



## The Influence of Perceived Social Support on Mindful Parenting: A Mediating Model of Gratitude

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### ABSTRACT

Early childhood care has such a major implication for individual development that it requires full attention. The present study aimed to determine the effect of perceived social support on mindful parenting mediated by gratitude. This quantitative correlational study involved 232 Indonesian mothers who were recruited randomly to fill the MIPQ, GQ-6, and ISEL-12 questionnaires. Path analysis was conducted using the R software. The results showed that gratitude mediated the relationship between perceived social support and mindful parenting. The mediating role was supported by the bootstrap analysis of the indirect effect (0.12, 95% CI [0.09, 0.16]). Additionally, perceived social support was found to have a significant direct effect on mothers' gratitude, with a standardized coefficient of 0.23 ( $p = .000$ ). The finding of this study suggests that positive emotions towards every situation faced by mothers through gratitude enables mothers to practice mindful parenting, characterized by greater awareness and acceptance of their children's uniqueness. Therefore, it is important to increase a mother's sense of gratitude, through practical support from their partner and family.

### ABSTRAK

Pengasuhan pada masa kanak-kanak awal memiliki implikasi yang sangat besar terhadap perkembangan individu sehingga memerlukan perhatian penuh. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh persepsi dukungan sosial terhadap mindful parenting yang dimediasi oleh rasa syukur. Penelitian kuantitatif korelasional ini melibatkan 232 ibu di Indonesia yang direkrut secara acak untuk mengisi kuesioner MIPQ, GQ-6, dan ISEL-12. Analisis jalur dilakukan dengan menggunakan perangkat lunak R. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rasa syukur memediasi hubungan antara persepsi dukungan sosial dan mindful parenting. Peran mediasi ini didukung oleh analisis bootstrap terhadap efek tidak langsung (0,12, 95% CI [0,09, 0,16]). Selain itu, persepsi dukungan sosial terbukti memiliki pengaruh langsung yang signifikan terhadap rasa syukur pada ibu, dengan koefisien terstandar sebesar 0,23 ( $p = .000$ ). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa emosi positif dalam setiap situasi yang dihadapi ibu melalui rasa syukur memungkinkan ibu untuk menerapkan *mindful parenting*, yang ditandai dengan kesadaran lebih besar dan penerimaan terhadap keunikan anak. Oleh karena itu, penting untuk meningkatkan rasa syukur pada ibu melalui dukungan praktis dari pasangan dan keluarga.

## Introduction

Mindfulness is a quality of self-awareness without passing judgment on experience over time (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn (2021) define mindfulness as a core psychological process that can change a person's response to inevitable life difficulties to be more positive (Brown et al., 2007). Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn (1997) first expanded the concept of mindfulness from intrapersonal to interpersonal relationships and proposed the concept of mindful parenting (Ahemaitijiang et al., 2021). Mindful parenting is a parenting process that involves deliberately bringing awareness of every moment with children, including awareness of the nature, feelings, uniqueness of each child, being present to listen with attention, acceptance of all children's conditions, both happy and unpleasant, and responding appropriately (Ahemaitijiang et al., 2021; L. Duncan et al., 2015; Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 2021; McCaffrey et al., 2017). Mindful parenting has two main components: (1) mindful discipline, focus on non-reactive parenting, awareness of parenting, and following parenting goals; and (2) being in the moment with the child, focusing on understanding empathy and accepting every child's behavior without conditions and judgment (McCaffrey et al., 2017).

Mindful parenting has been shown to improve the quality of parent-child relationships (Chaplin et al., 2021; Shorey & Ng, 2021), mothers' unconditional acceptance of each child's condition, and improving the quality of life for parents, thus reducing symptoms of emotional disorder behavior in children during adolescence (Coatsworth et al., 2018; Duncan et al., 2009; Laifer et al., 2021; Parent & McKee, 2019). With the above evidence, mindful parenting has gradually become a concept that needs to be studied and developed in psychological research, particularly related to its role as a factor that may affect the quality of early parenting (Reynolds, 2003).

Young children under eight years-old have special characteristics with challenges for mothers, who usually serves as their primary caregivers, which drain a lot of energy and emotions (Meunier et al., 2011). On the one hand, they have enormous desire to learn new things, but on the other hand they have not developed mature social skills and therefore young children require effective parenting (Belsky, 1984; Kumalasari & Fourianalistyawati, 2020). Early childhood is a period of development where parents, especially mothers, have responsibility for the welfare of their children's physical, emotional, and social aspects (Oates, 2010). Mindful parenting at every moment with children has been proven effective in improving mother-child psychological well-being (Han et al., 2019), reducing problematic behavior in children (Hidayati & Hartini, 2022; Shorey & Ng, 2021), and able to reduce parenting stress for mothers (Duncan, 2007; Romadhani & Hadjam, 2019; van der Oord et al., 2012).

In this context, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework provides a useful lens through which to an individual's external behavior is influenced by environmental factors. These are divided into five classes: microsystems, mesosystems, ecosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (Belsky, 1984). In addition to the mother's internal psychological factors, parenting is also influenced by external support, especially in significant others. Social support is a component of verbal and non-verbal information in the form of tangible assistance or actions that can have an emotional impact on the recipient (Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998). Social support has three aspects: appraisal support, belonging support, and tangible support (Cohen & Willis, 1985).

Mindful parenting is influenced by perceptions of social support for mothers (Mousavi & Dabiri, 2021; Syrotchen, 2019). With the perception of support, mothers feel they can improve their ability to deal with difficult situations and easily accept the reality of all the problems, especially problems related to parenting (Gordon et al., 2020; McKee et al., 2018). The perception of social support for mothers can reduce the level of parenting stress to improve parenting practices that have more emotional regulation and more positive reactions with compassion to children's behaviour, especially young children (Riany & Ihsana, 2021).

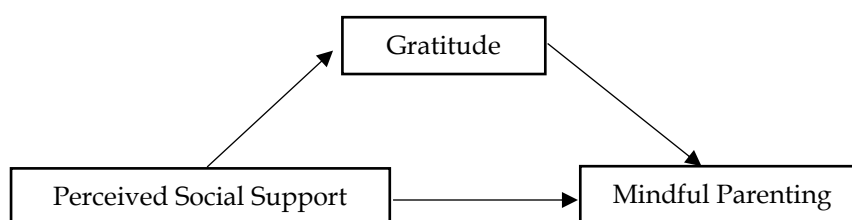
Gratitude is a positive emotion for individuals who feel thankful for the gift from others (Emmons & McCullough, 2012). Mothers who have high gratitude for their gifts, which are their children, will be able to have positive emotions, full of affection, and be consciously involved in the

parenting process, thus accepting the child's condition unconditionally (Anand et al., 2021; Halberstadt et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2018) The dimension of gratitude consists of three: thankfulness, gratefulness, and appreciation (McCullough et al., 2001).

The value of the existence of children, which is a blessing given by God, can influence positive emotions and is represented by parenting patterns applied by parents to children, namely consciously at every moment of togetherness and by parenting goals (Lurdes & Latipun, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020) Loving parents show kindness to themselves, which can help them appreciate every pose of their lives with their children more positively (Halberstadt et al., 2016; Lurdes & Latipun, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020) Gratitude which is a positive emotion, helps expand parents' attention and thinking by thinking about various actions that are more beneficial to children, so with gratitude mothers can have good emotional control in parenting practices for children every day (Lin, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2007).

The concept of mindful parenting has begun to be in demand in several studies in Indonesia. These studies include development of parenting programs based on mindful parenting (Nurhamidah & Retnowati, 2018; Romadhani & Hadjam, 2019), investigating the factors that influence the formation of mindful parenting in mothers (Khotimah, 2022; Kumalasari & Fourianalistyawati, 2021), and the development of mindful parenting measurement instruments for parents with adolescent children (Febriani et al., 2021). This study introduced the Indonesian version of MIPQ (Mindfulness in Parenting Questionnaire), used in a population of parents with children aged 2-12 years. An analysis uses EFA and CFA tests to determine the adequacy of the factor structure. Reliability, the convergent validity of factor structures, is also investigated.

Previous studies have examined the correlation between perceptions of social support, gratitude, and caring parenting (Lurdes & Latipun, 2019; Mousavi & Dabiri, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2020) However, no study has explored the link between the perception of social support for mindful parenting with gratitude as a mediator variable in mothers with young children in Indonesia. This study's main objective is to find out whether gratitude mediates between perceived social support and mindful parenting in mothers with early childhood children in Indonesia. Based on the literature review above, this study proposes that perceived social support, gratitude, and mindful parenting are positively and significantly correlated (H1). Furthermore, perceived social support is expected to have a direct influence on mindful parenting (H2). In addition, gratitude is hypothesized to serve as a mediating variable in the relationship between perceived social support and mindful parenting (H3).



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model

## Method

### *Research Design and Ethics*

This study used regression analysis with mediating variables to see the effect of perceived social support on mindful parenting through gratitude. Regression analysis with these mediating variables uses Hayes PROCESS Macro in hypothesis testing. This study has gained ethical clearance from a public university in Indonesia No. 132/KE/V/2023. All participants understand that their participation is voluntary and that their data will be stored safely and kept anonymous.

### *Participants*

Participants in the study were selected using a convenience sampling technique by distributing online survey forms to Indonesian mothers in February 2023. Participants were invited to participate in a mindful study of early childhood parenting. Participants had to be mothers having with at least one child aged below eight years-old to be included in the study. The questionnaire was distributed online through Google form format. This online survey consists of an introduction to the study, a description of the research objectives, inclusion criteria, and a brief discussion of issues related to research ethics. Participants were told that the study was anonymous that they were voluntary, and that no money or other compensation would be given. Only those who agree to study conditions will complete a questionnaire including demographic questions (e.g., age, occupation, number of children, and place of residence) and related scales. The final number of valid questionnaires received by researchers was 232 mothers (Mage 1/4 38.12; SD 1/4 6.56), where 36.2% of mothers have one child, 36.2% have two children, 17.2% have three children, 8.6% have four children, and 1.8% has five children; The number of participants living with extended family was 29.3%; Mothers' occupations are divided to: 41.4% are housewives, 24.1% work in private companies, 20.7% work as civil servants/state civil servants, and 13.8% work as other professions.

### **Research Instruments**

Mindful parenting was measured using the Mindfulness in Parenting Questionnaire (MIPQ) instrument developed by McCaffrey (2017), which consists of two important dimensions: mindful discipline and being in the moment with the child, with a total of 28 items. Responses were on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not like me at all) to 5 (very much like me). This instrument is used because it has been used before to measure mindful parenting of parents who have children aged 2-12 years (Febriani et al., 2021). For comparison, other similar instruments are used in the context of psychopathology (McCaffrey et al., 2017) This measuring instrument is proven to have a reliability coefficient of 0.950. This shows that 95% of the observed score variance is true score variance, and 5% is error variance caused by content sampling error and content heterogeneity. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of 28 items showed a loading factor of 0.66-0.95, CFI 0.871, RMSEA 0.058, and SRMR 0.051, so it can be concluded that the mindful parenting measurement tool is valid for measuring parental mindful parenting by the Kabat-Zinn theory (Febriani et al., 2021)

Gratitude was measured using the gratitude questionnaire (GQ-6) by Emos, McCullough, and Tsang (2004), responses were on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not like me at all) to 7 (very much like me), consisting of three dimensions, namely: thankfulness, gratefulness, and appreciative, with a total of 11 items. In Indonesian context research, it is proven to have an internal consistency score of 0.789 and a loading factor between 0.580-0.820 (Grimaldy & Haryanto, 2020). Next, perceived social support in this study was measured by the interpersonal survey evaluation list scale (ISEL-12) by Cohen et al. (1985), responses were on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (very much agree), consisting of three dimensions: appraisal support, belonging, and tangible, with 12 items. The instrument is proven to have an internal consistency score of 0.890 and a loading factor between 0.580-0.910 (Gordon et al., 2020).

### **Results**

The skewness value of each variable (-0.507, -0.324, -0.941) which was between  $\pm 2$ , indicating that all variables are normally distributed (Kim, 2013). Furthermore, based on the Figure 2, the relationship between each variable is linear (Montgomery et al., 2021). There is no multicollinearity between the independent variables, Perceived Social Support and Gratitude (VIF 1.285 < 10.00).



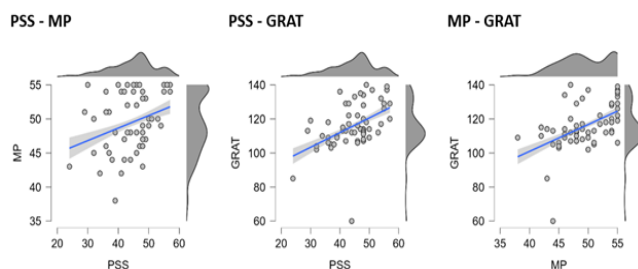


Figure 2. Scatter Plot

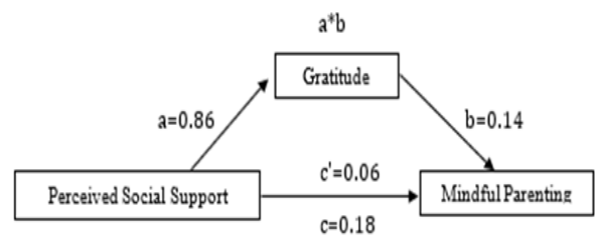


Figure 3. Testing Mediation Model of Gratitude

Table 1. Result of mediation analysis

	Path Coefficient	<i>p</i>	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
PSS – MP (Direct Effect)	0.06	0.11		
PSS – MP (Total Effect)	0.18	0.00		
PSS – MP (Indirect Effects)	0.12		0.09	0.16
PSS – MP (Effect Size)	0.23		0.15	0.28
PSS – Grat *	0.86	0.00		
Grat – MP **	0.14	0.00		

Notes. PSS=Perceived Social Support; MP=Mindful Parenting; Grat=Gratitude, \* = *a*; \*\*=*b*

The regression analysis showed that gratitude has a significant indirect effect between perceived social support and mindful parenting. Hypothesis 1 was supported, showing that both perceived social support and gratitude have a positive effect on mindful parenting ( $p < .001$ , coefficient = 0.23). However, Hypothesis 2 was not supported, as the direct effect of perceived social support on mindful parenting was not significant ( $p = .11$ ). Hypothesis 3 was supported, with gratitude acting as a mediator. The indirect effect was 0.12, with a 95% confidence interval [0.09, 0.16], showing it was significant because the interval did not include zero. The results also showed strong links for both path *a* (support to gratitude) and path *b* (gratitude to mindful parenting)

## Discussion

This study has managed to gather some evidence on perceived social support, gratitude, and mindful parenting through the use of a cross-sectional design. Perceived social support is proven to have a significant positive influence on gratitude. Previous studies supported this study that the perception of social support from parents will trigger positive emotions in dealing with all events, including adversities related to parenting. This means that the more positive the perception of social support owned by parents, the higher the gratitude they have in dealing with parental parenting problems for young children (Harita & Chusairi, 2022; Hasanah & Retnowati, 2019; Syrotchen, 2019; You et al., 2020). Parents with a high perception of social support from significant others are especially able to reduce the stress of parenting, feel affection, and have strength in themselves, whatever challenges are being faced alone, they can have higher self-confidence and can care for young children with greater self-kindness and positive emotions (Pratiwi, 2021; Taraban & Shaw, 2018). At the same time, they can also contribute to accepting all the challenges in the parenting process so that acceptance of children can be high and parent-child attitudes are full of affection (Riany & Ihsana, 2021). The perception of social support for parents can increase their confidence in parenting in accordance with parenting goals so that self-control in providing positive emotions will be higher.

A positive perception of the social support given to parents from other parties in the process of caring for children with special needs makes them able to reduce parenting stress and tolerate all obstacles that are being faced, thereby increasing self-acceptance and positive emotions by thanking them for all forms of assistance that have been given to them. This will make parents calmer in dealing with children's behavior without high emotional reactivity (Bi et al., 2022; Riany & Ihsana, 2021). In

turn, these attitudes and skills can help parents improve mindful parenting in terms of knowledge and practice in the parenting process (Nguyen et al., 2020). The couple's relationship with the parenting process can help mothers manage emotions better and adaptively (Meppelink et al., 2016). In addition to couples, perceived social support from the closest family is one influential factor in applying parenting to parents, especially children aged 0-30 months 30 months-6 years (Handayani et al., 2019). This is because preschool age and school age before adolescence is a period when maternal responsibility is at its broadest and most intense related to all aspects of a child's well-being, including health life, physical and emotional security, parenting, learning opportunities, and freedom of expression (Oates, 2010).

The analysis results show that perceived social support and mindful parenting are positively related. The research also supports the idea that gratitude acts as a mediator between them. This means that when parents feel more supported, they feel more grateful, which helps them become more mindful in parenting. A study in Vietnam also found that gratitude helps increase mindful parenting through parents' compassionate attitudes (Nguyen et al., 2020). Parents who feel supported by others usually have higher gratitude. This helps them give loving and warm parenting, with full attention and acceptance of the child's condition. Caring also helps parents notice and accept negative emotions without being overwhelmed. It reminds them on the goods of life and consequently helps parents feel even more grateful (Lurdes & Latipun, 2019; You et al., 2020).

Gratitude is described as a positive emotion (Warsah et al., 2023) that helps people focus and be mindful to choose better and kinder actions. In parenting, this means having a positive attitude toward the child. Parents who feel more grateful are more aware of themselves and show better control emotions in parenting. Gratitude also helps them understand child's emotions and show more love and acceptance. Previous studies also found that gratitude helps parents build social skills and show appreciation in their relationship with their child (Fredrickson, 2004). The other studies have also proven that gratitude positively correlates with mindfulness (Anand et al., 2021; O' Leary et al., 2016). Gratitude-based interventions have also been shown to influence mindful parenting (Chen et al., 2020; van der Oord et al., 2012). With positive emotions and the belief that children are a gift from God, parents can practice mindful parenting in every moment and show more care, love, and acceptance, which improves eventually the quality of parenting (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Emmons & McCullough (2012) explain that gratitude is a form of emotion or feeling that develops into an attitude, good moral traits, habits, and personality traits and ultimately will influence a mother in responding or reacting to various situations in parenting. That way, mothers will not be reactive have more effective emotional regulation, and can have awareness in every moment carried out with children with the application of parenting following the goals expected by parents. Mothers with high gratitude can establish quality relationships between parents and children to improve their psychological well-being (Halberstadt et al., 2016; O' Leary et al., 2016).

Parents have different demands depending on their child's age. According to Neece, Green, and Baker (2012) parents of children aged three to nine often feel less stress. For young children, parenting stress usually comes from daily problems (Crnic et al., 2005). Mindful parenting helps parents deal with these struggles by encouraging full attention, love, and acceptance without conditions (Syrotchen, 2019). Mothers who practice mindful parenting accept their child's behavior more calmly and are less reactive, which improves the parent-child relationship (Corthorn & Milicic, 2016; Syrotchen, 2019). It also helps reduce children's negative behavior (Singh et al., 2007), lowers parenting stress in mothers with young children (Kumalasari & Fourianalistyawati, 2020; Syrotchen, 2019), and improves parent-child psychological wellbeing (Dahlan, 2016; Parent et al., 2016).

Mindful parenting in another Indonesian study, according to Handayani et al. (2019) is influenced by social support. Extended family support has a direct influence on mindful parenting of mothers who have young children, in contrast to the results of research we have done that perceived social support is not proven to have a direct influence on mindful parenting. However, there is a variable that takes the role of mediator, namely gratitude. This shows that there are different views

on the factor that has a stronger influence in determining the formation of mindful parenting in mothers of young children in the Indonesian context of gratitude. That is, the value or perspective of parents towards children is a gift from God, and this gratitude becomes a more positive attitude towards parenting with full attention, love for children, and applying discipline by adjusting parenting goals.

As gratitude form of mindful parenting in mothers with the Indonesian context, it is necessary to have a cognitive affective aspect that assesses that a situation has a positive meaning for the child (Abidin et al., 2024; Wiswanti et al., 2020). These findings show that real support from partners and family helps mothers develop positive emotions and practice mindful parenting. However, the study has cultural bias, as most respondents were from Java, Indonesia. In this culture, gratitude plays a key role in raising children with love, acceptance, and without judgment, as children are seen as gifts from God (Baiduri & Yuniar, 2017; Haryanto & Kertamuda, 2016; Hidayati et al., 2024). Future research should explore the roles of both mothers and fathers in more depth and include different cultural views, so mindful parenting can be better understood.

## Conclusion

The results showed that perceived social support had a positive direct influence on gratitude but did not directly influence mindful parenting. Gratitude is a mediator variable between perceived social support and mindful parenting in mothers with children in early childhood. This means gratitude is the main factor determining how mindful parenting is applied to mothers. However, this gratitude variable will also be high if influenced by perceived social support, which is also high. From these findings, we recommend that future researchers conduct intervention studies that use gratitude and co-parenting in developing mindful parenting interventions in parents of young children. Further research is also recommended to see the influence of the value of children on mothers as a factor that becomes an alternative in the formation of mindful parenting.

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