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The Effect of Mindfulness as the Psychological Intervention on Perceived Stress among Breastfeeding Mothers with Intrauterine Growth Restriction (IUGR) Babies

SITI KHADIJAH MOHD BUSTAMAN^{1,2}, NURHAZIRAH ZAINUL AZLAN^{1,4}, NADZIRAH AHMAD BASRI³, MUHAMMAD LOKMAN MD. ISA⁴

¹*Kulliyah of Nursing, International Islamic University Malaysia*

²*Counselling and Career Services Department, International Islamic University Malaysia*

³*Department of Psychiatry, Kulliyah of Medicine, International Islamic University Malaysia*

⁴*Institute of Planetary Survival for Sustainable Wellbeing, International Islamic University Malaysia*

Introduction: High cortisol level during pregnancy due to psychological stress could cause Intrauterine Growth Restriction (IUGR) towards baby which could affect the baby's neurodevelopment and mental health. However, the epigenetic of the IUGR baby can be altered through breastfeeding and bonding between the mother and baby. Mindfulness intervention should be given to reduce the mother's stress as mothers need to be supported for their children to be optimally breastfed. Hence, the objective of this study was to determine the effectiveness of mindfulness as a psychological intervention to reduce the level of perceived stress among breastfeeding mothers. **Materials and Methods:** This quasi-experimental study investigated the effect of mindfulness on perceived stress with measurement in baseline, pre-test, and post-test on 23 pregnant women with diagnosis of late-onset IUGR babies at Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, SASMEC @IIUM. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was measured during antenatal period as the baseline and after confinement as the pre-test. Later, a counselling session with mindfulness therapy as the psychological intervention was conducted, followed by another two follow up sessions with intervals of two to three weeks. PSS was measured again after the third counselling session as the post-test. Data collected was then analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 27. **Results:** Based on the analysis of variance (ANOVA), there is no significant reduction in perceived stress following the psychological intervention with the mean score for pre-test (M=17.3, SD=4.9) and post-test (M=15.1, SD=5.8), ($p < 0.05$) but still there is slight reduction as compared to the baseline (M=15.9, SD=4.6). **Conclusion:** Mindfulness can be considered as a coping technique to reduce the perceived stress among the breastfeeding mothers and consequently may improve the condition of the IUGR

babies.

Keywords: Breastfeeding; intrauterine growth restriction; mindfulness; perceived stress