



## Exploring Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Managing Postpartum Depression: A Qualitative Study

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### ABSTRACT

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Postpartum depression (PPD) for much of the suffering of new mothers. Symptoms can present from sad affective experience, anxiety, tiredness, to complete disconnection of the child from herself. Traditional treatments include therapy and medication, but this study went a little deeper with the interest of mindfulness-based interventions to explore the subjective experiences in mother-child bonding, with mindfulness practiced mothers who experienced postpartum depression. In-depth 15 women diagnosed with PPD were selected, and interviews were conducted to determine how mindfulness influences emotional regulation, self-awareness, and mother-infant bonding. Various themes, including benefits and challenges of mindfulness in PPD recovery, are given to provide insight into its potential therapeutic role. The study concluded that the effectiveness of mindfulness in managing postpartum depression helps in enhancing emotional regulation, reducing anxiety, and increasing mother-infant bonding.

## INTRODUCTION

Postpartum depression is a common problem, affecting as many as 20% of new mothers, with manifestations including sadness, anxiety, loss of interest in usual activities, and failure to connect with the newborn.<sup>1</sup> These manifestations could severely compromise a mother's ability to function or care for her child. Since the treatment has conventionally included antidepressant medications and psychotherapy, which cannot be either accessible or acceptable to mothers, treatment may be constrained by concerns over the medication use within breastfeeding. Mindfulness is a mental training method focusing on observing things as they are happening without making judgments.<sup>2</sup> It has been reported to reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress among several populations; however, studies that focus specifically on its benefits to postpartum women are few in number.<sup>3</sup> This study explores the experiences of mothers who engaged in mindfulness practice to help them deal with PPD and thus contribute to the body of literature regarding its therapeutic potential.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Explore the experiences of postpartum women who have undergone mindfulness-based interventions.
2. Investigate the role of mindfulness in alleviating PPD symptoms.
3. Identify facilitating and hindering factors for implementing mindfulness in postpartum care.

## METHOD

This study used a qualitative research approach in order to explore the lived experience of postpartum women engaging in mindfulness practice.

### *Participants*

Fifteen women diagnosed with postpartum depression selected through purposive sampling. Participants were selected and between 4 to 12 months postpartum with at least 8 weeks of mindfulness practice completed.

### *Inclusion criteria*

Participants must have a confirmed diagnosis of PPD and have received some form of mindfulness intervention: MBSR, or mindful meditation sessions

### *Data Collection*

Deep insights were captured through semi-structured interviews. Some of the questions found their way to how mindfulness can have an influence on emotional regulation, mother-child bonding, reduction of stress levels, and mental well-being. Not Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and made anonymous in a way that ensured secrecy from the participants.

### *Data Analysis*

Theme analysis applied in the transcription analysis: it is a form of technique for exposing, analyzing, and reporting themes or patterns in qualitative data. Emerging themes surrounding the benefits and challenges of mindfulness within the context of postpartum depression are categorized.

## RESULTS OF STUDY

The thematic analysis resulted in the revelation of five broad themes that reflect the nature of mindfulness on postpartum depression:

1. **Mindfulness as an Emotional Regulator:** The participants in the study reported that mindfulness was the only tool that helped them manage overpowering emotions such as sadness, guilt, and frustration. Without mindfulness, these emotions seemed unmanageable, but with it, they were able to reduce the intensity of these emotions and cope more effectively.



2. **Living in the Present:** Mindfulness facilitated a shift to living in the present moment. This helped participants become more aware of their emotional states as they arose, allowing them to regulate their emotions before becoming overwhelmed.
3. **Mindfulness Against Negative Thinking Cycles:** Many of the mothers described mindfulness as a way to interrupt the cycle of negative thinking often associated with PPD, such as guilt and worry. Instead of getting trapped in these thoughts, mindfulness allowed them to view these emotions through a more accepting lens, reducing their power and influence.<sup>7</sup>
4. **Increased Self-Reflectivity and Empathy:** Several mothers shared that mindfulness practices helped them become more aware of themselves—what they were thinking and how they felt in response to different emotions. This awareness allowed them to make intentional decisions, rather than reacting impulsively to stressors. A key theme that emerged was self-compassion, with mothers explaining that mindfulness helped them forgive themselves for perceived shortcomings, which in turn alleviated the feelings of guilt and inadequacy that are often associated with postpartum depression (PPD).
5. **Reduced Anxiety and Stress:** The majority of participants reported that the primary benefit of mindfulness was a noticeable reduction in anxiety. Practices such as deep breathing and body scanning, which are commonly used in mindfulness, helped keep mothers grounded in the present moment, preventing them from focusing on future worries or potential failures. As a result, their stress and anxiety levels significantly decreased. In addition to reducing anxiety, many mothers also experienced improvements in their sleep patterns, addressing one of the major contributors to the physical exhaustion that often exacerbates PPD symptoms.<sup>8</sup>
6. **Enhanced Mother-Child Interaction:** Mindfulness also increased the ability of mothers to be fully present with their babies, which in turn deepened the connection and bonding between them. Before practicing mindfulness, some mothers felt detached from their babies, but through mindfulness, they were able to engage more fully and manage the demands of childcare without feeling overwhelmed. In these mindful moments, mothers found space to reflect on their interactions with their child, fostering a greater emotional connection.
7. **Barriers and Obstacles to Mindfulness Practice:** Despite its benefits, some mothers struggled to maintain a regular mindfulness practice due to the demands of caring for a newborn. Common barriers included lack of sleep, time constraints, and insufficient support. A few participants acknowledged the helpfulness of mindfulness but expressed that, to make it a consistent part of their daily routines, they would benefit from additional support, such as group sessions or step-by-step guidance from therapists

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the effectiveness of mindfulness in managing postpartum depression, particularly in improving emotional regulation, reducing anxiety, and enhancing mother-infant bonding. These results align with findings from previous research, further supporting mindfulness as an effective intervention for alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety. However, this study also underscores a practical challenge: sustaining a mindfulness practice during the highly stressful postpartum period. To address this, interventions could be designed to overcome common barriers, such as offering shorter, more flexible mindfulness exercises or incorporating mindfulness into routine tasks like feeding or diaper changing. These adaptations could make mindfulness more accessible and easier for mothers to integrate into their daily lives<sup>9</sup>. The flexibility of mindfulness is particularly beneficial, as it allows mothers to tailor the practice to meet their unique emotional and psychological needs, which is a key factor in its therapeutic value. Given this, it is recommended that healthcare providers working

with new mothers incorporate mindfulness techniques into care plans to offer comprehensive support for both psychological and practical recovery from postpartum depression.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Thus, in this qualitative study, it has been found that mindfulness can be an effective complementary intervention of postpartum depression. It can include benefits such as enhanced emotional regulation and reduced anxiety levels and stronger mother-child interactions. Despite the fact that there are challenges to the consistent practice of mindfulness, the usefulness and potential make it promising as a non-pharmacological intervention for the management of PPD symptoms. Future studies should therefore focus more on developing strategies that would favor the implementation of mindfulness in postpartum care settings and eventually long-term effects of mindfulness on postpartum mental health.

**Ethics approval and consent to participate:** Not required since no human experiment was done.

**Competing interests:** NIL

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