

What is the Relationship between Mindfulness, Self-Compassion and Parenting Stress in Adoptive Parents?

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Abstract

The present study aimed to explore if mindfulness and self-compassion were related to adoptive parenting stress, and if they mediated the relationship between child attachment-related difficulties and adoptive parenting stress. Adoptive parents of children aged between three and twelve years were recruited ($N = 81$) from across the United Kingdom to complete a web-based survey. Validated self-report measures were used to assess adoptive parents' levels of parenting stress, mindfulness, self-compassion and child-attachment related difficulties alongside measures of parental mental health, child behaviour difficulties and social support. Adoptive parents' levels of mindfulness and self-compassion were significantly negatively correlated with levels of adoptive parenting stress and were significant predictors of adoptive parenting stress levels. Attachment-related difficulties, mindfulness and parental mental health were identified as the significant predictors in a model which predicted over three quarters of the variance of adoptive parenting stress. Child attachment-related difficulties were found to have a highly significant relationship with adoptive parenting stress which neither mindfulness nor self-compassion mediated pointing to the unique elements of adoptive parenting stress. The findings which supported the majority of the *a priori* hypotheses extended the empirical research to include mindfulness and self-compassion as part of a complex model of adoptive parenting stress. The findings offer promise to the role of addressing mindfulness as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing parenting stress in adoption.

Keywords: Adoptive parenting, parenting stress, mindfulness, self-compassion, attachment-related difficulties