjustment, as well as the stigma that considers ASD a disgrace and a burden to the family. Mothers of children with ASD often face stigma and discrimination due to a lack of public awareness about children with special needs, which makes mothers feel humiliated, isolated and judged (Pyszkowska, 2021).

Mothers of children with ASD are at risk of parenting stress due to significant challenges in caring for their children, with higher levels of stress experienced compared to mothers of children with normal development or other developmental disorders (Rachma Setya Isfani,

2021). The mother's dominant role in parenting leads to parenting stress, where educating a child with ASD often makes it difficult for the mother to go through daily life and face various challenges in caring for the child, while the lack of social support further exacerbates the parenting stress experienced (Ikhda Izzatul Aqiilah, 2023).

According to Berry & Jones in (Mardatilah Hayati, 2024), defines parenting stress as a condition that arises from negative emotional experiences experienced by mothers and fathers when trying to fulfill their obligations in caring for and educating a child. According to (Donna A. de Maat, 2021), parenting stress is a negative feeling experienced by mothers towards their children and themselves due to perceptions of high parenting burden. In other words, parenting stress occurs when the relationship conditions between mothers and fathers are filled with feelings of tension and anxiety that exceed their own capacity when carrying out their role as mothers. This situation causes dysfunction in the parenting role which is influenced by the mother's limited understanding of the problems or disorders experienced by their children (Rahayu, 2019). In terms of parenting in Indonesia, a mother is more at risk of experiencing parenting stress because generally children spend more time at home with their mothers when their fathers work outside for a living (Dinda Aisha, 2022).

Parenting stress arises from tension and anxiety exceeding a mother’s capacity to care for and interact with her child. It results from imbalance between perceived demands and a mother’s ability to meet them, often worsened by limited understanding of the child’s problems or disorders. (Rahayu, 2019).

One of the efforts to reduce parenting stress in mothers who have children with ASD according to research by (Kurnia Boby, 2024), by doing mindfulness techniques. Applying mindfulness techniques allows mothers who experience parenting stress to increase self-awareness, pay more attention to their bodies and emotions, and regulate emotions at a deeper level of awareness (FHIRMAN RAMADHAN, 2021).(Kabat-Zinn J. , 2013) defines mindfulness as an awareness that arises from paying attention intentionally, in the present moment, and without judgment. (Kabat-Zinn M. &.-Z., 1997), also explained that mindfulness in the context of parenting means paying attention to the child and the parenting style consciously, in the present moment, and without judgment in the relationship between mother and child. In addition, Kabat-Zinn emphasizes that mindfulness allows mothers to understand their children in a more honest and profound way, and encourages responsible action and integrity. According to(Pakdaman, 2014), mindfulness in the context of parenting is defined as the mindful parenting method. The mindful parenting method, is an adaptation by combining two methods, namely the MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) and MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy) approaches designed to assist mothers in developing mindfulness skills, both for self-management and in carrying out parenting tasks.

Mindful parenting can also be understood as a parent's awareness in giving full and purposeful attention, and avoiding labeling or negatively assessing every experience experienced by the child (Duncan, 2009). According to Duncan (2009), there are five dimensions in mindful parenting including: (1) attentive listening, (2) non-judgmental acceptance of self and child, (3) awareness of self and child, (4) self-regulation in the parenting relationship and (5) compassion for self and child.

In (Nikmatunasikah, 2024), it states that mindful parenting interventions can reduce parenting stress experienced by mothers with special needs. In addition, in the research of (Daryan Nur Rifat, 2023), also said that mindful parenting-based interventions conducted

online for housewives with young children were considered quite effective in reducing the level of parenting stress. In (Mubarok, 2016), shows that mothers who have mindful parenting skills tend to avoid stress arising from parenting, mothers are able to respect children's opinions and behavior wisely, and are able to carry out their role as mothers optimally, and build harmonious relationships between mothers and children.

The application of mindful parenting intervention uses the intervention stages compiled by Bogels et al. (2014). Based on the (Pakdaman, 2014), there are 8 sessions in mindful parenting intervention, including: (1) awareness of automatic patterns in parenting, (2) recognizing the child as a whole, (3) caring for yourself as a mother, (4) responding rather than reacting, (5) recognizing old patterns from childhood, (6) conflict as an opportunity for connection, (7) setting limits with compassion, and (8) Integration and reflection. In the research of (Daryan Nur Rifat, 2023), said that the use of modules with 8 sessions has limitations, where in its implementation it experiences obstacles due to limited time with a long duration of intervention, so in this study adapting the Bogels (2014) module from 8 sessions to 4 sessions and found the results that the intervention was still proven effective in reducing parenting stress. In (FHIRMAN RAMADHAN, 2021), research also said that there were obstacles in conducting an 8-session mindful parenting intervention due to the difficulty of determining the meeting time due to the busyness of the participants, so this study also used an adaptation of the mindful parenting module into 4 sessions which also proved effective in reducing parenting stress. In (Kurnia Boby, 2024) also showed that mindful parenting intervention using (Pakdaman, 2014), module adapted into 4 sessions proved effective in reducing parenting stress in mothers who have children with autism spectrum.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of a 4-session mindful parenting training in reducing parenting stress among mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The sessions cover mindful parenting concepts, managing parenting stress, broadening perspectives with empathy and boundaries, and mindful strategies like body scan, breathing exercises, and gentle yoga. The study also examines the impact of non-verbal ASD symptom severity on stress. Using a Single Case Experimental Design (SCED), the research aims to quantitatively track changes in parenting stress levels following the training, providing deeper insights into its benefits for mothers of children with ASD.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach utilizing a Single Case Experimental Design (SCED), as described by (Sri Adi Widodo, 2021). This design allows researchers to evaluate the effects of interventions in depth on individuals or small groups by comparing conditions before, during, and after the intervention. According to (Robyn L. Tate, 2020), SCED aims to identify the causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, and control external variables to maintain internal validity.

This study utilized the A-B-A design, which consists of three phases: initial baseline (A1), intervention (B), and re-baseline (A2). Phase A1 included baseline measurements of the dependent variable, namely mothers' parenting stress levels, as well as cognitive measurements of mindful parenting and yoga skills. Phase B consisted of the intervention using a mindful parenting module modified from (Pakdaman, 2014), guide, which included four sessions: (1) mindful parenting concepts, (2) parenting stress, (3) empathy and compassion development,

and (4) mindful parenting strategies and future planning. Phase A2 was conducted after the intervention was stopped to evaluate the sustainability of the changes.

Participants

The participants in this study were three mothers who have children with a diagnosis of severe and non-verbal Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), aged 5 years and 5 months, 8 years, and 8 years and 5 months. participants were selected through purposive sampling technique from Majelis Anak Spesial in Jatiasih Bekasi area, based on the criteria set by the researcher.

Instrument

The main instrument used was theParental Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Berry and Jones (1995) and adapted by (Dewi Kumalasari, 2022), with a reliability of α = .828. The scale consists of 18 items divided into two dimensions: pleasure (8 items) and strain (10 items), using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A high total score on the strain dimension and low on pleasure indicates high levels of parenting stress. Other instruments included a mindful parenting comprehension questionnaire and a yoga skills checklist to assess physical skills and body awareness.

Procedure

Before the research began, approval was obtained from Paramadina University, and participants gave informed consent voluntarily. Baseline measurements included the Parental Stress Scale (PSS), and pre-tests on mindful parenting knowledge and skills. The training had four sessions covering mindful parenting concepts, managing stress, empathy and boundaries, and mindful strategies like body scan, breathing exercises, and gentle yoga. Pre- and post-tests measured cognitive and skill improvements. In the final phase (A2), the PSS was re-administered to assess changes in parenting stress, enabling evaluation of the training's effectiveness.

Data Analysis

In this study, data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe or describe the data that had been collected without testing hypotheses, with the aim of knowing the tendency of the data (central tendency), distribution (dispersion), and the form of data distribution as an initial basis in evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention provided (Sugiyono, 2013). In addition, data were analyzed visually in the form of graphs to see trends and levels of behavior change in each phase (Pat Dugard, 2012). Qualitative descriptions from field observations and activity notes complemented the analysis to provide a more comprehensive picture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to evaluate changes in cognitive abilities and skills in mindful parenting in three mothers who have children with non-verbal Autism SpectrumDisorder (ASD), before and after being given mindful parenting training. The assessment was conducted in two times, namely pre-test (before intervention) and post-test (after intervention).

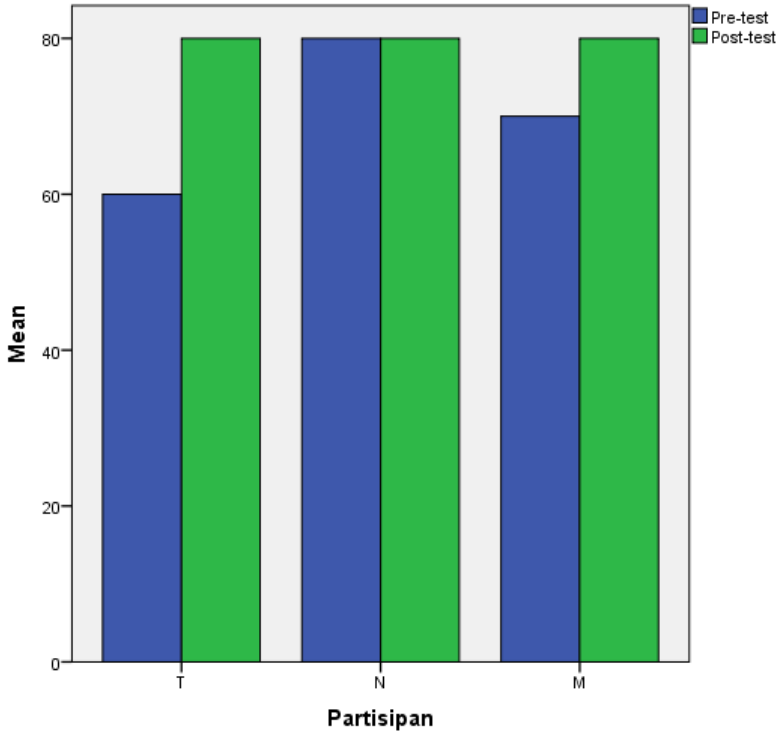
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Knowledge of Mindful Parenting Concept.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre Test	3	60	80	70.00	10.000
Post Test	3	80	80	80.00	.000
Valid N (listwise)	3				

Based on table 1 above, it shows that the descriptive statistics in general have increased cognitive ability scores in Mindful Parenting in the three participants after attending the training. The average pre-test score was 70, while the average post-test score increased to 80, with an average score difference of 10 points. This pattern of increase indicates that mindful parenting training provides an increase in cognitive abilities, namely in knowledge related to the concept of mindful parenting in participants.

Figure 1: Bar Diagram of pre-test and post-test Knowledge of Mindful Parenting Concept.



Based on Figure 1, cognitive abilities improved after mindful parenting training. Participant 1's score rose from 60 to 80, participant 3's from 70 to 80, while participant 2 remained stable at 80, likely due to her education and parenting experience. The mean score was 75 (SD = 8.37), with scores below 66.63 as low, 66.63–75 as moderate, and above 75 as high. Participants 1 and 3 moved from moderate to high, while participant 2 stayed in the high category. These results indicate that mindful parenting training effectively enhances cognitive knowledge in mothers of non-verbal ASD children.

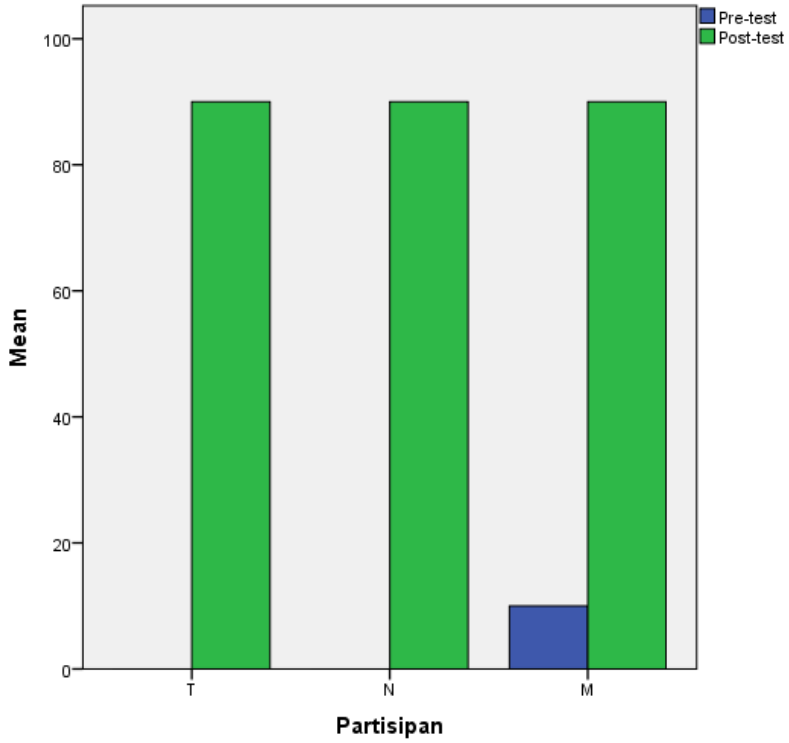
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of pre-test and post-test of Mindful Parenting Skills.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre Test	3	0	10	3.33	5.774
Post Test	3	90	90	90.00	.000
Valid N (listwise)	3				

Based on table 3 above, the average yoga skill score at pre-test was 3.33 (SD = 5.77), within a range of 0 to 10. Both before and after training, all three participants fell into the moderate skill category. This category is based on a mean of 46.67 and standard deviation of 47.61, with 0 as the lower and 94.3 as the upper moderate limits. Although participants remained in the moderate category, their average score increased significantly from 3.33 at pre-test to 90.00 at post-test, with a standard deviation of 0.00. This demonstrates that mindful parenting yoga training effectively enhanced the participants' yoga skills.

Figure 2: Bar Diagram of pre-test and post-test of Mindful Parenting Skills.



Based on Figure 2 bar chart above, it shows the improvement in yoga skills. In the pre-test phase, two of the three participants scored 0 and one participant scored 10, reflecting low initial understanding of the skills taught. After training, all reached a consistent 90. This highlights the mindful parenting training's effectiveness in significantly enhancing participants' yoga skills across the board, confirming the program's success.

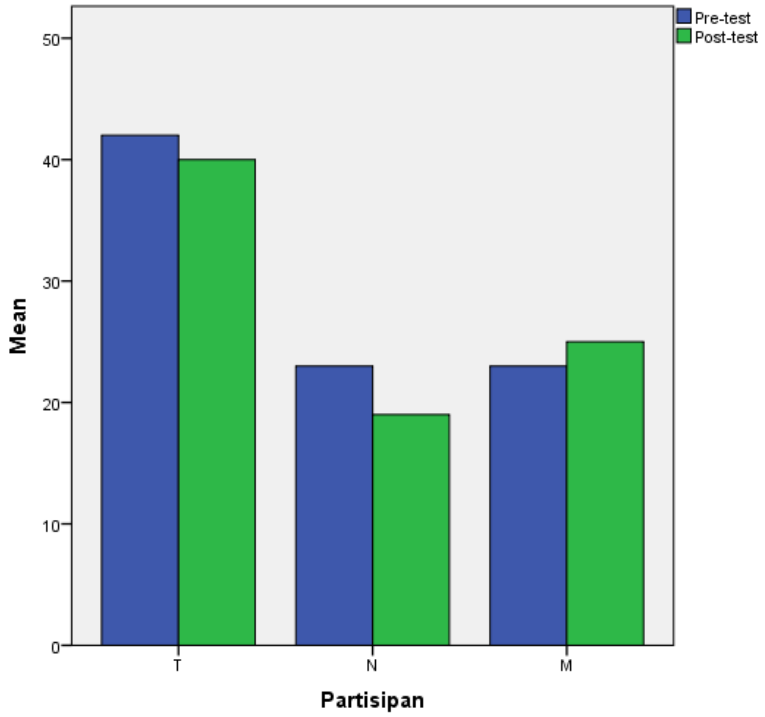
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of pre-test and post-test of Parental Stress Scale (PSS)

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre Test	3	23	42	29.33	10.970
Post Test	3	19	40	28.00	10.817
Valid N (listwise)	3				

Based on table 3 above, it shows a decrease in mean parenting stress from 29.33 (pre-test) to 28.00 (post-test). Although small, this change reflects reduced stress after mindful parenting training. Stable standard deviations (10.97 to 10.82) indicate consistent variation, with stress levels shifting from moderate to mild among participants

Figure 3. Bar Diagram of pre-test and post-test of Parental Stress Scale (PSS)



Based on the graph above, it shows that two of the three participants experienced decreased stress scores after mindful parenting training, while one had a slight increase. Stress levels were categorized as low (<18.90), moderate (18.90–38.44), and high (>38.44). The first participant's score decreased from 43 to 40, remaining in the high-stress category. The second participant's score dropped from 25 to 20, both within the moderate category. The third participant's score increased from 24 to 27, also within the moderate stress range.

Table 4. Parental Stress Scale (PSS) follow-up interview table

Subject	**Follow up Result**	**Conclusion**
Participant T, is a 33-year-old mother who works as a housewife and has two children and her first child has a diagnosis of Autism	Mrs. T reported good physical health but ongoing psychological stress due to economic burdens. Though significant changes weren't	Although Mrs. T showed no significant stress reduction, she demonstrated increased emotional awareness and adaptation efforts. External

Spectrum Disorder with severe non-verbal characteristics.	felt, she is making efforts to stay patient and adapt emotionally. Self-acceptance is developing gradually, though she has not yet applied yoga skills during the past week	stressors like economic pressure and limited application of mindful parenting may have affected outcomes, indicating that internalizing these skills takes time and consistent support.
Participant N, is a 43-year-old mother who works as a teacher (elementary and junior high school teacher) and has three children and her third child has a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder with severe non-verbal characteristics.	Mrs. N felt calmer and happier after the training, despite not fully practicing yoga due to health issues. She has begun to relax, reflecting the training's positive emotional impact and the gradual application of mindful parenting skills based on her current condition and capacity.	Mrs. N showed a positive emotional response, feeling calmer and happier with her child. Though physical conditions limited full technique use, her initial effort to relax reflects growing motivation and awareness. This suggests the training's positive impact is emerging, with gradual adaptation and application of mindful parenting skills.
Participant M, is a 37-year-old mother who works as a private employee and has an only child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder with severe non-verbal characteristics.	Ms. M felt overwhelmed by work and childcare, affecting her physical and emotional health. However, after the Mindfulness Parenting session, she began using relaxation techniques like breathing exercises and morning walks, which helped her feel calmer and more focused, showing initial positive effects of the training.	Based on the follow-up results, there were positive changes in Mrs. M after attending the Mindfulness Parenting intervention. She started to implement self-regulation strategies and showed improvement in stress management and balance between work and motherhood. This indicated that the mindfulness approach contributed to the improvement of her parenting skills and psychological well-being.

Based on the interview table above, the researcher conducted a follow-up process to find out whether the mindful parenting skills provided during the training session had been applied by the participants in their daily lives. The insignificant decrease in stress scores and the increase that occurred in participants may be influenced by various factors, such as differences in individual characteristics, the level of application of mindful parenting techniques in daily life, as well as external factors such as social support and the workload of a mother.

Discussion

This study shows mindful parenting training reduces parenting stress in mothers of non-verbal ASD children. Table 3 and Figure 3 show the average Parental Stress Scale score decreased from 29.33 (pre-test) to 28.00 (post-test), with stable standard deviations (10.97 to 10.82). Two participants (T and N) showed stress decreases (43 to 40, 25 to 20), while one (M) had a slight increase (24 to 27). Variations in response may relate to differences in education, occupation, and psychosocial factors. This supports Begum's (2020) view that higher education in mothers correlates with better cognitive and executive functions, aiding positive management of children with ASD. In addition, this is in line with the findings of (Ulima Salsabila, 2022), which state that parenting stress is generally influenced by three main factors, namely the limitations of children's abilities, external factors (such as demographics and social support), and internal factors that include maternal personality characteristics. These factors affect the effectiveness of the training differently in each participant, resulting in variations in the measured change in stress scores.

The reduction in stress is supported by increased knowledge and skills in mindful parenting. Scores rose from 70 to 80 in knowledge and from 3.33 to 90 in yoga skills. This shows the training improved cognitive understanding and strengthened self-regulation through body and breathing techniques important for caring for non-verbal ASD children.

The consistent pattern of skill and knowledge improvement across participants provides support for the theory that mindful parenting can improve mothers' emotional responses, reduce stress reactivity, and improve the quality of the mother-child relationship. This is in line with the opinions of (Susan M. Bögels, 2010) and (Larissa G. Duncan, 2009) who state that mindfulness in parenting can reduce stress and increase maternal sensitivity to children's needs, especially in the context of caring for children with special needs. In addition, these results support the study of (NIRBHAY N. SINGH, 2006), which found that mindfulness training in mothers of children with developmental disabilities contributed to a decrease in stress and child problem behaviors. Thus, mindful parenting training conducted in an integrated manner, including cognitive understanding and body-based skills, was found to be psychologically and functionally effective in reducing parenting stress levels in mothers facing the challenges of parenting a child with non-verbal ASD.

Overall, mindful parenting training was found to be both functionally and psychologically effective in reducing parenting stress, particularly by enhancing attentional capacity, awareness, understanding of mindful parenting concepts, stress management, perspective broadening with empathy and boundaries, and by teaching mindful strategies such as body scans, breathing exercises, gentle yoga, and physical skills that support emotion regulation. These findings are valuable as a foundation for developing similar intervention programs, especially to support mothers of non-verbal ASD children who are vulnerable to emotional stress in the parenting process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of descriptive statistical analysis of pre-test and post-test data, it can be concluded that mindful parenting training is proven effective in reducing parenting stress in mothers who have children with non-verbal Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). There is a decrease in the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) score from an average of 29.33 to 28.00, indicating a decrease in the level of parenting stress, although it is quantitatively classified as moderate. In

addition, there was an increase in the knowledge aspect of mindful parenting concepts from an average of 70 to 80 and there was an increase in mindful parenting yoga skills from an average of 3.33 to 90, indicating that the training not only improved cognitive understanding, but also strengthened emotion regulation and body awareness skills relevant in the context of parenting a child with non-verbal Autism Spectrum Disorder (AS). These findings support that holistically integrated mindful parenting training can provide functional benefits for mothers in managing stress and improving overall parenting quality.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Look this example below:

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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