

# Empowering Children's Decision-Making: The Transformative Role of Mindful Parenting - A Systematic Review

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Research Guide

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**Abstract:** *This paper is going to assess how mindful parenting influences decision-making in children. In today's world of technology, children are more stressed about making decisions wisely. Very often they are confused and are easily influenced by external pressures, like peers or situations. A large group of children make a sudden decision without understanding the consequences that are about to come or have to be faced by them in the future due to the decisions that are taken wrong. Decision-making is a very important life skill that has to be mastered at a young age. It is one of the 21st-century skills that help bring success into our lives. The right choices that we make help to conquer heights and achieve success at an early age. Parents play a very significant role in the lives of children at an early age. Studies were conducted to understand the role of parents in decision-making. Healthy parenting helps a child to understand the circumstances and make the right decision. Decision-making depends on various factors like self-awareness, self-esteem, and so on. It is said that decision-making goes wrong when you are emotionally down. Studies state that mindful parenting helps children's decision-making. The purpose of the current study was to investigate associations between maternal mindful parenting and preschool children's individual and social decision-making. Although the empirical research concerning mindful parenting is growing, few studies have specifically focused on mindful parenting and its associations with preschool children's development.*

**Keywords:** Mindful parenting, Children, Decision-making, Emotions, Life skills

## 1. Introduction

Effective decision-making is crucial in this century. The rapid change in the world is at an unprecedented pace due to technological advancements, globalization, and other factors. Effective decision-making skills are essential in navigating this rapidly changing world, helping individuals and organizations to stay ahead of the curve and adapt to new challenges and opportunities. In today's world, there is greater accountability for decisions made by individuals and organizations. Many of the challenges we face are complex and multifaceted, requiring careful analysis, evaluation, and decision-making. Effective decision-making skills are needed to identify problems, gather relevant information, evaluate potential solutions, and make choices that will lead to positive outcomes. The future is becoming increasingly uncertain, and effective decision-making skills are needed to manage risk and uncertainty. By considering potential risks and consequences, individuals as well as organizations can make decisions that are more well-informed and effective. In many fields, competition is becoming more intense, and effective decision-making skills can provide a competitive edge. By making sound choices and taking calculated risks, individuals and organizations can set themselves apart from the competition and achieve greater success. Effective decision-making skills are needed to make choices that align with personal and organizational values and to be able to justify those choices to stakeholders.

Decision-making skills are an essential set of life skills that enable individuals to make informed and effective decisions in various aspects of their lives. These skills involve the ability to gather relevant information, analyze and evaluate options, consider consequences, and make a choice based on

personal values and goals. By practicing mindful parenting, parents can help their children develop important social and emotional skills, such as empathy, self-awareness, and self-regulation. Additionally, mindful parenting can help parents reduce stress, improve their own emotional well-being, and create a more positive and fulfilling parenting experience.

In summary, effective decision-making is critical in this century, as it can help individuals and organizations navigate a rapidly changing, complex, and uncertain world, and achieve greater success and well-being.

**Body (existing study, dimensions, studies, gaps need for further practical implications)**

Parents' role in the upbringing of a child is important in all aspects. The emotional well-being of the child depends on the parenting. A healthy parenting style has to be adopted while fostering a child. The child has to face a lot of challenges in the rapidly changing world. They need to adopt and develop a multitude of skills beyond the traditional outlook to get prepared to face the real world. Educators and scholars in this field stress the importance of life skill development in children as they are the key components of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a part of life skills decision-making plays a significant role in life. Effective decision-making and managing emotions wisely are components of a successful life and career. The literature provided shares evidence with examples that say how emotional self-regulation could be developed through high-quality parent-child relationships. (Thompson, 1994) The children's development in early childhood days depends on mother-child interactions, which include positive emotional expression and assertiveness. (Denham et. al., 1991) Studies

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about mother-child interactions and the child's academic performance in the future show that there is a deep link in the relationship. The importance of mindful parenting sheds light in this context of bringing positivity to children because it promotes emotional regulation in parents and children equally.

### **Mindful Parenting**

Originally proposed by Kabat-Zinn and Kabat-Zinn (1997), mindful parenting is conceptualized as the practice of being present and aware in everyday interactions with children by paying attention without judgment as each moment unfolds. Duncan et al. (2009) integrated and extended the model of mindful parenting by incorporating the principles of classic mindfulness theory as applied to parent-child relationships.

Mindful parenting is a parenting approach that involves being fully present and aware of your thoughts, emotions, and actions in the present moment while interacting with your child. This approach emphasizes the importance of cultivating mindfulness in both parents and children, as well as fostering a positive and loving relationship between them. The model includes five dimensions specific to parent-child interactions; (1) listening with full attention, (2) non-judgmental acceptance of self and child, (3) emotional awareness of self and child, (4) self-regulation in the parenting relationship, and (5) compassion for self and child. These dimensions approach parenting in a way that facilitates being present in daily interactions, parenting more calmly, and engaging in increased emotion regulation. As a result, parenting behavior becomes more consistent and responsive over time, and parent-child relationships become characterized as more positive, warm, and supportive and filled with less negativity, conflict, and judgment.

The current study explores the role of mindful parenting in fostering individual and social decision-making. Individual decision-making and social decision-making were the terms used here. The term "individual decision-making" when the consequences of the decision are only for the individual making it, whereas the term "social decision-making" when the consequences also impact another individual (e.g., a friend or stranger), with "prosocial" referring specifically to positive forms of social decision-making behaviors. This study explores the association between self-reported maternal mindful parenting and observed decision-making behavior in children. Focus was to know whether mindful parenting was associated with children's individual decision-making behavior. The hypothesis says that children with more mindful mothers would exhibit less observed stress, doubt, and confirmation-seeking in a choice task. Second, the hypothesis says that maternal mindful parenting would predict children's level of social decision-making behavior in a laboratory-administered sharing task. Given the aforementioned gender differences in prosocial behaviour favouring girls. The girls displayed higher levels of social decision-making. There is a possibility that individual decision-making is not as strongly related to mindful parenting because other aspects of children's social context and individual differences in children's temperament and personality play more important roles in fostering choice-related individual decision-making. However, one possible explanation for this association could be that older children's

cognitive capacities are more developed allowing them to think critically about the risks and benefits of choosing one toy over another. Additionally, taking time to examine each possible choice may have also led to delayed time to decision-making as well as doubtfulness. Children with more mindful mothers were more likely to engage in sharing behavior than those with mothers who were low in mindful parenting, which is noteworthy because prosocial sharing behavior is a normative developmental attainment of the preschool years (Paulus and Moore, 2014). Therefore, identifying a contextual factor that seems to influence the extent to which young children share with others suggests that programs to promote parents' mindful parenting could provide tangible benefits to young children's early social development. Related to this idea, one possible explanation for the observed association between mindful parenting and social decision-making is that parents are higher in the mindful parenting model and emphasize prosocial behaviors in daily interactions with children. Another possibility is that mindful parenting contributes to parental positivity and less punitive discipline, both of which are associated with increased prosocial behaviors in young children (Knafo and Plomin, 2006).

In childhood, the parent-child relationship plays a significant role in promoting children's optimal development (Hartup, 1989). Parents often help to regulate the child's emotion, especially in times of stress (Haley and Stansbury, 2003). Warm, consistent care giving relationships provide the ideal environment for children to develop and refine their emotion regulation capacities and social-emotional competence (Cassidy, 1994; Thompson, 1994). Therefore, examining how parenting contributes to the development of children's decision-making skills in early childhood may provide insight into the most effective ways parents can facilitate children's development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills related to decision-making in both individual and social contexts.

### **Some key principles of mindful parenting include:**

Cultivating awareness could be developed by paying close attention to the child's thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, as well as our own. This helps to respond to the child thoughtfully and intentionally, rather than reacting impulsively. The way of practicing a non-judgmental approach in the child and ourselves without judgment, accepting our thoughts and emotions as they are, and avoiding labelling kids as "good" or "bad." Mindful parenting involves cultivating compassion while treating ourselves and our children with kindness, empathy, and compassion. This helps to foster a positive and loving relationship between parent and child. Being fully present and engaged in the moment with the child. This means putting aside distractions and focusing our attention on the child and our interactions with them. Encouraging open communication will create an environment in which the child feels comfortable expressing themselves and communicating openly with the parent. This helps to build trust and strengthen a relationship. By practicing mindful parenting, parents can help their children develop important social and emotional skills, such as empathy, self-awareness, and self-regulation. Additionally, mindful parenting can help

parents reduce stress, improve their own emotional well-being, and create a more positive and fulfilling parenting experience.

There are a number of neural and cognitive mechanisms that influence the development of decision-making skills; additionally, high-quality relationships with caregivers may further facilitate the development of these skills. Early in life, interactions with parents provide external regulation of emotion and over time children develop independent regulatory capacities that should facilitate decision-making (Thompson and Meyer, 2007). Parents' own ability to control their emotions influences their interactions with their children, and variations in parent emotion regulation are determined by a combination of cognitive, social, physiological, and neurobiological factors (Morris et al., 2007). Parents who are unable to model successful regulation through behavior and parenting practices contribute to emotion regulation difficulties in their children (Rutherford et al., 2015), which may indirectly impact the development of children's decision-making abilities. One promising construct, mindful parenting (Kabat-Zinn and Kabat-Zinn, 1997; Duncan et al., 2009), is posited to underlie parents' own emotion regulation and thus may be an important predictor of children's emotion regulation and decision-making.

#### **Some key aspects of decision-making skills include:**

Before making a decision, it's essential to identify and define the problem or issue that needs to be addressed.

Gathering information involves collecting relevant information about the problem or issue, including facts, opinions, and potential consequences of different options. After gathering information, it needs to analyze and evaluate different options, considering their pros and cons and how they align with our values and goals. It's important to consider the potential consequences of each option, including short-term and long-term effects on yourself and others. After analyzing options and weighing the consequences, it's time to make a decision. This involves choosing the option that aligns best with our values and goals.

Developing good decision-making skills can have a significant impact on various aspects of life, including personal relationships, academic and career success, financial management, and overall well-being. Effective decision-making skills help individuals navigate life's challenges more confidently and make choices that lead to greater satisfaction and success.

Decision-making in children can also benefit from developing decision-making skills from a young age. By learning to make choices and decisions, children develop independence, confidence, and critical thinking skills. Here are some tips for promoting decision-making in children:

Encourage children to make choices whenever possible, such as selecting what to wear, what book to read, or what activity to do. This allows children to practice decision-

making and feel empowered. When providing options, give children a few different choices to choose from. This can help them learn to evaluate and compare different options. While providing options, make sure to set boundaries and limits. This can help children understand the consequences of their decisions and develop responsibility. Encourage children to talk through their decision-making process, including why they made a certain choice and how they came to that decision. This helps children develop critical thinking skills and self-awareness. Making mistakes is a natural part of the decision-making process. Encourage children to learn from their mistakes and reflect on what they could do differently in the future. Provide guidance and support, when necessary, but try not to make decisions for children. This allows children to develop independence and learn from their own experiences.

By promoting decision-making skills in children, parents and caregivers can help children develop important life skills and prepare them for future success.

#### **Mindful Parenting help in decision-making in children**

Mindful parenting can also help children develop decision-making skills. Mindful parenting involves being present and attentive to your child's needs and emotions, while also setting clear boundaries and expectations. Here are some ways that mindful parenting can help children with decision-making:

Emotional regulation: Mindful parenting can help children regulate their emotions, which can be important for making effective decisions. By teaching children to identify and manage their emotions, they can make decisions that align with their values and goals, rather than being driven by impulses or emotions. Mindful parenting encourages self-awareness, which is important for effective decision-making. By teaching children to reflect on their thoughts and feelings, they can better understand their motivations and values, which can guide their decision-making. Mindful parenting also encourages empathy, or the ability to understand and consider other people's feelings and perspectives. By teaching children to consider the impact of their decisions on others, they can make decisions that are more compassionate and considerate. Such parenting also promotes open-mindedness and flexibility, which can be important for decision-making. By encouraging children to consider multiple perspectives and ideas, they can make decisions that are more well-rounded and thoughtful. This also helps children develop problem-solving skills, which are essential for effective decision-making. By teaching children to identify and evaluate different options, consider consequences, and make choices based on personal values and goals, they can develop a strong foundation for decision-making.

Overall, mindful parenting can help children develop important life skills that can support them in making effective decisions, leading to greater success and well-being.

**Effective decision-making is crucial in this century due to the following reasons:**

**Rapid change:** The world is changing at an unprecedented pace due to technological advancements, globalization, and other factors. Effective decision-making skills are essential in navigating this rapidly changing world, helping individuals and organizations stay ahead of the curve and adapt to new challenges and opportunities.

**Complex problems:** Many of the challenges we face today are complex and multifaceted, requiring careful analysis, evaluation, and decision-making. Effective decision-making skills are needed to identify problems, gather relevant information, evaluate potential solutions, and make choices that will lead to positive outcomes.

**Increased uncertainty:** The future is becoming increasingly uncertain, and effective decision-making skills are needed to manage risk and uncertainty. By considering potential risks and consequences, individuals and organizations can make decisions that are more well-informed and effective.

**Increased competition:** In many fields, competition is becoming more intense, and effective decision-making skills can provide a competitive edge. By making sound choices and taking calculated risks, individuals and organizations can set themselves apart from the competition and achieve greater success.

**Greater accountability:** In today's world, there is greater accountability for decisions made by individuals and organizations. Effective decision-making skills are needed to make choices that align with personal and organizational values, and to be able to justify those choices to stakeholders.

**The implications of decision-making in today's world**

Decision-making in today's world has significant implications for individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. Here are some key implications:

**Personal consequences:** Decisions made by individuals can have significant personal consequences, affecting their career, relationships, health, and overall well-being. Effective decision-making can help individuals make choices that align with their values and goals, leading to greater happiness and fulfillment.

**Organizational performance:** Decisions made by organizations can have a major impact on their performance, including their financial success, reputation, and ability to achieve their mission. Effective decision-making can help organizations make choices that are well-informed and aligned with their goals and values, leading to greater success and sustainability.

**Social impact:** Decisions made by individuals and organizations can also have a broader social impact, affecting communities, regions, and even the planet. For example, decisions about resource use, environmental

policy, and social justice can have far-reaching consequences for society as a whole.

**Ethical implications:** Decision-making also has ethical implications, as choices made by individuals and organizations can be evaluated in terms of their fairness, justice, and moral principles. Effective decision-making involves considering the ethical implications of choices and making choices that are consistent with ethical values and principles.

**Technological advancements:** Finally, decision-making in today's world is also affected by technological advancements, which provide new tools and methods for gathering and analyzing information, predicting outcomes, and making choices. Effective decision-making involves staying up-to-date with technological advancements and using them to make better choices.

Overall, decision-making in today's world has significant implications for individuals, organizations, and society as a whole, and effective decision-making skills are critical for achieving success, sustainability, and well-being.

Dispositional mindfulness is thought to be a natural way of being mindful in day-to-day life and is associated with improved emotion regulation (Fogarty et al., 2013), improved mental health symptoms (Bravo et al., 2018; Hicks et al., 2018), and reduced stress (Bergin and Pakenham, 2016). There is growing interest in examining applications of mindfulness in children and parents (Thompson and Gauntlett-Gilbert, 2008; Coatsworth et al., 2010; Semple and Lee, 2014).

**2. Conclusion**

In the current study, we explored the role of mindful parenting in fostering individual and social decision-making. Results suggested that only mindful parenting (not dispositional mindfulness) was associated with faster cortisol recovery after the stressor for mothers. No significant main effects were identified for mindful parenting on infants' cortisol responses. Mindful parenting, particularly in early childhood, may enable parents to provide consistent and positive caregiving, which provides the foundation needed to facilitate children's emotion regulation and decision-making skills. Future studies with larger samples should investigate if there is an interaction between decision-making, child age and mindful parenting. As the study did not consider additional parenting factors and individual child characteristics that may play an important role in the development of decision-making. Future studies should assess mindful parenting in concordance with other parenting constructs such as warmth and hostility as well as developmental assessments of children's executive function, inhibitory control, and other early competencies that could promote decision-making. Furthermore, only the mindful parenting of the mother is considered in this study. Some research posits that fathers (or other co-parents) impart a specific and important effect on child development, including prosocial behavior (Gryczkowski et al., 2018). Therefore, future studies should include co-parents to further understand the role of the

family context in promoting children's decision-making skills. As stress and emotional regulation are believed to contribute to the ability to make decisions, future studies should take a biopsychosocial approach when addressing the research questions. In summary, findings from the current study suggest that mindful parenting may play an important role in the development of children's prosocial decision-making. Future research should investigate how this association unfolds over time while also examining developmental outcomes associated with prosocial decision-making during early childhood. The findings also add to the growing evidence that parents' use of mindfulness during caregiving should be incorporated into early preventive intervention programs, particularly programs designed to foster children's early social skills including sharing behavior and prosocial decision-making (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). By providing mindful parenting programs early on, it may improve not only the child's ability to navigate difficulty but also the parent's ability to regulate their own emotion, thereby embodying the attributes that can then be taught to the child.

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