

A Teacher's Reflections on Two Parent-Child Mindfulness-based Workshops in Taiwan

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Abstract—This article delves into the experiences and reflections of a Taiwanese mindfulness teacher in designing and implementing two one-day parent-child mindfulness workshops. While Taiwanese research predominantly focuses on individual and group mindfulness training, studies on parent-child mindfulness programs remain scarce. The primary researcher conducted two parent-child mindfulness workshops at different locations, collecting data through field observations, participant feedback forms, participant reflections, and recorded journals. Participants (14 mothers, one father, and 15 children) reported learning to focus on the present moment, become aware of bodily sensations, and appreciate positive experiences through various mindfulness practices. They found engaging mindfulness exercises and learning basic neuroscience concepts particularly effective. The researchers highlighted the importance of considering training length and frequency, group and classroom dynamics, management of disruptive behaviors potentially caused by children, and the suitability and safety of the training facilities. The design of parent-child mindfulness activities should reflect participants' needs and expand their experiences within a supportive, open, and warm atmosphere. These implications are further elaborated in this article.

Keywords—parent-child mindfulness workshop, teaching, mindfulness practice, reflection

I. INTRODUCTION

As mindfulness practices gain popularity, related courses have expanded, demonstrating benefits for mental and physical well-being (Chen et al., 2019). A review of Taiwanese literature reveals applications of mindfulness across diverse groups, showing positive outcomes (Chen et al.). However, research on parent-child mindfulness programs remains limited. Mindfulness can be beneficial across all age groups and may enhance family harmony by facilitating parent-child awareness and interaction. This article explores the experiences of a mindfulness teacher who designed and implemented two parent-child mindfulness workshops, addressing the teaching challenges encountered, the processes of parent-child mindfulness in the workshops, and the participants' learning and reactions to the mindfulness practices.

II. MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness involves purposeful, nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1991). Practitioners observe their experiences comprehensively

without rushing to change them or focusing on past or future concerns, engaging in activities like meditation, body scanning, mindful eating, and stretching. Such practices cultivate individual openness, acceptance, and self-awareness, allowing individuals to manage challenging emotions, increase frustration tolerance, and make thoughtful choices (Creswell, 2017; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Mindfulness fosters concentration and relaxation, helps individuals stay true to their original selves, and supports them in noticing life's nuances, practicing gratitude, and responding skillfully to difficult experiences (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Shapiro et al., 2006). Overall, mindfulness practices promote individual health and self-regulation, offering substantial benefits for well-being (Creswell, 2017; Schuman-Olivier et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

III. MINDFULNESS LITERATURE IN TAIWAN

Mindfulness training programs in Taiwan have been applied across various demographics, including children (e.g., Huang, 2015), adolescents (e.g., Sun, 2020), college students (e.g., Chiang, 2014; Lin, 2020), adults (e.g., Lee, 2020), the elderly (e.g., Yu & Chen, 2022), and patients (e.g., Hung, 2018). For example, Yu and Chen (2022) adjusted mindfulness training programs to support emotional well-being in the elderly, modifying the teaching pace and course hours to meet participants' needs. Chiang (2024) reported that an emotional psychology curriculum with mindfulness practices enhanced students' self-compassion, gratitude, and emotional health. Chen et al. (2019) reviewed literature on mindfulness in Taiwan, noting short-term benefits for attention, body awareness, self-compassion, and quality of life. Despite these advancements, research on parent-child mindfulness training remains scarce. This article addresses this gap by exploring a teacher's reflections on two one-day parent-child mindfulness workshops.

IV. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PARENT-CHILD MINDFULNESS COURSES

The first author, a mindfulness teacher and clinical psychologist, has extensive experience teaching mindfulness to adults, adolescents, and children. She led two parent-child mindfulness workshops, incorporating elements of the mindfulness and neuroscience curriculum designed by Sarah Silverton and her team. The first author condensed the curriculum into a one-day, six-hour format, focusing on themes such as "Here and Now," "Focus," "Body," "Connection," and "Interpersonal Skills." Each six-hour course consisted of two three-hour sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, with a total of seven parent-child pairs (14 participants) in the first workshop

and eight pairs (16 participants) in the second. Participants included 14 mothers and one father aged 35-45, and 15 children aged 9-11. Data were collected through participants' feedback forms, the teacher's reflections, and observation journals. The second author, a counseling psychologist trained in mindfulness, assisted with an in-depth analysis of the collected data.

V. IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS OF PARENT-CHILD MINDFULNESS COURSES

The workshop enabled parents and children to develop present-moment focus, increase bodily awareness, and appreciate positive experiences, thereby enhancing their mental and physical awareness, self-acceptance, and present-moment focus. Participants responded positively to engaging activities and learning neuroscience concepts in the mindfulness workshop. For example, they enjoyed the water-carrying challenge, which required calm and balanced movements for both parents and children. They also appreciated the creation of a mindfulness bottle, a reflective exercise to collect small items that help stabilize emotions and achieve a peaceful state. Simple neuroscience explanations helped participants understand physiological processes, enhancing their self-awareness and behavior control. The findings suggest that mindfulness teaching should emphasize practical activities, followed by reflections, questions, and answers to reinforce and deepen participant learning experiences. Didactic teaching approaches and lengthy printed materials were less effective, as participants showed limited motivation for them.

VI. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING PARENT-CHILD MINDFULNESS COURSES

First, teachers must manage sub-group dynamics, such as pre-existing relationships among parents and children, which is essential for fostering participants' focus and interaction. Teachers should employ activities that encourage cross-group interaction to enhance group cohesion and facilitate support among group members. Pre-course training might prevent participants' disruptive behaviors, such as cellphone or toy use during sessions. Additionally, teachers must manage group order, such as supervising parent-child interactions to avoid occasional injuries or horseplay. A few volunteer assistants can assist with maintaining order and handling logistics in training fields. Teachers also need to manage time and space, particularly when presenting interpersonal skill-building activities. For participants, six-hour workshops proved too long, reducing their concentration on mindfulness practices. To avoid frequent movement and distractions, participants need comfortable seats and space while practicing mindfulness exercises.

VII. DISCUSSION OF CHALLENGES IN PARENT-CHILD MINDFULNESS WORKSHOPS

Feedback from workshop participants affirmed the practical benefits of mindfulness, consistent with Chen et al. (2019), who reported positive outcomes from mindfulness practices. In line with Yu and Chen's (2022) findings, this article emphasizes the importance of flexibly adjusting activities based on the needs of parents and

children, as well as venue limitations. Participants reported increased attention, relaxation, awareness, and appreciation of their present experiences, supporting previous findings on the benefits of mindfulness (Chiang, 2024; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

Researchers analyzed various sources of data and highlighted key themes for teaching parent-child mindfulness: (1) constructing a clear structure and suitable pacing in teaching; (2) using relationship-building skills to connect with participants; (3) maintaining stability and sensitivity in embodying mindfulness practices; (4) leading effective guidance of mindful practices; (5) utilizing strategic questioning and explanation; and (6) fostering a conducive environment. Teachers manage group dynamics, establish group norms, promote participant engagement, and facilitate commitment while balancing the needs of both parents and children. Teachers should avoid over-controlling behavior and facilitate participants' autonomy in learning mindfulness.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Teachers might consider shorter, more frequent teaching sessions to improve the effectiveness of parent-child mindfulness training. Venues with comfortable seating, ample space, and suitable facilities are recommended to minimize distractions and enhance participants' concentration during mindfulness exercises. Teachers can modify Western mindfulness training curricula and incorporate culturally congruent concepts and activities to enhance accessibility, practicality, and applicability when teaching mindfulness to diverse populations. Additionally, teachers should engage in ongoing professional training and peer supervision in mindfulness. Future research should evaluate teaching effectiveness to assess the outcomes of parent-child mindfulness programs.

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