MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR) FOR FATHERS IN FAMILIES AFFECTED BY POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

1 in 5 mothers are diagnosed with postpartum depression or anxiety (PPDA). In these families, fathers are also often distressed which can lead to couple conflict. Relationship conflicts are a major predictor of postpartum depression. By increasing the awareness, resilience, and emotional presence of fathers through Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBI), we expect that the couple's relationship, and subsequently the mother's mental health, will improve. Given the time constraints and competing demands during the postpartum period, fathers may find it challenging to commit to a regular group. This pilot study aimed to investigate the feasibility and acceptability of mindfulness groups for new fathers.

Participants were recruited from a tertiary mental health clinic. Eligible fathers included those in a relationship with a woman diagnosed with PPDA. The intervention offered was an 8-week adapted Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. Measures used were CSQ (Client Satisfaction Questionnaire) and CPQ (Communication Pattern Questionnaire), GAD-7 (anxiety) and PHQ-9 (depression). Results suggest improvements in couples' communication and mutual understanding. Both fathers (N=10; mean age=36.3) and mothers reported high satisfaction with the program. The dropout rate was 33%, predominantly due to scheduling conflicts. This study demonstrates the feasibility of MBI for new fathers and identifies the need for flexibility to accommodate their schedules. Further study will explore the effects of MBI on the parents' relationship, as well as on the mental health outcomes in the mother.