The Moderating Effects of Mindfulness and Parenting Styles on the Relation between Parent’s and Adolescent’s Emotional Intelligence

Yixin Zhong

The University of Hong Kong
Abstract

In view of the increasing mental health problems adolescents in Hong Kong are encountering, it is worth studying the adolescents’ psychological states, among which trait emotional intelligence (EI) is a good predictor of their emotion-related efficacy and psychological well-being. This study examined the moderating effects of 2 parental variables - mindfulness and parenting style on adolescent’s trait EI. The sample of the study consists of 72 parent-adolescent dyads. Parents were asked to complete questionnaires on demographic survey, mindfulness, parenting style, and trait EI. Adolescents were asked to complete a questionnaire on trait EI. The results first identified the relation between parent’s and adolescent’s trait EI. Further, the results also revealed Nonreactivity, as a dimension of mindfulness had a moderating effect on adolescent’s trait EI. However, no moderating effects of any parenting styles were identified. It suggested that future research shall explore more on the role of mindfulness in parent on adolescent trait EI development and examine its long-term benefits in adolescent mental health. In addition, to battle with adolescent mental health problems, the society shall also allocate more resources on parental training and education, with specific emphasis on mindfulness knowledge and hands-on mindfulness practices.
Introduction

Mental health issues are indispensable with emotions. Emotion plays a tremendously important role in a person’s cognitive functioning. Deficits in emotion regulation, self-efficacy, or self-esteem gives rise to self-injury or other self-disruptive activities, the onset of which usually occurs in adolescence. Adolescent mental health has become a public concern in Hong Kong as the reported cases of student suicides, depression, and anxiety disorders keep mounting. According to the statistical report by the Child Fatality Review Panel under the Social Welfare Department in Hong Kong (2015), among the 87 children and adolescents aged under 18 who died of unnatural causes in 2010 and 2011, 35 (40%) of them committed suicide, with the youngest just being 10 years old. Suicidal attempt is closely related to Non-suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI). NSSI is a type of maladaptive behavior with actions such as cutting, scratching, or burning to hurt body tissues. It indicates a person’s poor competence in managing intense emotions during interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences. When such self-destructive behaviors become less effective in soothing one’s disturbing mental states, highly depressed adolescents may finally turn to suicidal attempts. In light of existing research findings, when it comes to adolescent’s self-destructive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, researchers shall review and examine the emotion-related issues of the subject adolescent as well as those who are close to him/her.

A trait is a developmental outcome of the interaction between genetic factors and environmental forces. Research studies have identified trait emotional intelligence (EI) as a reliable predictor of adolescent psychological well-being. Besides, trait EI is relatively stable and resistant to external changes. In light of the close connection between adolescent’s emotional well-being and parental influences, this study will focus on the impacts of parental factors on the
development of adolescent’s trait EI in hope of searching for new pathways to the promotion of adolescent mental health. The primary purpose of this research was to explore the degree to which parent and adolescent was connected with each other in terms of their trait EI. The secondary purpose of this research was to explore the roles of two parental factors - mindfulness and the parenting style - played in moderating the parent-adolescent relation in trait EI.

Mindfulness is a dispositional state an individual processes. Mindful people are prone to be accepting and patient. The state of mindfulness provides a rich context to allow the occurrence of novel and unexpected incidents during parent-adolescent interactions. Different parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, give rise to different parenting practices. Parenting styles also influence the adaptation of emotion-coping in adolescents. Combined together, it was proposed that both mindfulness and parenting styles were two key moderators on the relationship between parent’s and adolescent’s trait EI.

In all, this study designed a model composed of three parental variables (parent’s trait EI, mindfulness in parent, and parenting style) and one adolescent variable (adolescent’s trait EI) in an attempt to present an underlying mechanism of the operation of parental influences on adolescent’s trait EI. I anticipate that this study will shed light on the societal perceptions of adolescent mental health issues and corresponding solutions. It deems the professionals’ as well as the public’s awareness that preventative or intervention measures after the emergence of psychological symptoms will not fix the root causes of mental health problems. Fundamentally, to solve intricate mental health problems in adolescents, the society shall invest more efforts in assisting parents to make positive changes in themselves and promote parent’s own overall self-efficacy through mindfulness practicing. To conclude, to shift the existing mindset in dealing with adolescent mental health issues can introduce a new dimension for positive changes.
THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF MINDFULNESS

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence

The construct of emotional intelligence

The word “emotion” is originated from French and Latin. Its original meaning contains “to move, to stir up.” Emotions are fundamental psychological phenomena that possesses universal characteristics across ethnicities, cultures and times (Frijda, 1988). The arousal of emotions is manifested in three domains: first, overt behaviour, such as facial expressions, body gestures, and autonomous actions (Gross, 1998), and covert behaviour, such as discreet and socially undesirable conducts (Hinshaw, Zupan, Simmel, Nigg, & Melnick, 1997); second, cognitive appraisal and evaluation, the task of which is to help understand the self, the others, and the external situation (Nussbaum, 2001. p. 19); third, physical sensations, such as pain (Villemure & Bushnell, 2002) and disgust (Anderson & Sobel, 2003). The three domains are inter-connected with each other (Frijda, 1988). Emotion has long been considered a crucial factor for individual and social functioning. Emotion affects an individual’s judgements. The somatic or emotional signals may influence the conscious decision making process on the neurological level and determine this person’s response to emotional cues on the behavioural level (Bechara, 2004). Emotion can automatically entail morality-related actions through unconscious processing (Huebner, Dwyer, & Hauser, 2009). Emotional expression and processing influence the quality of a person’s social functioning and adaptation (Gross, 2002; Hooker, & Park, 2002; Kipps, Mioshi, & Hodges, 2009).

Emotion is in relation to many concepts that are pertinent to a person’s ability and competence. The American Psychological Association uses the term *intelligence* to evaluate
individual differences “in their ability to understand complex ideas, to adapt effectively to the environment, to learn from experience, to engage in various forms of reasoning, to overcome obstacles by taking thought.” (Neisser, et al., 1996). Theorists have conceptualized the construct of intelligences that address social abilities for adaptation and growth from different perspectives. As early as 1920, Thorndike has identified Social intelligence as a different type of intelligence that encompasses the skills to get along with other people - "to understand and manage men and women and girls, to act wisely in human relations". In Gardner’s conceptualization of personal intelligences, interpersonal intelligence is referring to the capacity to “access to one’s own feeling life – one’s range of affects or emotions: the capacity instantly to effect discriminations among these feelings and, eventually to label them, to enmesh them in symbolic codes, to draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one’s behavior”. Interpersonal intelligence is referred to the capacity to “notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions (1985, pp. 239-240). In general, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence are collectively associated with the capacities to recognize emotion-related elements in oneself and others, respectively, and respond properly to them (Gardner & Hatch, 1989).

The concept of EI was first proposed by Salovey and Mayer in 1990, the construct of which shares a certain degree of similarity with the types of intelligence listed above. Salovey and Mayer (1990) conceptualizes EI as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action” (p. 189). The researchers developed the hierarchical Four-Branch Model of EI, containing abilities to (a) perceive emotion in oneself and others, (b) use emotions to facilitate thought, (c) understand emotions and emotional signs, and (d) manage emotions in oneself and others to
achieve objectives (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). The ability EI is a collection of emotion-related cognitive abilities and is independent of personality traits (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). Within the scope of definition, people high in EI are those who “pay attention to, use, understand, and manage emotions, and these skills serve adaptive functions that potentially benefit themselves and others” (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). In addition, as a cluster of cognitive abilities, EI develops with age (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

In contrast to Salovey and Mayer’s approach on the cognitive processing of EI, some other theorists formulated EI as a mixed capacity in non-cognitive domains. Danial Goleman’s theory on EI combines aspects of motivation and personality. He describes EI as a host of traits and characters including “being able to motivate oneself, being persistent in the face of frustration, to control impulse and delay gratification, to regulate one’s own moods, to keep distress from swamping the ability to think, to empathize and to hope” (1995, p. 34). Goleman (1995) believes that EI determines an individual’s potential to enhance his happiness and well-being through training and development. Further, EI is more critical than IQ to success in life. Reuven Bar-On (1997) has also proposed a similar term – Emotional Quotient (EQ), which is defined as “an array of non-cognitive capacities, competences and skills that influences one’s ability to succeed in coping with environments demands and pressures” (p. 14). When being regarded as personality traits, EI is conceptualized as “a constellation of emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies” (Petrides, Furnham, & Mavroveli, 2007). These established theories on EI indicate that the domains of EI encompasses go far beyond the traditional scope of intelligence with more significance in dealing with real life issues.
There is no contradictions between ability EI and trait EI, even though some research studies have found no convergence between the two constructs (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). In a comparative study of the two types on emotion regulation and mental health in adolescence, it is found that ability EI predicts the skillfulness of an adolescent on when choosing among different coping tactics, whereas trait EI determines the level of efficacy in implementation (Davis & Humphrey, 2012). To reconcile unnecessary discrepancies or misunderstandings arising from the adoption of either of the two types of EI measures, Mikolajczak (2010) proposed an integrated Three-Level Model of EI: The first level is the scope of emotion-related knowledge; the second emotion-related abilities; and the third emotion-related dispositions. The Three-Level Model illustrates a hierarchical structure, incorporating three interrelated dimensions under the construct of EI.

Even though the operational definitions of ability EI or trait EI are different, their distinctions are easily identified in their assessment tests. Ability EI tests shall be measured through maximum-performance report, while trait EI tests are measured through self-report questionnaires (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004; Petrides & Furnham, 2001). One of the major reasons that this study did not choose ability EI tests, such as Mayer-Salovey-Caruso EI Test (MSCEIT) develop, is that these tests only focuses on the cognitive processing of emotion. Ability EI tests do not incorporate some critical indicators to a person’s mental health conditions, such as empathy (Keyes, 2005), motivation (Rouse, Ntoumanis, Duda, Jolly, & Williams, 2011), optimism (Achat, Kawachi, Spiro, DeMolles, & Sparrow, 2000), and self-esteem (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, & De Vries, 2004). In addition to that, ability EI tests contain other limitations. First, since emotional activities are internal experiences of an individual, maximum-performance scores by standard tests or external observations cannot provide accurate
evaluations of construct with a “subjective nature” (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). Second, a person’s ability EI can grow through age and experience and improve through training and practicing (Mayer, et al., 2004). The instable nature of ability EI makes its tests a less effective predictor of developmental issues. Third, confounding factors, such as a person’s knowledge on vocabulary, the impact of social values, awareness of emotion-related issues, or conventional beliefs, can influence the final ability EI scores (Petrides, 2009).

This research was designed to measure a developmental outcome in adolescence. To bypass the limitations in ability EI tests, trait EI tests were adopted which are exclusive of the realm of human cognitive ability (Carroll, 1993). Due to the fact that trait characteristics are highly stable and quite resistant to changes and deeply embedded in a person’s personality sphere (Petrides, 2009), trait EI tests seem match well with the purpose of this study in the exploration of an adolescent dispositional construct, which can serve as an effective predictor of adolescent mental health and psychological well-being. The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) developed by K. V. Petrides of University College London (2009) demonstrates good incremental validity in the prediction of life satisfaction and somatic complaints, the likelihood of rumination upon negative thoughts, and the efficacy in adapting good coping strategies (Freudenthaler, Neubauer, Gabler, Scherl, & Rindermann, 2008; Gardner & Qualter, 2010; Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007).

**Trait EI and adolescent developmental outcomes**

The manifestation of a person’s EI is realized under the combined influences from acquired cognition, environment, and family (Lane, 2000). In light of the theory of trait EI, parent’s EI, as a dispositional factor, is heritably associated with the adolescent’s EI. Statistical facts reveal that on average, additive genetic impacts from the biological parent, regardless the
gender, accounts for about one third of the trait EI variance among adolescents (Vernon, Petrides, Bratko, & Schermer, 2008). It is reasonable to speculate that the trait EI of an adolescent is consistently associated with that of either of his parent’s because of their biological bond.

At this special developmental stage, EI plays an important role in growth adjustment and adaptation. Adolescence symbolizes the transition from childhood to adulthood. Psychologically, during this transitional stage, adolescents’ developmental goals are to become emotionally more detached from their parents and family and obtain more autonomy on their own (Grotevant & Cooper, 1998). Intrinsically, they need to strive for more space to reflect upon varied issues in their lives. In behavior, adolescents become more rejecting to parental advices and disciplines regardless of the contents and willing to risk new decisions and practices. (Baumeister, 1991). Adolescents are propelled to engage their EI to cope with their emotionality and moodiness as a result of the constant conflicting life situations that they have never experienced before (Brooks-Gunn, 1989). Their EI on the dispositional level also gives rise to their emotional and interpersonal competence (Frederickson, Petrides, & Simmonds, 2012).

In a research on the self-reported EI of 250 high school students in Spain with an average age at 14.7, Fernandez-Berrocal and his colleagues (2006) concluded that trait EI could indicate how well an adolescent’s psychological wellbeing is - adolescents with higher self-reported trait EI had better abilities in regulating their emotional states and negative moods. These students demonstrated less anxiety and depression symptoms in contrast to those with lower self-reported trait EI. Moreover, the rates for self-destructive behavior, such as suicidal ideation, plans or attempts, in adolescents are much higher than in adults (Nickerson & Slater, 2009). Risk factors vary from family dysfunction, life stress to violence and victimization (Liu & Tein, 2005;
Nickerson & Slater, 2009; Wagner, 1997). Empirical research study on the self-harming behaviors in 490 British high school students with an average age of 16 proved that students with high trait EI were more adept at using emotional coping strategies and less likely to harm themselves. However, students with low trait EI tended to adopt maladaptive coping strategies, such as rumination, thus the likelihood of harming themselves were also higher (Mikolajczak, Petrides, & Hurry, 2009).

**Parental Variables and Their Relations to Adolescent’s Trait EI**

**Mindfulness**

*The construct of mindfulness.*

The term *Mindfulness* is coined based upon Eastern religious philosophy, the key ingredient of which is to maintain a non-reactive state of mind through practicing meditation. (Seligman, 2004). Even though meditation has been deeply rooted in the Eastern culture for thousands of years, the concept of mindfulness has begun to catch the attention in the West in recent decades due to its high clinical applicability and effectiveness in treating depressive and pathological patients (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Mindfulness is exclusive of religious preaching. It is more about a living style that can accommodate the ever-changing life situations (Kabat-Zinn, 2014, pp. 3-4). Mindfulness is referred to a state of actively yet autonomously attending to “novel” stimuli both from the inside and outside at the present moment without any mental judgements. (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). In other words, in contrast to varied mental reactions to new stimuli, mindfulness represents a stable yet suspending mental state, waiting for the coming of any new stimuli. Mindfulness can also be interpreted as the degree and spectrum of awareness of the self, others, or the external surroundings at any given moments (Gunaratana,
1993); a comprehensive experience that encompasses physical, sensory, social, and cognitive functioning (Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005); or an attentional state that regulate the stability of the pre-frontal cortex (PFC) that is related to emotional cognitive processing (Bishop et al., 2004).

Trait mindfulness or dispositional mindfulness (DM) applies to people regardless whether they practice mindfulness meditation or not (Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2011). Even though trait mindfulness and personality trait are both dispositional factors, their relative stability over a full life course differ. A longitudinal study once demonstrated the high stability of personality traits over 45 years, proving them to be valid indicators of an individual’s developmental outcomes (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999). In contrast to personality traits, trait mindfulness can be modified by the enhancement of state mindfulness through mindfulness meditation. Neuroscientific research reveals that repeated activations of state mindfulness facilitate brain plasticity, resulting in alteration in the structure and related function of neural circuits, which in turn cultivate DM (Garland et al., 2010). In addition, mindfulness meditation increases grey matter volumes in the right orbito-frontal cortile and the right hippocampus, two brain regions that are specialized in emotional regulation and impulsivity inhibition (Luders, Toga, Lepore, & Gaser, 2009). In other words, unlike less changeable personality, by frequent involvement of state mindfulness, such as attending mindfulness intervention programs, trait mindfulness can be transformed and further enhanced (Kiken, Garland, Bluth, Palsson, & Gaylord, 2015). In short, an individual can turn himself or herself into a more mindful person through active mindfulness meditation. The existing literature and empirical findings imply that if inherent trait mindfulness is identified as a moderator to a person’s trait EI development, it indicates that professionals
working in the psychological and educational field may consider the cultivation of state mindfulness as an orientation to the healthy development of an individual’s trait EI.

All mindfulness measures are developed in self-report formats due to the fact that mindfulness is a highly private and exclusive experience of an individual. However, some focus on the state quality of mindfulness, while others the trait quality of mindfulness. The *Toronto Mindfulness Scale* (TMS) developed by Bishop and his colleagues (2004) is an established measurement for state mindfulness that has been used many researchers in their assessments of changes in state mindfulness after mindfulness-based interventions (Gayner, 2012; Laurent, Hertz, Nelson, & Laurent, 2016; Knight, et al., 2014).

The *Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire* (FFMQ), developed by Dr. Ruth Baer of University of Kentucky, on the other hand, is a representative trait mindfulness measure with psychometric properties representing a comprehensive mindfulness construct (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006). FFMQ contains five facets of trait mindfulness – *Observing, Describing, Acting with awareness, Nonjudging of inner experience,* and *Nonreactivity to inner experience.* Observing ($\alpha = .83$) measures the degree of sensitivity of a person to be aware of changes in bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotional states at the present moment. Describing ($\alpha = .47$) measures the comprehension capacity to experiences as a result of Observing and the ability to verbally depict and interpret the experiences. Acting with awareness ($\alpha = .87$) measures a person’s propensity of engaging and maintaining steady attention to tasks that are currently being performed in daily lives. Non-judging of inner experience ($\alpha = .88$) measures one’s tendency to preserve a stable mental state by not instantly evaluating one’s own emotional, cognitive, or behavioral experiences at the present. Finally, Nonreactivity to inner experience ($\alpha = .82$) measures a person’s predisposition of staying detached from inner thoughts
and feelings by not shifting the current focus away from the task that is being undertaken (Baer et al. 2006).

This thesis adopted the FFMQ in measuring trait mindfulness in parent. Because the study did not involve any mindfulness training or intervention programs, the FFMQ was selected in measuring trait mindfulness in participating parents, regardless they have mindfulness meditation experiences or not. Besides, the FFMQ has been proved to have good incremental validity in predicting various psychological problems, such as anxiety disorders (Hawley et al., 2017), anger and negative thoughts rumination (Eisenlohr-Moul, Peters, Pond Jr, & DeWall, 2016; Kiken & Shook, 2014), depressive symptoms (Royuela-Colomer & Calvete, 2016), and avoidant behaviors (Reynolds, Consedine, & McCambridge, 2014).

**Mindfulness and emotion-related activities.**

Mindfulness is positively correlated with cognitive task performance. A state of mindfulness can proactively exercise attentional control on emotion-provoking stimuli. Ortner, Kilner, & Zelazo (2007) studied the effect of mindfulness meditation on focal attentional control in emotional circumstances. Their experiment findings revealed that participants with mindfulness meditation experiences showed a reduction in emotionally engaged states from unpleasant scenes as compared with participants without any mindfulness meditation experiences. It suggests that when exposed to emotion-provoking stimuli, meditators demonstrate less emotional response and stronger sustainability in attentional control.

Likewise, a considerable number of empirical studies have demonstrated huge interest in exploring the attribute of mindfulness in the enhancement of metacognition in emotional regulation. Rumination is one of the key characteristics of depression. Mindfulness has been
found to be positively associated with metacognition and negatively associated with ruminative mental activities among adolescents (Razavizadeh Tabadkan & Mohammadi Poor, 2016). A mindful person is prone to cultivating an accepting attitude and capacity to stay open to a new experience, regardless it is a positive or a negative one (Bishop et al., 2004). Whereas, individuals, especially young ones, whose level of mindfulness are lower, are tend to react with cognitive avoidance in response to unpleasant experiences, which in turn impedes emotion regulation and adaptive emotional coping (Prakash, Whitmoyer, Aldao, & Schirda, 2015).

Being mindful soothes negative emotions and affects. Converging evidence has proved that mindfulness meditation can enhance the capacity to retain positive emotional states and stabilize emotional disturbances. Cognitive-behavioral therapies have widely incorporated mindfulness meditation in treatments. In an intervention project on cancer patients, it was found that increases in mindfulness resulted in declines in emotional interferences and mental and physical stresses. (Brown & Rayan, 2003). The adoption of a mindfulness-based stress-reduction (MBSR) practice on adolescents with psychiatric disorders was also proved its effectiveness in the reduction of depressive and anxious states. (Biegel, Brown, Shapiro, and Schubert, 2009).

**Dispositional mindfulness and trait EI.**

Both mindfulness and trait EI are multi-dimensional constructs that can be conceptualized as a cluster of dispositional traits. Whereas, theories and research studies on the interactive relations between DM and trait EI are scarce. Some researchers have adopted them in their research as separate constructs, independent of each other (Petrides, Gómez, & Pérez-González, 2017). Mindfulness gives rise to a person’s psychological well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Howell, Digdon, Buro, & Shepycki, 2008). In the trait EI model proposed by Petrides...
(2007), Well-being is also one of the 4 factors of the trait EI construct, incorporating self-esteem, trait happiness, and trait optimism, these three facets. Whether mindfulness is on a lower dispositional level compared with trait EI or what is the role of DM on the development of trait EI has never been discussed yet. On the contrary, among the limited studies on their relation, most of which are elaborated from the perspective of trait EI instead of from the otherwise. For example, trait EI functions as a mediator in the relation between mindfulness and Well-being (Bajaj, Gupta, & Pande, 2016) and between mindfulness and impulsive behavior as well (Park & Dhandra, 2017).

**Mindfulness and emotion-related parent-child interaction.**

Research has identified the association between lower level of mindfulness among parents and higher level of depressiveness with increased reactive/ruminative thinking (Parent et al., 2010). Further, there is a positive correlation between the level of depressiveness in parent and the child’s internalizing as well as externalizing problems, which indicate deficits in emotion regulation efficacy (Parent et al., 2010; Parent, McKee, Rough, & Forehand, 2016).

Since state mindfulness can be further internalized and transferred to trait mindfulness, extensive empirical studies have identified the benefits of mindfulness-based parenting programs in the improvement of parent-adolescent relationship. Coatsworth and his colleague (2010) proposes that mindfulness-based parent programs can enhance parent-adolescent relationship in generally five areas: (1) attentive listening; (2) acceptance of the “traits, attributes, and behavior” of self and child nonjudgmentally; (3) awareness of emotions in self and child; (4) managing reactivity during parent-child interactions; and (5) Compassion.
Mindfulness in parent has displayed its impact on parent-child relationship since an early age. In a study of 216 mothers with at least one child between the age of 3 and 6 in China, researchers found that maternal trait mindfulness was positively associated with active involvement and parental confidence and negatively associated with emotional and behavioral problems both in parent and child (Siu, Ma, & Chui, 2016). Moreover, mindfulness has demonstrated its capacity in strengthening the parent-child relationship in empirical studies among normal families and families with pathological issues. In a comparative effectiveness study of a parent-adolescent relation program with and without the integration of parental mindfulness training, researchers found that family program with mindfulness training not only yielded same outcomes as that without mindfulness training in enhancing parents’ interpersonal emotion-regulation skills, parental support to adolescent, effectiveness in the supervision and communication of adolescent behavioral issues, and parents’ overall well-being, but also demonstrated better longitudinal effects on parent’s emotional awareness in adolescent matters and the effectiveness in monitoring adolescent behavior. (Coatsworth et al., 2015). Parents of children with pathological conditions need to deal with stress in their everyday life. In a study of parents who had children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit disorder (ADD), or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), the results indicated that with the increase of mindfulness score in parents after mindfulness-based intervention, parents demonstrated significant improvements in their use of positive affirmations in evaluation stressful life experiences as a result of enhanced scope of attention after mindfulness training. Further, significant improvements in parent-child relation were also detected as parents became more accepting and less judgmental of their children’s pathological conditions (Ahmad & Muayyad, 2016).
Mindfulness in parent facilitates the child’s subsequent psychological development along the growth trajectory. In a study of three age groups of children: young childhood (3 to 7 years old), middle childhood (8 to 12 years old), and adolescence (13 to 17 years old), researchers proves that mindfulness both directly increases children’s prosocial behaviors and decreases internalized and externalized behavioral problems and indirectly through enhanced parenting competence and adaptive parenting practices (Parent, McKee, Rough, & Forehand, 2016). In brief, mindfulness impacts the emotion-related parent-child interactions through the enhancement in parenting attitudes and practices.

Parenting Style

The construct of parenting style.

Darling and Sternberg (1993) conceptualizes parenting style as “a characteristic of the parent that alters the efficacy of the parent's socialization efforts by moderating the effectiveness of particular practices and by changing the child's openness to socialization”. Parenting style is the “antecedent” of child growth outcome mediated by the parent-child relationship (Baumrind, 1967). A parenting style reflects “one’s parenting competency” and is the “social context” as well as the “emotional climate” for parent-child relationship. In contrast, the parenting practices a parent adopts within one parenting dimension only have short-term impact on children’s cognition, behaviour, or psychological state. (Darling and Sternberg, 1993).

Before the construct of parenting style was first proposed, Eric Fromm had used rational and inhibiting authority to elaborate superiority-inferiority human relationship in his book Escape from Freedom. In rational authority, the interest of the superior party is aligned with that of the inferior party. The superiority-inferiority relationship is instilled with “love, admiration, or
gratitude”. In inhibiting authority, the interest of the superior party dominates and that of the inferior party keep being neglected. The superiority-inferiority relationship is filled with “humiliation and hatred” (Fromm, pp. 163-164). Inspired by Fromm’s idea, in 1966, Diana Baumrind of UC Berkeley, identified three basic parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive.

**Authoritative parenting**. Authoritative parenting is “rational authority”. Authoritative parents have an accepting attitude to their children’s current state. However, they apply rational practices to shape their children’s value and conduct. Their goal-setting is realistic and their control and discipline are adequate. They offer reasons and explanations proceed and/or after punishment. Meanwhile, they also encourage their children to voice out their concerns and feelings and grant them autonomy to make independent judgements and choices. Authoritative parenting style (discipline, high warmth, autonomy granting) is associated with better adjustment (Kaufmann, et al. 2000); adolescents’ lower risk behavior (Jackson, Henriksen, & Foshee, 1998; Piko & Balázs, 2012; Rosen, Cheever, & Carrier, 2008); higher academic achievement (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992); higher proneness to peer pressure (Chan & Chan, 2013), and lower substance use (Baumrind, 1991).

**Authoritarian parenting**. Authoritarian parenting is “inhibiting authority” with dominant-submissive parent-child relation. Authoritarian parents have unrealistically high expectations for their children. Their discipline is strict, rigid, and punitive. They do not allow their children to demonstrate their authentic feelings and emotions. They interpret such suppression, compulsion, and excessive restriction as “love”. Adolescents with authoritarian parents are more likely to develop personality disorders (Johnson, Cohen, Chen, Kasen, &
Brook, 2006). They demonstrate stronger tendency to submit to authority (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991).

**Permissive parenting.** Permissive parenting does not like either of the other two. Permissive parents are neither controlling nor supportive. They impose little family rules and regulations on their children and tolerate intrusive behavior or remarks. They are highly responsive and help too much to an extent that their children become dependent on their parents. The impacts of permissive parenting on adolescents’ maladaptive behavior, academic performance, and depressive symptoms are somewhere between authoritative and authoritarian parenting (Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005; Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996; Shucksmith, Hendry, & Glendinning, 1995).

**Parenting styles and adolescent’s ability EI.**

The relationship between parenting styles and child/adolescent EI does not seem to be a popular area of empirical research. Therefore, existing research studies on the subject correlation is very limited. The first study was conducted by Asghari and Besharat in 2011. Participants were 352 college students with an average age of 18.39 ($SD = 0.78$). Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS) was used to assess both mother’s and father’s self-perceived parenting styles. POPS mainly comprises three parental variables – involvement, autonomy, and warmth. Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) is based on the three ability EI dimensions proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1990): emotion appraisal, emotion utilization, and emotion regulation. The research findings revealed that all the three parenting dimensions were associated with the adolescents’ ability EI. In specific, parental warmth was proved to be the most influential variable on this correlation.
The second study was conducted by Abdollahi, Talib, & Motalebi in 2013. One hundred and eighty-eight Iranian male students with an average age of 17.1 ($SD = .93$) were recruited for the study of adolescent-perceived parenting styles and adolescent’s ability EI. The parenting bonding instrument (PBI) and the Assessing Emotions Scale (AES) were applied in assessing the adolescent’s ability EI. In contrast to POPS adopted in the previous study, PBI a measure assessed from the child’s perspective, including four basic parenting styles based on two parental factors – care and overprotection. AES is developed based on Mayer and Salovey’s theory on ability EI (1990). Their research results indicated that parenting styles with high warmth and affection were associated with high ability EI, while parenting styles with rejections and neglects were associated with low ability EI.

**Parenting styles and adolescent’s trait EI.**

Studies focusing on the relationship between parenting styles or parenting practices and children’s trait EI are even scarcer than the relationship with adolescent ability EI (Alegre, 2011). In one recent study, conducted by Argyriou, Bakoyannis, & Tantaros of the University of Greece (2016), these researchers attempted to explore the relationship between parenting styles and trait EI through 127 Greek adolescents with a mean age of 16.4 years ($SD = 0.96$ years). Three parenting styles – authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive - were assessed through the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) from the perspective of adolescents. TEIQue-ASF was used in the assessment of adolescent trait EI. Their research findings have demonstrated several evidences: (1) Authoritative parenting is positively related to adolescent trait EI; (2) authoritarian parenting is negatively related to adolescent trait EI; (3) no relation has been found between permissive parenting and adolescent trait EI; (4) male adolescents’ trait EI scores higher than
their female counterparts; and (5) adolescents whose parents have obtained higher academic achievement tend to possess higher trait EI.

**Research Design Based on Literature Review**

The influence of parents is essential in adolescent development (Ginsburg, 2007). Within the paradigm of the nature-nurture interplay, adolescent’s EI can be regarded as a joint product of both the genetic traits passed down by the parents and the rearing environment that has been shaped by parents along the past developmental trajectory. Based upon existing literature and research findings, the primary purpose of this paper was to test the degree of connectedness between the parent’s EI and the adolescent’s EI. In specific, the study tested the correlation between the parent’s trait EI and the adolescent’s trait EI, the parent’s trait EI being the independent variable and the adolescent’s the dependent variable. The trait EI contains 5 subscales: 4 factors (Emotionality, self-control, Sociability, and Well-being) and 1 Global trait EI. Further, the study examined the moderating effect of parenting styles on the relationship between the parent’s EI and the adolescent’s EI. The parenting styles included three types: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Moreover, the study also examined the moderating effect of mindfulness of the parent on the relationship between the parent’s EI and adolescent’s EI. The trait mindfulness of the parent included 5 facets: Observing, Describing, Acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience, and Nonreactivity to inner experience. In total, the following hypothesis were tested: (1) the adolescent’s trait EI is correlated with the parent’s trait EI; (2) there is a moderating effect of authoritative parenting style on the relationship between the parent’s trait EI and the adolescent’s trait EI. In specific, authoritative parenting style is positively associated with adolescent’s trait EI; (3) there is a moderating effect of authoritarian parenting style on the relationship between the parent’s trait EI and the adolescent’s trait EI. In
specific, authoritarian parenting style is negatively associated with adolescent’s trait EI; (4) there is a moderating effect of permissive parenting style on the relationship between the parent’s trait EI and the adolescent’s trait EI. In specific, permissive parenting style is negatively associated with adolescent’s trait EI, and (5) there is a moderating effect of mindfulness in the parent on the relationship between the parent’s trait EI and the adolescent’s trait EI.
Methodology

Participants

Seventy-two parent-adolescent dyads with adolescents currently studying in Hong Kong, participated in the survey. They were recruited from both local schools (33%) and international schools (67%). Among them, 66 mothers (92%) and 6 fathers (8%) participated in the survey. The 69.4% of the participating parents is between 45 and 54 years old. The majority of the parents (96%) described both their and their spouses’ ethnical background as Asian, reflecting the regional demographics. Most of the parents are married (99%). Forty-two percent of the parents reported attaining a Bachelor’s degree, 22% a Master’s degree, 26% a high school diploma, and 10% an Associate degree or Professional degree. Thirty-four percent of the parents are wage earners, 17% self-employed, and 33% home-maker. In comparison, 63% local school moms are “employed for wages” or “self-employed”, the rate of which is 17% higher than their international school counterparts. Four participating families with incomplete survey data were not included in the final data analysis of this research. The study has obtained approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Hong Kong.

The age range of participating adolescents was from 12 to 19. The mean age of adolescents was 14.42 ($SD=1.897$). Forty girls (56%) versus 32 boys (44%) participated in the survey. Sixty-seven percent of adolescents were studying in international schools; the rest were studying at local schools. Thirty-one percent of the adolescents had no siblings; 58% had 1, 10% had 2, and 1% had 4.
Procedures

Participating families were recruited from the author’s personal network and the chiropractic and the optometric clinics the author regularly visit. Survey documents are distributed in hard copies, PDF documents, or Excel documents in interactive format to cater to the participants’ individual preferences and practical needs. Survey documents were distributed either in person or through email. The participating parents returned their survey results to the author by mail, email, or in person. Since the author have most of the participants’ contact information, in case of any missing data, most of the time, the author could make contact with the participants and replenish their survey questionnaires. Survey documents included an informal invitation letter from the author, stating the intent of this survey and its main content, an Informed Consent Form for Adult, a Student Assent Form, a demographic survey and other four questionnaires, which were elaborated below in detail. An envelope was provided within each set of survey documents that were distributed in hard copies, providing to adolescent participants in case that they needed to keep their survey answers confidential to their parents. A few of, but not many adolescents did sealed their questionnaires in the envelopes. Each participating family was entitled of Starbucks coupons at the value of HK$ 50 as a token of appreciation.

Measures

Data for this study were obtained from the following inventories:

1) The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaires (TEIQue; Petrides, 2009), used to evaluate parent’s emotional intelligence;

2) TEIQue–Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF; Petrides, 2009), used to evaluate adolescent’s emotional intelligence;
3) *Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire* (FFMQ; Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006), used to evaluate parent’s mindfulness; and

4) *Parenting Style Questionnaire* (n.d.), used to evaluate parents’ parenting styles.

The *TEIQue* (Petrides, 2009) is a trait-based measure for EI, containing 153 items, encompassing assessments of 15 facets, 4 factors, and one Global trait EI. The umbrella structure of TEIQue is led by a Global trait EI, under which are the *Sociability* factor (Emotional management, Assertiveness, and Social awareness), the *Well-being* factor (Optimism, Happiness, and Self-esteem), the *Emotionality* factor (Empathy, Emotional perception, and Emotional expression), and the *Self-control* factor (Emotional regulation, Impulsiveness, and Stress management). Two facets – *Adaptability* and *Self-motivation*, contribute directly to the Global trait EI score. Participants were asked to self-report the degree of agreement to each item, on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1(*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*). Examples of the items are: “I’m normally able to “get into someone’s shoes” and experience their emotions” (Emotionality); “When I disagree with someone, I generally prefer to remain silent rather than make a scene” (Sociability); “Controlling my urges is not a big problem for me” (Self-control); and “Life is beautiful” (Well-being). Petrides (2009) reported acceptable internal consistencies (.69-.89) within the 15 facets across genders. The 4 factors and 1 Global trait EI scores obtained in this study demonstrated high internal consistency. The reliability statistics are presented in Table 1.
The TEIQue-ASF was used to measure adolescent’s Global trait EI as well as four factors. The age of target participant of this measure could be as early as 11 years (Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham, and Frederickson, 2006). It is a self-report measure composed of 30 items, each two of which represent one facet out of the total 15. The scale used a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Disagree) to 7 (Agree). Participants are asked to identify the extent to which they agree with descriptions pertinent to their emotion related ability of their own and others. Examples of the items are: “I am good at getting along with my classmates” (Emotionality); “I find it hard to control my feelings” (Self-control); “I often find it hard to see things from someone else’s point of view” (Sociability); and “Sometimes, I think my whole life is going to be miserable” (Well-being). Petrides (2009) reports that the internal consistence of Global trait EI score is normally over .80. The Global trait EI and Self-control, Sociability, and Well-being displayed satisfying internal consistency. However, the Cronbach’s alpha of Emotionality exceptionally low. The reliability statistics are presented in Table 2.
Table 2

*Reliability Statistics of the TEIQue-ASF*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait EI Factor</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
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</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global trait EI</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *FFMQ* is a 39-item self-report measure that assesses five facets of trait mindfulness: *Observing, Describing, Acting with awareness, Nonjudging of inner experience,* and *Nonreactivity to inner experience.* Assessments of dispositional mindfulness were evaluated according to the subscales scores and the total mindfulness index. A high total mindfulness index/subscale score indicates high mindfulness competence in general or in a specific dimension. The measure uses a 5-point Likert scale, responses of which include 1 (*never or very rarely true*), 2 (*rarely true*), 3 (*sometimes true*), 4 (*often true*), and 5 (*very often or always true*). Examples of the items are: “When I take a shower or bath, I stay alert to the sensations of water on my body” (Observing); “I perceive my feelings are emotions without having to react to them” (Nonreactivity); and “I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I should feel them” (Nonjudging). The reliability and factor analysis of *FFMQ* in previous studies has demonstrated strong internal consistency (Baer et al., 2008; Choi, 2015). The reliability statistics of this study are presented in Table 3.
Table 3

*Reliability Statistics of the FFMQ*

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<tr>
<th>Mindfulness Facet</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Describing</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting with awareness</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonjudging of inner experience</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonreactivity to inner experience</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *Parenting Style Questionnaire* is obtained from the official website of Comprehensive Psychological Assessment Centre (CPAC) in Australia with no author specified. At the time of writing this research paper, no existing research studies were found that have used this measure. This Parenting Style Questionnaire is an adapted version of the Parenting Practices Questionnaire developed by Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart (1995). The measure includes 30 parenting practices corresponding to the three types of parenting styles - *authoritative*, *authoritarian*, and *permissive*, rated on a 6-point Likert scale, varying from 1 (Never) to 6 (Always). The authoritative parenting style contains 13 parenting practices, the authoritarian also 13, whereas, the permissive only 4. Examples of the parenting practices are: “I am responsive to my child’s feelings and needs” (authoritative parenting style); “I use criticism to make my child improve his/her behaviour” (authoritarian parenting style); and “I give into my child when he/she causes a commotion about something” (permissive parenting style). The Parenting Practices Questionnaire developed by Robinson et al. (1995) contains 62 parenting practices under the same categorization. However, the type of parenting style is not specified in the questionnaire.
Besides, each parent, mother or father, is required to rate the parenting practices of both himself/herself and that of the spouse’s. Some of descriptive sentences of parenting practices in the Parenting Practices Questionnaire are almost identical with those in the Parenting Style Questionnaire adopted in this research. For example: “I am responsive to our child’s feelings and needs”; “I scold and criticize to make my child improve”; and “I give into our child when the child causes a commotion about something”. Based upon the survey data of this research, the Parenting Style Questionnaire demonstrates satisfying internal liability. The low number of items (only 4) under the permissive parenting style may attribute to its low internal consistency. The reliability statistics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Reliability Statistics of the Parenting Style Questionnaire*

<table>
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<th>Parenting Style</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Authoritative</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

**Correlations between Parent’s Trait EI and Adolescent’s Trait EI.**

The research findings displayed a positive correlation between parent’s Global trait EI and adolescent’s Global trait EI, \( r(70) = .27, p = .022 \); a positive correlation between parent’s Sociability and adolescent’s Sociability, \( r(70) = .31, p = .008 \); and a positive correlation between parent’s Well-being and adolescent’s Well-being, \( r(70) = .30, p = .011 \). However, no significant correlations were found either between the parent’s Emotionality and the adolescent’s Emotionality, \( r(70) = .02, p = .894 \); or between the parent’s Self-control and adolescent’s Self-control, \( r(70) = .20, p = .090 \).

**Moderating Effects of Mindfulness in Parent on Adolescent’s Trait EI.**

Adolescent’s trait EI was regressed on parent’s trait EI, mindfulness, and their interaction term. Mindfulness facets - Observing, Describing, Acting with awareness, Nonjudging, and Nonreactivity, were tested independently, resulting in 5 models (summarized in Table 4). Results showed significant interactive effect between parent’s trait EI and Nonreactivity on adolescent’s trait EI.

The findings identified the moderating effect of one mindfulness trait – *Nonreactivity to inner experience* on adolescent’s Global trait EI. The results indicated that parent’s mindfulness trait Nonreactivity could significantly moderate the correlation of parent’s *Global trait EI* with adolescent’s Global trait EI. In specific, the strength of the association between parent’s and adolescent’s Global trait EI decreased with increasing level of trait Nonreactivity. Simple slope analyses revealed that the effect of parent’s Global trait EI was significant when trait Nonreactivity was low \((b = .73, p < .001)\) and medium \((b = .38, p = .005)\). But when trait
Nonreactivity was high, the effect of parent’s Global trait EI became insignificant, $b=.03$, $p=.865$. So, a high level of trait Nonreactivity could weaken the association of parent’s and adolescent’s Global trait EI. In other words, when the level of Nonreactivity in parent was low and medium, parent’s Global trait EI predicted higher adolescent’s Global trait EI.

Further, under the Global trait EI, the results also identified significant moderating effects of trait Nonreactivity on 3 trait EI factors: Emotionality, Sociability, and Well-being. Whereas, the moderating effect on adolescent’s Self-control was not found. First, simple slope analyses revealed that the effect of parent’s Emotionality was significant when trait Nonreactivity was low ($b=.46, p=.028$). But when trait Nonreactivity was medium ($b=.09, p=.489$) and high ($b=-.29, p=.098$), the effect of parent’s Emotionality became insignificant. So, a medium or high level of trait Nonreactivity could weaken the association of parent’s and adolescent’s Emotionality. It means that when the level of Nonreactivity in parent was medium and high, parent’s Emotionality predicted higher adolescent’s Emotionality. Second, Simple slope analyses revealed that the effect of parent’s Sociability was significant when trait Nonreactivity was low ($b=.75, p=.001$) and medium ($b=.45, p=.002$). But when trait Nonreactivity was high, the effect of parent’s Sociability became insignificant, $b=.14, p=.412$. So, a high level of trait Nonreactivity could weaken the association of parent’s and adolescent’s Sociability. It means that when the level of Nonreactivity in parent was high, parent’s Sociability predicted higher adolescent’s Sociability. Third, Simple slope analyses revealed that the effect of parent’s Well-being was significant when trait Nonreactivity was low ($b=.73, p<.001$) and medium ($b=.43, p=.002$). But when trait Nonreactivity was high, the effect of parent’s Well-being became insignificant, $b=.12, p=.512$. So, a high level of trait Nonreactivity could weaken the association of parent’s and adolescent’s Well-being. It means that when the level of Nonreactivity in parent was high,
parent’s Well-being predicted higher adolescent’s Well-being. The regression models are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*The regression models of Nonreactivity on Global trait EI and trait EI factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>se</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
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<td>Adolescent’s Global trait EI</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>-3.33</td>
<td>.006</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parent’s Global trait EI</td>
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<td>.006</td>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>-2.60</td>
<td>.012</td>
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<td>.70</td>
<td>.489</td>
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<td>3.22</td>
<td>.002</td>
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<td>-.04</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-0.71</td>
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</table>

**Moderating Effects of Parenting styles on Adolescent’s Trait EI.**

No moderating effects of *authoritative* parenting style ($\Delta R^2 < .01$, $F(1,68) = .31$, $p = .582$), *authoritarian* parenting style ($\Delta R^2 < .01$, $F(1,68) = .07$, $p = .797$), or *permissive* parenting style
(ΔR²<.01, F(1,68)=.047, p=.828) were found on adolescent’s Global trait EI. Moreover, none of the parenting styles have any moderating effects on neither of the four trait EI factors. The regression models are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

The regression models of Parenting Styles on Global trait EI and trait EI factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>se</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
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### The Moderating Effects of Mindfulness

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### Others

The research results did not reveal any associations between (1) adolescent’s gender and his/her trait EI, $r(70)=.07, p=.569$; (2) adolescent’s age and his/her trait EI, $r(70)= -.01, p=.917$; (3) parent’s educational level and adolescent’s trait EI, $r(70)= .04, p=.727$; (4) parent’s employment status (e.g. “Employed for wages” or “A homemaker”) and adolescent’s trait EI, $r(70)= -.02, p=.889$; and (5) the number of siblings and adolescent’s trait EI, $r(70)= -.03, p=.783$. 
Discussion

The present study tested (1) the correlations between parent’s and adolescent’s trait EI, (2) the moderating effects of dispositional mindfulness in parent on the relation between parent’s and adolescent’s trait EI, and (3) the moderating effects of the 3 types of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) on the relation between parent’s and adolescent’s trait EI. In correlation analysis, the adolescent’s Global trait EI was associated with that of the parent’s. The results also proved correlations of the Sociability and the Well-being between parent’s and adolescent’s. However, the results failed to identify any associations between parent’s and adolescent’s Emotionality or Self-control. Furthermore, among the five mindfulness dimensions and the total mindfulness score, only Nonreactivity to inner experience has been proved to have a moderating effect on the Global trait EI and most of adolescent’s trait EI factors, except for Self-control. Finally, the results did not identify any moderation effects of the three parenting styles on adolescent’s trait EI.

Correlation between parent’s and adolescent’s trait EI

Consistent with previous research findings (Vernon, et al., 2008; Petrides, 2009), this research also identified correlations between parent’s and adolescent’s Global trait EI. Adolescent’s trait EI can be an integrative outcome from the interplays among shared genes with the parent, the adolescent’s unique genes, the parent-child interactions within the rearing environment, and the adolescent’s unique life experiences. The findings indicated that adolescent’s Global trait EI, as a dispositional factor on the lower level of personality, has begun to display its shared similarities with the parent’s. On the inside, a personal genetic base is the primary contributor to trait development (Zeidner, Matthews, Roberts, & MacCann, 2003). On the outside, life experiences, as the “antecedent history” in early childhood, continuously
contribute to the personality shaping and formation during adolescence (Blos, 1962, p. 16). Such a progressive impact within this relationship is mediated by attachment bonding with the caregiver, which in most cases - the mother. (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, & Bakker, 2007). The amount of time the mother and her child spent in joint-activities directly contributes to the child’s trait EI development (Alegre, 2012; Wong, C. S., Foo, Wang, & Wong, 2007). Further, parental genetic factors is transmitted to the adolescent through non-genetic environment. Resemblance in trait EI between parent and child actually reflects a two-way transmission comprises passive genotype–environment correlation (parent to child) and evocative genotype–environment correlation (child to parent) (Silberg & Eaves, 2004). To sum, the identification of parent-adolescent similarities in their trait EI in this study once again proves the contribution from their shared genes and the additive effect of parent-child interactions.

Moreover, within the four EI factors in the TEIQue and TEIQue-ASF measures, the results only revealed associations between parent’s and adolescent’s Sociability and Well-being, but not their Emotionality or Self-control. It implied that first, in the second decade of a person’s life, the adolescent might have already acquired and internalized the parent’s Sociability-related characteristics in the effectiveness and approach of communication (Assertiveness), the sensitivity in social contexts (Social awareness), and the comprehension in coping with emotion-related scenarios (Emotion Management). Second, adolescent’s general viewpoints to his/her future life (Optimism), the overall level of satisfaction to his/her current life (Happiness), and the evaluation of themselves (Self-esteem) also has begun to reflect the parent’s overall Well-being.

However, the research findings did not find the association between parent’s and adolescent’s Emotionality. Some distinct developmental characteristics during adolescence may explain this divergent outcome. One possible developmental characteristic that leads to change is
hormonal changes during adolescence. Drastic hormonal changes serve the development of primary and secondary sex characteristics, which give rise to mood swings and emotional adjustment problems that an adolescent has never experienced in the preadolescent stage (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). The flotatation of mood due to external stimuli may weaken the association between parents’ and children’s emotionality EI. Another explanatory factor is identity crisis that adolescents encounter. The occurrence of identity crisis constantly inflicts disturbing emotions, such as fear, anger, and anxiety, and escalate familial conflicts when adolescents become emotionally rejecting their parents so as to explore and construct a new identity for themselves (Steinberg, 2001). The condition can be further intensified when adolescents begin to realize the gap between their perceptions, values, and attitudes with their parents’ in the exploration of their personal identity (Coco & Courtney, 1998). Unstable and fluctuating emotional disposition, as one of the normal developmental characteristics in this stage (Jacobson, 1961), more or less will affect the relationship with family and friends due to adolescents’ rejection of emotional bonding. Such a “violent thrust away from dependency” (Blos, 1962) may decrease or even counteract the impact of parent’s Emotionality on adolescent’s Emotional perception and Emotional expression (two facets under Emotionality) development. Moreover, “first time” life experiences may also contribute to this absence of correlation in parent-child emotionality EI. With the exposure to novel phenomena in a more diverse social context, adolescents are frequently propelled to confront intensified “first time” emotional disturbance and behavioral impulsivity (Siegel & Shaughnessy, 1995). Inevitably, they may encounter difficulties in comprehending these unexpected life events and the associated physiological responses in themselves (Camarena, 1991). They may constantly shift, alter or adjust their Emotional perception and Emotional expression within in the same dichotomy in an
attempt to test varied consequences in different social contexts. This attribute may also give rise to the low consistency ($\alpha = .49$) in the answering Emotionality-related questions. It can be speculated that in adolescence, universal development features may temporarily outweigh individual genetic factors in the externalization of trait EI. Fourth, *Self-centeredness in adolescence*. Egocentric personality traits, such as extraversion, risk-taking, impulsivity, are more salient in adolescence (Sarov, 2014). Eventually, adolescents are less capable of attending to and prioritizing other’s feelings and needs, which in turn become a temporal hindrance to the development of Empathy, another facet under Emotionality. Fifth, *parenting stress*. Stress of parents pertinent to job- and family-related matters can be another determinant that mediates the impact of parent on the dispositional level (Almeida & McDonald, 1998). In contrast to the preadolescent years, parents with adolescent children may also feel the same emotional inadequacy and disorientation in parent-adolescent interactions. It is expected that the arising cognitive and emotional conflicts between parents and adolescents brings additional pressure to parents when dealing with familial matters. This may bring temporal uncertainty in and interference with the socialization of Emotionality in parent. In all, it can be speculated that, before the maturation of trait EI development, the relation between parent’s and adolescent’s Emotionality factor may not display significant correlation yet.

Likewise, typical neurological and psychological developmental characteristics at this stage can also be applied to explain why the results did not reveal any associations between parent’s and the adolescent’s Self-control. One explanatory factor is *the underdeveloped prefrontal lobes*. In adolescence, the prefrontal cortex, the brain region that is responsible for the inhibition of hormonal urges and emotional impulses, are still under construction (Hooper, Luciana, Conklin, & Yarger, 2004). Large loss of grey matters and rapid growth in white matters
occur simultaneously (Paus, 2005). Failure in executive functioning occur from time to time when the prefrontal cortex cannot fulfill the task demands arising from the interplays between the cognitive and emotional processing (Steinberg, 2007). As a consequence, adolescent may frequently display various degrees of Impulsiveness (a facet of Self-control) in thoughts and actions (Casey & Caudle, 2013) due to their underdeveloped brain executive function mechanism (Best & Miller, 2010). Another explanatory factor may attribute to the maladaptive regulation due to developmental regression. Neurological evidence has indicated the emergence of developmental regression in cognition-behavior regulation in early adolescence (Anderson, 2002). In behavior, adolescents appear to be less considerate in involving conscious judgements or thoughtful considerations in their decisions and subsequent actions. Such phenomenon may attribute to the increasing risk-taking behaviors in the exploration of new personal identity or under the influence from the peers in their social bonding (Steinberg, 2007). To fulfill the psychological tasks in development, frequent emotional instability is expected to be a regular internal state that an adolescent shall deal with. The engagement of continuous emotional adaptation to conflicting cognitive-emotional interactions, which are pertinent to challenging external life situations as well as internal adjustment dilemma, become a routine task. In such demanding conditions for emotional development, adolescent’s trait Emotional regulation may not have a stable ground to consistently present itself as a salient developmental outcome. Eventually, its association with parent’s trait Emotional regulation (a facet of Self-control) may also not that easily to be detected. Dilemmas in coping is a third explanatory factor. As mentioned earlier, parents and adolescents encounter different life stressors that may eventually increase their emotional and cognitive load. Discrepancies in the perspectives taken by the parent and the adolescent can escalate the tension in their relationship (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000). In
early adolescent period, when family members are still struggling in adapting to emotion-laden situations, they may initially experience a certain degree of maladaptation in emotion and behavior adjustment (Conger, Patterson, & Ge, 1995). Notice that the mean age of adolescent participants for this study is 14.4, indicating that this study is primarily focused on families with young adolescents. Therefore, the trait Stress-management (a facet of Self-control) may be in the initial development stage to the extent that not able to manifest it in identifiable emotional coping skills and strategies. To conclude, before the emergence of conscious knowledge to various phenomena pertaining to adolescence and adequate coping competence, it is speculated that the impact of Self-control may still be in the latent period at the present.

The Moderating effects of Nonreactivity

The results confirmed that one mindfulness facet – Nonreactivity to inner experience had a moderating effect on the parent-child correlation in their trait EI. Nonreactivity is conceptualized as a disposition that is prone to acceptance of any emotional activities or even upheavals without immediate mental as well as behavioural reactions to it (Baer et al., 2006). In other words, when becoming emotional, individuals with high level of trait Nonreactivity tend not to rush to immediate judgements on the self, others, or the situation. Further, they are not easily being provoked with impulsive verbal reactions, such as yelling, arguing, criticizing, and physical reactions, such as fighting or throwing objects. The matter of fact is that in parent-adolescent interactions, it is evident that parents have to encounter different levels of abrupt emotional activities coming along with familial conflicts between the two generations (Bettelheim, 1963). In the exploration of a new identity, adolescent may attempts to break the old one by breaking familial rules that have been established for years, challenging parent’s values and judgements, bypassing parent’ permission, or performing other activities that trespass the
existing parental boundaries. In addition, Adolescents can easily become emotionally agitated due to frequent hormonal fluctuations. Being one of the mindfulness dimensions, Nonreactivity to inner experience in such situations determines whether the parent express his or her thoughts and feelings right away at negative emotion-provoking stimuli or take any immediate actions to stop deviant behavior. Parents with high Nonreactivity are apt at avoiding being “flooded” – a term coined by Gottman (1994) in describing emotional hijackings - when confronting emotional distress and opt not to respond with impulsivity. To the adolescent, the non-responding reaction can be a signal of “I understand your bewilderment and inner struggle”. The action itself is powerful enough to demonstrate the parent’s acceptance and understanding to the adolescent’s internal developmental needs, which in turn provides a secure environment for adolescent’s psychological development (Berenson, Crawford, Cohen, & Brook, 2005). Nevertheless, Nonreactivity does not mean that parent permits or neglect unacceptable remarks or deviant behaviors. It only indicates the degree to which a parent is capable of controlling the inner impulsivity in stressful conditions. This quality nurtures trust in parent-adolescent relationship and is the antecedent of any subsequent positive parenting and conflict-solving skills arising from a clear mind (Greco & Eifert, 2004).

The moderating effect of Nonreactivity to the correlation between parent’s and adolescent’s Global trait EI in the present study suggests that Nonreactivity can make changes to the rearing environment to the extent become capable enough to counterbalance the effect of parent’s trait EI on the adolescent’s trait EI development. The reason that Nonreactivity is such a powerful moderator to adolescent’s growth is probably because it satisfies adolescent’s psychological needs. Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. The “detachment process” from original family relationship, which involves stress and rebellion, is
considered to be inevitable and normative (Freud, 1958). Adolescents need sufficient space and autonomy to allow them to explore their emerging sense of self in the search of a new identity. Being less reactive to mood states supresses negative socialization of EI traits in parents and thus creates a more positive atmosphere for parent-adolescent interactions (Barnhofer, Duggan, & Griffith, 2011; Fisak & Von Lehe, 2012). Such evidence explains that why Nonreactivity creates a condition that allows adolescent enjoys more freedom and independence in self-adjustment and reflection in the pursuit of higher emotional and cognitive competence.

The results further revealed that when parent becomes highly “nonreactive”, adolescent displays more shared similarity in Emotionality with parent to the extent that a disassociated relation in the simple effect analysis was transformed into a significant correlation in the moderation test. First, parents with high level of Nonreactivity are prone to demonstrate Empathy at their impulsivity, rebellion, or emotion-charged irrationality (Berenson, Crawford, Cohen, & Brook, 2005). Second, parents with high level of Nonreactivity possess high sensitivity in the Emotional perception to their internal emotional states (Desrosiers, Vine, Curtiss, & Klemanski, 2014; Laurent, Laurent, Hertz, Egan-Wright, & Granger, 2013). Therefore, they are able to quickly interrupt any automatic reactions once any emotion-related physiological arousals are perceived. Third, parents with high level of Nonreactivity demonstrate higher ability in “verbal control and verbal sensitivity” in Emotional expression (Jones & Hansen, 2015). Fourth, parents with high level of Nonreactivity are more capable of maintaining nurturing parent-adolescent Relationships (a facet of Emotionality) through effective communication and adaptive coping (Jones & Hansen, 2015). Therefore, even though parent-adolescent conflicts may temporally reduce the similarity between parent’s and adolescent’s Emotionality, Nonreactivity may serve
as a positive force to compensate such deviation by creating a condition to allow more free
genetic expressions of adolescent’s own Emotionality.

As what has mentioned previously, it is probably because the biological and
psychological restraints in adolescence proportionally outweigh the socialization of Self-control
in its genetic expression, Nonreactivity did not display a moderating effect on the relation
between parent’s and adolescent’s Self-control. However, from a developmental prospective,
with sufficient life experiences and practices, they eventually become more capable of
comprehending various outcomes out of the interplays between themselves and the environment.
Through the progressive process of accomplishing their developmental needs, adolescents may
gradually become more oriented and emotionally-adjusted as their maturity grow. Therefore, in
later life stages after adolescence, it is still hopeful to detect the relation between parent’s and the
child’s Self-control.

**Moderating effects of parenting styles on adolescent’s trait EI**

This study initially hypothesized that *authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive*
parenting styles have moderating effects on the adolescent’s trait EI, respectively. However, the
researching findings of the current study did not exhibit any of such associations. It would be
very hard to find meaningful implications from existing literature or empirical studies, since
rarely there are widely-acknowledged studies or theories claiming that parenting style is an
antecedent to the child’s trait EI development. In the Literature Review of this thesis, only two
studies that have identified the significant relation of parenting styles and adolescent’s ability EI
were found (Abdollahi, Talib, & Motalebi, 2013; Asghari & Besharat, 2011), both of which
happened to be conducted in the Middle-East of Asia.
Meanwhile, the available literature on adolescent’s trait EI is also extremely limited. After assessing 155 dyads of Spanish mothers and children aged from 7-12, Alegre (2012) claimed that there were no significant associations between children’s trait EI and (1) either positive/negative parenting styles with dimensions in warmth, consistency in discipline, appropriateness in demands, and children’s autonomy, (2) or the four parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved). On the other hand, only one empirical study has found significant impacts of the three types of parenting styles on adolescent’s trait EI by the time of writing this essay (Argyriou, Bakoyannis, & Tantaros, 2016). In particular, this study adopted adolescent’s self-report in assessing both mothers’ and fathers’ parenting styles.

The fact that the current study did not reveal any associations may probably attribute to the following reasons: (1) The construct validity of the Parenting Style Questionnaire. The Parenting Style Questionnaire is a simplified version abridged from the Parenting Practices Questionnaire developed by Robinson et al. in 1995, with no specific author(s) and empirical studies supporting it. Even though the Cronbach’s alpha demonstrate high internal consistency for authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles, the internal consistency of permissive parenting style is less satisfying, probably due to lack of construct content since there were only four items under the subscale. Therefore, the Parenting Style Questionnaire may not be a valid psychometric instrument in measuring parenting styles. (2) The targeting participants for assessment. This study adopted a parental self-report questionnaire to assess the parenting styles. It was determined by parent’s subjective viewpoint pertinent to his or her parenting. Parental exercises that convey the parent’s values, beliefs, and attitudes may not be the same convincing and persuasive as in the preadolescent stage. The cultivation of parental awareness on the occurrence of such transition is a developmental process and may not be achieved instantly. As a
consequence, evaluation solely from parent’s standpoint can contain judgements established from early parenting experiences, thus might be biased and out-of-date. The actual impact of parenting styles on adolescent may be different from or even contradictory to that in the preadolescent times. (3) *The nature of parenting styles.* Parenting style is the externalization of parent’s cognitive, behavioural, and emotional characteristics. It manifests itself in parental values, disciplines, and various parenting practices. Presumably, parenting style may function as an environmental factor that facilitate the child’s EI development. Whereas, as a dispositional factor, trait EI locates at the lower level of personality. Therefore, in the interplay between genes and environment, trait EI facilitates the construction and operation of an external rearing environment (Zeidner, et al., 2003). It can be speculated that conversely, trait EI in parents may in part determines parenting styles instead.

**Limitations and areas for future research**

*Sample issues.* The survey data were collected through the author’s personal network. All participants were recruited on a voluntary basis. Parents who declined to participate may attribute to the following reasons: first, they did not want to disclose their personal information; second, they were not interested in the topic of the survey and thought that either it was irrelevant to their lives or they could not obtain tangible benefits from it; third, completing the survey was too time-consuming and they had no time to spare; and fourth, some parents claimed that the survey questions seemed too “difficult” for them to choose the answers. In contrast, it can be speculated that parents who participated this survey might process higher than average level of Emotionality, meaning that they are more empathetic, more apt at forming close relationships with others, better at perceiving emotional activities, and expressing inner feelings. Moreover, another defect in the sample for the present study is that it lacked data contribution
from fathers. Only 6 out 72 fathers participated the survey. Father has his unique influence on adolescent psychological well-being, independent of the maternal contributions (Videon, 2005). Further, the total number of participating family is only 72, which might result in insufficient power of the statistical analysis. It might be possible that by increasing the sample size, the research may achieve different statistical results. To avoid the sample bias in this study, in the future, a survey targeting both mothers and fathers can be conducted within a school. Parents of the school may be more willing to participate as an obligation of a community member.

*Measurement for parenting style.* The present study adopted a parent self-report measure to assess their parenting styles. The subjectivity of this approach may not match with the adolescent’s evaluation on his or her parent’s parenting styles. One recent study with measurements from adolescent’s perspective did successfully identify the relationship between authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles (Argyriou, et al., 2017). Besides, the development of a person’s trait EI is a combined outcome of gene-environment interaction. Parents of different genders may be compensatory factors to each other in fostering a family culture. Therefore, researchers in future research may consider expanding the assessment of parenting style by including both adolescent’s and the spouse’s viewpoints to adjust any underlying bias.

*Demographic data.* The present demographic survey did not include questions on whether parents were a regular meditation practitioner or had any previous experiences in meditation or mindfulness programs. Therefore, the study could not identify if the data came from non-meditating or nonclinical samples, thus not able to compare their different moderating impacts on adolescent’s trait EI. As regular mindfulness practice not only can enhance temporal state mindfulness, but with sufficient effortful practices, it can also be transform to DM. It would be very anticipating that in future research if the moderating effect of DM will be further
strengthened after a mindfulness training program, provided to either parents, adolescents, or both. A longitudinal survey after the intervention program would be suggested to examine the mindfulness program’s long-term impact on the trait EI development.

**Implications of research findings**

This study introduced a new perspective to look at adolescent psychological development based upon the relation between parent’s and adolescent’s trait EI. The findings identified the substantial impact of high Nonreactivity, as a mindfulness trait on adolescent’s trait EI, indicating that Nonreactivity may suppress the impact of parent’s low/negative trait EI and function as a more influential factor contributing to the adolescent’s trait EI development. It implies that the level of mindfulness in parents can be a fundamental moderator to adolescent trait EI development. No existing literature has studied the association between the two variables.

However, existing literature has claimed that even though DM is not inherited, it can be enhanced through conscious mindfulness meditation (Garland et al., 2010; Kiken, et al., 2015). In other words, regardless of parent’s inherited EI characteristics, there is a way to compensate a parent’s innate defects and adjust his or her parenting with a positive approach. Therefore, the research findings provide important implications to schools, universities, clinics, counselling services, and government agencies in their current approaches to the promotion of mental health and prevent mental illness. In addition, the results provide new insights to parents who feel themselves disoriented in parenting.

It deems attention that even though the results of this study did not display any moderating effects of the other 4 mindfulness dimensions - Observing, Describing, Acting with
awareness, or Nonjudging, it did not mean that these mindfulness dimensions are minor factors. The remaining four has magnificent effects on slowing down mental activities and even interfering with ruminative thinking (Williams & Penman, 2011). Due to the interrelatedness of mindfulness dimensions, researchers shall acknowledge their potential accumulative impacts that give rise to Nonreactivity. Moreover, with larger sample size, less sample bias, and improved measurement validity, it is still hopeful to identify the moderating effect of more mindfulness dimensions.
Conclusion

This study identified the correlation between parent’s EI and adolescent’s EI. Further, it also revealed that one mindfulness dimension – Nonreactivity in parent had more fundamental impact on adolescent EI development, to the extent that it can influence the primary impact of parent’s trait EI. Nonreactivity simply means - to allow it happen. In specific, parents, who demonstrate less mental and behavioral reactivity to their thoughts or feelings in spite of being aware of them, can create a positive condition that facilitates adolescent EI development. As trait EI has been proved to have high predictive and incremental validity of psychological well-being and socioemotional competence in adolescence (Greven, Chamorro-Premuzic, Arteche, & Furnham, 2008; Frederickson, Petrides, & Simmonds, 2012), this research identified a direction for the promotion of a healthy society in a holistic way.

The current mental health condition in children/adolescent in Hong Kong does not look very promising. Like in other developed societies in the world (Rook, Raison, & Lowry, 2012), rampant yet unnecessary depression is destroying young lives one after another in Hong Kong - one of the richest regions in the world. Children and adolescents seem being trapped in a confined and suffocated personal space, not being able to go beyond the existing horizon and comprehend the underlying message their life experiences carry in a broader perspective. To push forward positive social movement in mental health, it is futile to compare and evaluate individual differences in personal traits since everyone possess genetic defects, more or less. From an evolutionary standpoint, no trait characteristics is superior to others due to their compensating advantages in nature (Zeidner, et al., 2003). In personality development, Alfred Adler also points out that all human beings share the same developmental path to achieve an
integral sense of self by compensating their innate subjective and comparative feeling of inferiority (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992, pp. 135-169).

However, in preventing mental illness of adolescents and young adults, it seems that the focus is always on the youth instead of on the parent. The Hong Kong society has launched several intervention programs to prevent mental disease and promote positive lifestyles in youth. “The Little Prince is Depressed” is a website established in 2004, offering e-learning depression-prevention program to young people in Hong Kong, aiming at reducing students anxiety and stress and promoting emotional literacy in Hong Kong (Lai, 2016). Another renowned program is called Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social Programs (P.A.T.H.S.). PATHS has been providing depression intervention courses to promote positive development and reduced risk behavior in Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong since 2005 (Shek & Wu, 2016). However, rarely are there wide-acknowledged parental programs in the battle against adolescent mental disease and subsequent self-disruptive behavior. Besides, most parenting programs conducted by schools or other educational or counselling agencies only provide rigid and inflexible guidelines on what parent “should do” or “should not do”. Quite a number of parents participated the survey expressed their concerns and needs for professional advice on how to better understand and overcome difficulties in parenting and exercise effective practices in different scenarios.

The ultimate message underlying the present study is: to promote adolescent mental health, it is important allocate more resources to improve parenting. The society shall explore approaches to integrate mindfulness-based training in preventative and promotional programs. A Chinese old idiom says: “It takes ten years to grow trees and a hundred years to rear people.” Measures or schemes to promote mental health shall start early in a person’s life, with special
support to the parents. It would be quite anticipating that mindfulness-based parental training programs would demonstrate its unique strength in promoting effective and adaptive parenting.

I would like to conclude this thesis by presenting the no. 43 verse of *Tao Te Ching*, the oldest philosophical text in China (Star, 2008):

“The most yielding thing in the world
Will overcome the most rigid
The most empty thing in the world
Will overcome the most full
From this comes a lesson –
Stillness benefits more than action
Silence benefits more than words
Rare indeed are those who are still
Rare indeed are those who are silent
And so I say,
Rare indeed are those
Who obtain the bounty of this world”
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THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF MINDFULNESS


