


# Mindful Parenting as a Mediator in Parents' Perspective-Taking: Exploring the Roles of Causal Attribution and Self-Compassion

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**Background:** Existing literature has examined the link between parent causal attribution and self-compassion in parent perspective-taking, but the impact of mindful parenting as a mediator remains underexplored.

**Purpose:** The present study examines the mediating effect of mindful parenting on the relationship between parental attribution and self-compassion in parents' perspective-taking.

**Methods:** Using a cross-sectional design, 208 parents aged 30 to 59 ( $M = 42$ ,  $SD = 4.3$ ) with first-born adolescents aged 12–18 participated in the study.

**Results:** The results revealed that mindful parenting fully mediated the relationship between parental causal attribution and perspective-taking while partially mediating the association between self-compassion and perspective-taking.

**Conclusion:** These findings emphasize the crucial role of mindful parenting in explaining the relationship between parent causal attribution, self-compassion, and parent perspective-taking. Further research is needed to explore these relationships in more diverse and representative samples.

**Keywords:** mindful parenting, parent causal attribution, parental self-compassion, parents-adolescents, perspective taking

## Introduction

During adolescence, various domains undergo multidimensional and multidirectional changes that profoundly transform family relationships and require adaptation from every family member.<sup>1</sup> Parents and adolescents must renegotiate their relationships<sup>2</sup> by learning and understanding new responsibilities and changes in their parent-adolescent relationships.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the vertical relationship between parents and adolescents, where parents are considered more knowledgeable and powerful, gradually evolves into a horizontal relationship that becomes increasingly equal, symmetrical, and reciprocal.<sup>4</sup> This transformation affects parents' psychological state, as Steinberg<sup>1</sup> found that 40% of parents whose children are transitioning to adolescence experience two or more of the following issues: decreased self-esteem and life satisfaction, increased depression, anxiety, and negative thoughts about their middle adulthood period. Consequently, parents tend to perceive parenting adolescents as a challenging journey. As the relationship between parents and adolescents becomes more equal, adolescents can be more open to expressing their opinions, which, if responded to positively by parents, can encourage meaningful conversations. These conversations create mutual understanding and can later mitigate the intensity of dysfunctional debates during conflicts.

Minimizing dysfunctional conflicts between parents and adolescents can be achieved by trying to understand each other's viewpoints through perspective-taking.<sup>5</sup> Perspective-taking is the ability to understand one's own thoughts and position while also understanding the thoughts of others without experiencing emotions directly.<sup>6</sup> It is viewed as the

cognitive aspect of empathy<sup>7</sup> and helps reduce conflicts between mothers and adolescents by providing distance and space to relieve emotions, leading to an opportunity to understand others' viewpoints.<sup>8</sup> In summary, the perspective-taking ability of both parents and adolescents is essential in conflict management.<sup>5</sup> Parents with higher perspective-taking exhibit less conflict intensity with their teenagers than parents with lower perspective-taking.<sup>9</sup> The reason is that parents with higher perspective-taking show more understanding towards their teenager's feelings and can better explain their perspectives than parents with lower perspective-taking.<sup>9</sup> When adolescents know that parents have the high perspective-taking ability, they may feel more comfortable discussing their disagreements and opinions openly. This can lead to constructive communication and harmonious relationships between parents and adolescents.<sup>10</sup>

Several factors have been associated with perspective-taking. One such factor is parents' mindfulness, which has been reported to be linked with perspective-taking by reducing cognitive loads, ultimately leading to the development of social skills, including perspective-taking.<sup>11</sup> Mindful parents who interact with their children can recognize their own and their children's emotions and regulate them, thereby playing an important role in promoting perspective-taking and harmonious relationships between parents and children.<sup>12</sup> One study found that mother causal attribution was positively correlated with mother perspective-taking.<sup>13</sup> Parent-causal attributions refer to a high internal locus of causality and are focused on the parent as the causal agent of their child's difficult behavior in caregiving situations.<sup>14</sup> Self-compassion has also been linked to perspective-taking, as people with high self-compassion tend to soothe themselves when facing problems and do the same for others.<sup>15,16</sup> Another study found that parents' emotional intelligence was positively correlated with their perspective-taking ability.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, parental reflective functioning, the ability to understand one's and other's mental states, has been positively associated with perspective-taking.<sup>18</sup> Positive parenting practices, such as warmth and support, have also been found to be associated with perspective-taking in both parents and adolescents.<sup>10</sup> Thus, to promote perspective-taking in parent-adolescent relationships, it is crucial to consider multiple factors.

In addition to the relationship between parents' mindfulness, causal attribution, and self-compassion with perspective-taking, previous studies have also found links between these factors and mindful parenting. Specifically, research has documented a positive association between parent-causal attribution and positive parenting behaviors, such as greater readiness for treatment and attendance,<sup>19</sup> which are essential elements of mindful parenting.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, several studies have reported a positive correlation between self-compassion and mindful parenting.<sup>21–23</sup> These findings suggest that there may be an indirect effect of parent causal attribution on perspective-taking through mindful parenting.

Indonesia is a Southeast Asian country that has been identified by a cultural framework combining elements of hierarchy and collectivism.<sup>24,25</sup> Within a hierarchical framework, there is an expectation for younger individuals to demonstrate respect towards their parents, with elders being perceived as having a superior status. Even after puberty, parents continue to be the most significant role models and influences in their children's lives in Indonesia.<sup>26</sup> In collectivism, the emphasis is on fostering harmony among individuals. Thus, children should obey their parents' directions, extending pleasantries to those who are older than them. Furthermore, parents instill in their kids the value of averting confrontations and cultivating wholesome connections with others.<sup>27,28</sup>

## Current Study

The present study focuses on examining whether mindful parenting mediated the relationship between parental attribution, self-compassion, and perspective-taking. Perspective-taking by parents is crucial in preventing dysfunctional conflicts with their adolescents. Previous studies have found that mindful parenting significantly influences parents' perspective-taking. Other studies have reported that parental attribution and self-compassion are associated with mindful parenting. The absence of prior investigations examining whether mindful parenting serves as a mediator for the effects of parental attribution and self-compassion on perspective-taking, particularly within the cultural context of Indonesia, is a notable gap in the existing research. This gap becomes particularly significant given the cultural nuances in Indonesia, where the hierarchical positioning of children in relation to their parents is deeply embedded, emphasizing obedience as an obligation and dissent as disrespectful, irrespective of the child's age.

Based on the literature review, we formulate the following hypotheses: 1) Mindful parenting mediates the relationship between parental attribution and perspective-taking, and 2) Mindful parenting mediates the relationship between self-compassion and perspective-taking.

## Materials and Methods

### Participants

The participants were recruited through a convenience sampling method, which is economical and easy to organize, but may have some limitations.<sup>29</sup> The researchers distributed e-posters containing a description of the study and an invitation to participate. Interested participants who met the inclusive criteria were directed to a link that included informed consent and a questionnaire. The e-posters were distributed through various online platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google mailing list, and WhatsApp. The inclusive criteria required that participants had a first child aged 12–18 years, spoke Indonesian fluently, and had access to a device connected to the internet. The exclusion criteria included parents who did not live with their teenagers and parents with special needs children.

### Procedures

Registered participants were invited to attend an online meeting where the research team provided a detailed explanation of the survey procedure. During the meeting, participants who were still willing to take part in the study completed the informed consent form, while those who chose not to participate could leave the meeting. Participants who were unable to attend the meeting were informed about the survey procedure via email and WhatsApp and were provided a link to complete the informed consent form. Upon submitting their informed consent, participants were directed to complete the online questionnaires through Google Forms, which took an average of 40 minutes to complete.

Data collection occurred from May to June 2022, with links to the online forms made publicly available on social media to maximize participation. Participants' questions and concerns about the questionnaire form were addressed directly by the research team during the online meeting or via the researcher's WhatsApp number provided in the poster/questionnaire link. All data collected were automatically recorded and transferred to the researcher's email address. Participation in this study guaranteed anonymity, and participants' contact information was only used to transfer the participation reward in the form of electronic money. The data were analyzed collectively, and individual interpretation of the data was not possible. The study complies with the Declaration of Helsinki and received ethical clearance from the ethical committee of Universitas Padjadjaran (Ethics approval number: 911/UN6.KEP/EC/2022).

### Instruments

This study utilized four measurement tools to assess perspective-taking, parental attribution, self-compassion, and mindful parenting, which are briefly described below. In addition, participants completed a sociodemographic questionnaire, which included information such as the age and gender of both parents and their children, as well as the parent's level of education.

#### Perspective-Taking

Perspective-taking was measured using the Self-Dyadic Perspective Taking (SDPT) scale, which assesses parental perspective-taking abilities.<sup>30</sup> The scale originally consisted of 13 statements, such as "I am good at understanding my child's problem", which participants rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (does not describe me very well) to 6 (does describe me very well). The response scores were summed, a higher score indicated a higher level of perspective-taking. The SDPT was adapted into Indonesian following the International Test Commission (ITC) Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests,<sup>31</sup> and one item was excluded from further analysis due to a very low item-total score correlation ( $r = -0.99$ ). The instrument had high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94.

#### Mindful Parenting

The measurement of mindful parenting in this study employed the Interpersonal Mindful Parenting Scale (IMPS-31) developed by Duncan et al.<sup>32</sup> The instrument consisted of 31 items, such as "not listening to the child attentively", and

used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “1” (never) to “5” (always). The scores of the 12 unfavorable items were reversed when calculating the total scores. The response scores were summed, and a higher score indicated a higher level of mindful parenting. The original version of the instrument showed a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.72 for its reliability.<sup>33</sup> In this study, the IMPS-31 was adapted following the guidelines of the International Test Commission for Translating and Adapting Tests, and the reliability test indicated a high level of internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.86.

### Parental Attribution

Parental attribution was measured using the Parent-Causal Attribution (PCA) dimension of The Parent Cognition Scale (PCS) instrument developed by Snarr et al.<sup>14</sup> The PCA instrument consisted of seven items, such as “I handle my child in a non-confident way”, and parents were asked to rate their child’s behavior over the past two months on a Likert scale ranging from “1” (almost always) to “6” (almost never). To calculate the PCA total score, all the scores of each reversed item were added up. The response scores were summed, the higher the score, the higher the PCA. The original version of the PCA instrument had a relatively high reliability with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.81.<sup>14</sup> In this study, the Indonesian version of PCA demonstrated very high reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.83.

### Parental Self-Compassion

The Parenting Self-Compassion Scale (P-SCS) was used to measure self-compassion in this study. This instrument was developed by adapting the Self-Compassion Scale by Neff<sup>34</sup> to the context of parenting of school-age children.<sup>35</sup> The P-SCS consisted of 22 items that were categorized into three positive subscales (i.e., self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness) and three negative subscales (i.e., self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification). The items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “1” (almost never) to “5” (almost always). The total self-compassion score was calculated by taking the mean score of all six dimensions. The response scores were averaged,<sup>35</sup> the higher the score, the higher the parental self-compassion. Prior to summing up the scores of all dimensions, the scores of negative subscales were reversed. In the current sample, the reliability test indicated a high level of internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.92.

## Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values, and percentages, were used to summarize the data. There were no missing values in the dataset. In general, the data were quantitatively analyzed using regression analysis. Mediation analysis was carried out by assuming parental attribution and self-compassion indirectly affects perspective taking via mindful parenting. Perspective-taking was regressed on parental attribution, self-compassion, and mindful parenting. Mindful parenting was also regressed on both parental attribution and self-compassion. Additionally, several covariates, including the age and gender of parents and children, and parents’ education, were regressed on the outcome variable, perspective-taking. All analyses were conducted in RStudio version 2022.02.2+485<sup>36</sup> using the lavaan package version 0.6–7.<sup>37</sup>

## Results

### Descriptive results

Participants in this study were 208 parents who had a first-born adolescent aged between 12 to 18 years old. The parents’ ages ranged from 30 to 59 years old, with a mean age of 42 (SD = 4.3), while the mean age of their children was 14.44 (SD = 1.83). Most of the participants were women (93.3%, n = 194), while the children’s sex was relatively equally distributed, with 54.8% (n = 114) being girls. Additionally, a high proportion of participants held at least a bachelor’s degree, suggesting a relatively high socioeconomic status within the sample. Descriptive statistics were presented in [Table 1](#), with means and standard deviations calculated for all variables. As the variables had different scales of measurement, direct comparisons were not appropriate. The bivariate correlational analysis of all variables analyzed in this study is presented in [Table 2](#). All correlations between predictors and outcome variables were found to be statistically significant, while correlations between covariates and correlations between covariates and other variables were insignificant, except for the correlation between parents’ age and children’s age.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Sociodemographics and Investigated Variables

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Percentage (%)
Parents' sex					Mothers = 93
Child's sex					Girls = 55
Parents' education					1 = 0.50 2 = 9.10 3 = 15.40 4 = 57.20 5 = 16.30 6 = 1.40
Parents' age	30.00	59.00	42.09	4.35	
Child's age	12.00	18.00	14.44	1.83	
Perspective taking	30.00	77.00	61.59	9.56	
Parental attribution	8.00	42.00	30.28	6.61	
Self-compassion	1.90	5.00	3.65	0.66	
Mindful parenting	75.00	140.00	110.60	12.28	

**Notes:** n = 208. Perspective-taking scores can range from 13 to 78. Parental attribution scores can range from 7 to 42. Self-compassion scores can range from 1 to 5. Mindful parenting scores can range from 31 to 155. 1 = Elementary school, 2 = Junior High School, 3 = Senior High School, 4 = Bachelor's Degree, 5 = Master's Degree, 6 = Ph.D.

**Table 2** Correlations Among Perspective Taking, Parental Attribution, Self-Compassion, Mindful Parenting, Parents' Age, and Child's Age<sup>a</sup>

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Perspective taking						
2	Parental attribution	0.40**					
3	Self-compassion	0.53**	0.39**				
4	Mindful parenting	0.69**	0.52**	0.66**			
5	Parents age	-0.05	0.09	0.04	0.05		
6	Child's age	-0.08	-0.02	0.01	0.04	0.35**	

**Notes:** n = 208. \*\*p < 0.01.

## Analysis of Hypotheses

The two aforementioned hypotheses were tested using a single regression model. Prior to analyzing the indirect effects, a regression analysis without a mediator was conducted. The regression coefficients for both parental attribution and self-compassion were statistically significant, with a value of ( $B = 0.37$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and ( $B = 7.13$ ,  $SE = 0.88$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), respectively.

Table 3 displays the regression coefficients for the outcome variable perspective-taking, with mindful parenting as the mediator variable. The results showed a significant effect of self-compassion ( $B = 0.38$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ) and mindful parenting ( $B = 0.47$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) on perspective-taking. However, the effect of parental attribution on perspective-taking was not statistically significant (see Table 3). Additionally, the covariate analysis indicated significant effects of the gender of parents (see Table 3). The effects of both parental attribution ( $B = 0.59$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and self-compassion ( $B = 1.67$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) on mindful parenting were also statistically significant. Overall, the

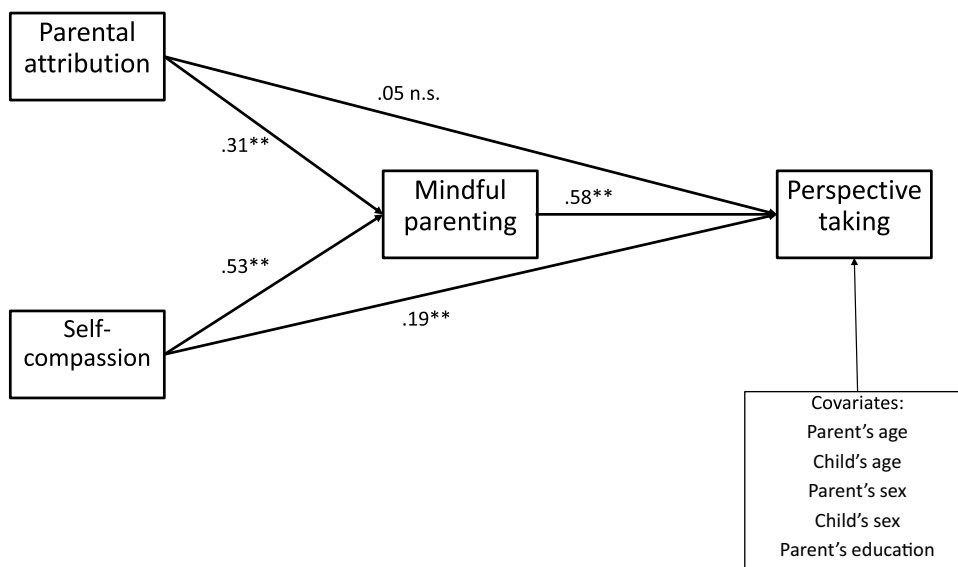
**Table 3** Regression Analysis of Predictor and Outcome Variables

	<b>Unstandardized Regression Coefficients</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Standardized Regression Coefficients</b>	<b>p-values</b>
<i>Outcome variable: perspective taking</i>				
Parental attribution	0.08	0.08	0.05	0.31
Self-compassion	2.87	0.89	0.19	0.00
Mindful parenting	0.47	0.05	0.58	0.00
Parents' age	-0.19	0.11	-0.08	0.08
Child's age	-0.47	0.26	-0.09	0.07
Parents' sex	-6.57	1.75	-0.17	0.00
Child's sex	0.24	0.88	0.01	0.78
Parents' education	0.29	0.51	0.03	0.57
<i>Outcome variable: mindful parenting</i>				
Parental attribution	0.58	0.10	0.31	0.00
Self-compassion	9.99	0.99	0.53	0.00

**Note:** n = 208.

model explained approximately 59% of the variance in perspective-taking. The visual presentation of mediation model with standardized regression weights were presented in Figure 1.

Table 4 presents the total and indirect effects of parental attribution and self-compassion, with bootstrapping of 10,000. All indirect effects and total effects were found to be statistically significant. The direct effects of both parental attribution and self-compassion were significant when the mediator was not included in the model. However, when the mediator was included in the model, the direct effect of parental attribution was no longer significant, while the direct effect of self-compassion remained significant. Additionally, the indirect effects of both parental attribution and self-



**Figure 1** Visual presentation of mediation model with standardized regression weights. More comprehensive results can be viewed in Table 3. \*\*Indicates p = 0.00. **Abbreviations:** n.s., not significant result.

**Table 4** Indirect and Total Effects of Predictors on Outcome Variable

	<b>Unstandardized Regression Coefficients</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Standardized Regression Coefficients</b>	<b>p-values</b>
<i>Indirect effects</i>				
Parental attribution	0.27	0.05	0.18	0.00
Self-compassion	4.65	0.68	0.31	0.00
<i>Total effect</i>				
Parental attribution	0.35	0.09	0.23	0.00
Self-compassion	7.52	0.87	0.50	0.00

**Note:** n = 208.

compassion were significant. These findings suggest that mindful parenting fully mediated the effect of parental attribution on perspective-taking while only partially mediating the effect of self-compassion on perspective-taking.

## Discussion

This study aimed to examine whether mindful parenting mediated the relationship between parental attribution, self-compassion, and perspective-taking. The findings indicated that mindful parenting fully mediated the association between parental attribution and perspective-taking, indicating that the effect of parental attribution on perspective-taking was entirely accounted for by mindful parenting. Additionally, mindful parenting partially mediated the relationship between self-compassion and perspective-taking, indicating that the effect of self-compassion on perspective-taking was partially explained by mindful parenting.

Our study findings indicated that when parents attribute their children's misbehavior to their own inadequate parenting skills, they tend to implement mindful parenting strategies, resulting in a positive impact on their perspective-taking toward their children. This finding differs from the argument made by Duncan et al that mindful parents typically accept parenting challenges and issues as normal.<sup>33</sup> High levels of parental attribution can lead to negative self-evaluation of parenting skills and low acceptance of parenting challenges as normal.<sup>38</sup> However, cultural factors may explain the observed differences in findings. In collectivistic cultures like Indonesia, where power distance is high,<sup>39</sup> self-blame for a child's misbehavior may be viewed as a reflection of parental responsibility.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Indonesian parents with high parental attribution may engage in parental reflection and have a heightened awareness of their parental responsibility. This discovery underscores a distinctive cultural context where harmony holds paramount importance in the parent-child relationship. As an illustration, parents refrain from overt arguments, even within their partnerships, as they adhere to the cultural notion of setting an example.<sup>41</sup> This, in turn, may lead to a greater readiness to change parenting styles and participate in parenting programs.<sup>20</sup> These characteristics align with elements of mindful parenting, including non-judgmental listening, emotional awareness, and non-reactivity to the child and self.<sup>42</sup> The positive association between parental attribution and mindful parenting in Indonesian parents, as observed in this study, is therefore consistent with previous research that has demonstrated a direct positive link between mindfulness and perspective-taking.<sup>43,44</sup> Mindful parenting has been shown to reduce parenting stress and increase social participation compared to non-mindful parenting,<sup>10</sup> which may help parents cope with negative situations and enhance their perspective-taking abilities.<sup>10</sup> Mindful parents are also more adept at recognizing their own and their children's emotions and regulating them, which are critical skills that support perspective-taking.<sup>12</sup> As such, mindful parenting is likely to mediate the mechanism between parental attribution and perspective-taking, as demonstrated in this study.

The results of the current study indicate that mindful parenting partially mediates the relationship between self-compassion and perspective-taking, which contrasts with the findings of hypothesis 1. This suggests that self-compassion has both direct and indirect effects on perspective-taking, consistent with prior research linking self-compassion to perspective-taking,<sup>45,46</sup> as well as the potential mediating role of mindful parenting.<sup>10,23</sup>

With respect to the direct effect of self-compassion on perspective-taking, previous research suggests that self-compassion involves taking a step back from one's own experiences, recognizing shared human experiences, and being kind to oneself, which are important skills in perspective-taking.<sup>16</sup> Self-compassion is also associated with the ability to self-soothe during challenging situations, which reduces negative reactivity and helps to increase self-awareness and awareness of others' emotions, including those of their children.<sup>22</sup> This increased awareness can help parents to remain calm when faced with their child's challenging behaviors rather than reacting negatively, which is an important skill in developing perspective-taking.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the indirect effect of self-compassion via mindful parenting, there are two key points to consider. Firstly, self-compassion may influence mindful parenting because self-compassionate parents tend to have greater confidence in their parenting abilities than less self-compassionate parents.<sup>22</sup> Self-compassionate parents are also less likely to blame themselves for their parenting behavior, more accepting of their shortcomings and difficult emotions, more aware that both parents and children are imperfect, and less likely to deny or repress their emotions.<sup>22,34</sup> Secondly, as noted previously, mindful parents have greater skills in recognizing their own and their children's emotions, which are important aspects of perspective-taking.<sup>12</sup> This study significantly contributes to the parenting literature by being one of the first to examine the relationships between causal attribution, self-compassion, mindful parenting, and perspective-taking among Indonesian parents, unveiling a positive correlation between parental attribution and mindful parenting, which is distinctive from previous findings. Additionally, it underscores the importance of mindful parenting and self-compassion in enhancing parents' perspective-taking regarding their adolescents. However, it is crucial to acknowledge several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the convenience sampling technique used may limit the generalizability of the results. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, future research could include a broader age range of adolescents. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the studied relationships across different family demographics. Second, the overrepresentation of mothers in the sample could potentially skew the results, as it might not accurately reflect the experiences of fathers or other caregivers. Future research could employ more purposive sampling methods and strive for a more balanced gender representation among participants to enhance the study's representativeness and applicability. Third, the online recruitment process and the use of online questionnaire forms may introduce biases. In addition to online recruitment and questionnaire, future studies should employ non-online recruitment and paper-pencil questionnaires.

## Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the indirect impacts of parental attribution and self-compassion on perspective-taking, with mindful parenting assumed to mediate this relationship. Results indicated that these mediating effects were present but varied in magnitude. Specifically, while mindful parenting fully mediated the relationship between parental attribution and perspective-taking, it only partially mediated the association between self-compassion and perspective-taking. The results shed light on the cultural influence on parents' perception of parenting adolescents. The study recommends a two-fold approach for parents: incorporating mindful parenting practices and prioritizing the cultivation of self-compassion. It is advised that parents incorporate techniques aimed at cultivating mindfulness, prioritizing qualities such as being present, non-judgmental, and attentive during interactions with their adolescents. In addition to mindful parenting practices, the study underscores the value of nurturing self-compassionate attitudes in parents, including self-kindness and recognizing mistakes as a shared aspect of common humanity. Furthermore, educators at school, collaborating with professional, can support the mindful and self-compassionate parenting practice by providing training for parents who have difficulties accessing the parenting resources.

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## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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