


Chapter 7

Mindfulness–Based Interventions and Parent– Child Relationship in Parents of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Brief Narrative Review

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ABSTRACT

Mindfulness has been noticed in the domain of psychology and neuroscience for the last two decades. With the plethora of studies based on interventional benefits of mindfulness-based techniques in various populations, the present review assesses if parent-child relationship studies effectively use mindfulness-based interventions on parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The children are in the age group of below 5 years. The aspects of ASD, mindfulness techniques, and parent-child relationship importance are explored, albeit briefly. One study could be reviewed and was assessed for its treatment fidelity. The conclusion was based on the need to conduct more mindfulness-based intervention studies for the parent population of children in the younger ages and with ASD. This review recommends such replication of studies on the parents of the Indian subcontinent as well.

INTRODUCTION

Which is one of the most sought topics for personality training, soft-skills training, decreasing day-to-day stress in various populations, or for medical interventions? The answer is “mindfulness”. It is the buzz word around. Though many systematic reviews have been published recently (Cachia et al.,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8682-2.ch007

2016; Mak et al., 2018; Tercelli & Ferreira, 2020), interventions for parents of young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have been reviewed sparsely. Given the burden on parents of children (Picardi et al., 2018), a narrative and critical review are warranted. It needs to highlight the advantages of mindfulness-based interventions on parents of children with ASD to assist in emerging studies from the Indian sub-continent.

Hence, this chapter focuses on reviewing studies on mindfulness-based interventions in assessing the parent-child relationship improvement in parents of children below five years with ASD.

BACKGROUND

What are ASDs?

ASD is one of the most prevalent and complex conditions of Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD). NDD is a set of complex disorders with varied conditions under their belt. Each condition is characterized by different symptomatology, presentation, and differs in the age of onset. However, it is unified in its origin (generally during the developmental period) and often presented with overlapping symptomatology in conditions. Their etiological basis is genetic in nature. NDDs give rise to disabilities in children due to many impairments noted life-long. Impairments occur in the children's developmental domains, such as social, pre-academic, motor, speech, language, self-help, cognitive, and play skills (Jeste, 2015).

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM, 5th ed., American Psychiatric Association, 2013), ASD is featured with deficits in social communication, interaction, limited, odd patterns of behavior seen early in the child's development. On an average across the globe, one in 160 children is diagnosed with ASD (World Health Organization, 2013). It is the most prevalent among the NDDs worldwide and in India (Arora et al., 2018). With increasing survival rates and lowered mortality rates of neonates, the number of children with the risk of NDDs has also increased (Global alliance for vaccines and immunization for India [GAVI], 2019; Zaka et al., 2018). A pooled prevalence rate of 0.09 is reported in the ages of 0 to 15 years in a meta-analytic review on the prevalence of ASD from India (Chauhan et al., 2019).

Why Choose Parents of Children with ASD for Interventions?

Parenting is the process of enhancing, promoting, and strengthening a child's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development from infancy to early adulthood. As research has put it, it is the rearing of a child apart from the biological aspects of the child (Bornstein, 2019). The good quality of a parent-child relationship is therefore critical for a child's healthy growth.

Parenting children with a disability is stressful compared to parenting children with typical development (Davis & Carter, 2008). Since children born with developmental issues can become disabled later in life, they are treated as a perpetual crisis for the family. This is especially so for the parents, as the whole family's life changes significantly (Merrick et al., 2011). In the sixty seventh-world assembly, the World Health Organization (2014) has noted that families with ASD from low-resource places face multiple challenges such as social stigmatization, isolation, and discrimination, resulting in poor social support.

Professional help is generally and often provided to children with NDD. In contrast, parents of these children also have needs usually missed by the professionals (Head & Abbeduto, 2007). Fernandez-Carriba

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