

Empowering Teachers: Mindfulness Practices for Sustainable Well-being in Education

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Abstract: Teachers are fundamental to the educational system, influencing the development and future success of students. However, their mental health is often overlooked, leading to detrimental effects on their well-being and performance. Prolonged exposure to high-stress conditions, demanding workloads, and emotional strain significantly impacts teachers' mental health. Prioritizing mental health of teachers is crucial for maintaining a sustainable and effective educational system. This study examines the potential benefits of mindfulness practices for well-being of teachers. Mindfulness includes, techniques such as meditation and deep breathing, is shown to reduce stress, enhance emotional regulation, and improve overall well-being. This research, involving 35 teachers from public schools in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, utilizes a quasi-experimental design to assess the impact of mindfulness interventions on positive and negative affect of teachers. Results indicate that mindfulness practices significantly increase positive affect and decrease negative affect, suggesting that such interventions can enhance mental health of teachers.

Future research should address limitations such as sample size and the exclusivity of self-reported data by incorporating mixed-methods approaches and including diverse participant demographics. These findings guide stakeholders in developing effective intervention plans to support a healthier and more resilient teaching workforce, thereby improving educational outcomes and societal well-being.

Keywords: Teachers, Mindfulness, Positive affect, Negative affect. Intervention Mental health

Introduction

Teachers are the cornerstones of the educational system, playing a vital role in shaping the minds and futures of young individuals. However, their mental health is often neglected, leading to adverse effects on their well-being and performance (Croll, 2023). Prolonged exposure to high-stress situations, demanding workloads, and emotional strain are significant concerns on mental health of teachers. The supportive teacher-student relationship lessen stress, improve academic performance, and enhance emotional resilience of students (Adari, 2024). To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the educational system, it is imperative to prioritize mental health of teachers and provide the necessary support and resources to foster their well-being. By valuing and supporting teachers, we can create a positive and nurturing educational environment that benefits both teachers and students alike (Jennings et al., 2019).

The mental health of teachers has a direct bearing on their productivity, which in turn affects the economy as a whole. Better mental health among educators translates into more efficacious teaching, which benefits students' academic performance. A highly qualified and competent workforce is a

prerequisite for economic growth and development, and this can be achieved through improved student performance. On the other hand, educators who are struggling with mental health concerns would find it difficult to carry out their duties, which would reduce their productivity and weakened educational quality (Harmsen et al., 2018). A mentally healthy teaching workforce is more likely to exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement. This not only improves learning for students but also encourages innovation and ongoing improvement in educational institutions (McLean et al., 2019).

The overall well-being of society and the success of students are closely associated with the mental health of educators. Teachers who maintain good mental health can more easily create a happy and supportive learning environment, providing the emotional support and guidance that students need to thrive academically and personally (Smith & Jones, 2018). This, in turn, leads to improved student performance, higher graduation rates, and greater opportunities for social mobility (Brown, 2020). Academically successful individuals are more likely to contribute positively to society, as they are better prepared for higher education and employment, thereby reducing the likelihood of unemployment and social issues (Lee, 2019).

The positive impact of teachers' mental health extends beyond the classroom. When students experience a supportive and enriching educational environment, they are more likely to develop into well-rounded, resilient individuals who can contribute to the well-being and progress of society as a whole (Davis, 2021). Consequently, a skilled and adaptable labour force promotes national progress and prosperity. In an increasingly interconnected world, this has long-term economic advantages (Johnson, 2022).

The Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) of World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the importance of mental health in educational settings and advocates for the implementation of evidence-based school mental health programs, particularly in resource limited areas like Pakistan (WHO, 2014). These initiatives aim to create a holistic approach to school well-being by addressing the mental health needs of both teachers and students. This involves training teachers to identify and respond to mental health concerns, incorporating mental health education into the curriculum, and ensuring access to mental health resources and services. By promoting these programs, a supportive environment that enhances the well-being of both students and teachers can be fostered, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes and overall societal well-being (Jones & Smith, 2018; Brown et al., 2020).

In Pakistan, where two-thirds of the population consists of young people, the mental health of teachers is of paramount importance. This context presents both opportunities and challenges. A large young population has the potential to drive economic growth and innovation. However, it also places substantial pressure on the educational system to efficiently and effectively educate a large number of students. (Smith & Johnson, 2018; Patel et al., 2020). The demographic profile of the country emphasizes the necessity for a strong and effective educational system capable of meeting the needs of a substantial young population. Ensuring the mental well-being of educators is essential for establishing a stable and high-quality learning environment that fosters the growth and success of young individuals. Prioritizing the mental health of teachers is a crucial step in addressing these demands and ensuring that the educational system can adequately fulfill its role in shaping the future of the young population (Khan & Ali, 2019; Ahmed et al., 2021).

This research is a part of a larger study aimed at exploring the potential benefits of mindfulness practices for teachers' well-being within the school environment. Teaching is a profession that demands significant emotional and cognitive resources, often leading to stress and burnout. This study seeks to investigate whether mindfulness techniques can serve as effective tools to improve teachers' overall health and happiness, thereby enhancing their ability to fulfill their demanding roles in education.

Integrating mindfulness practices within the school environment equips teachers with effective tools for stress management and enhanced well-being. Schools can incorporate mindfulness programs into their

professional development initiatives, providing teachers with regular opportunities to participate in mindfulness activities. These programs might include guided meditation sessions, mindfulness workshops, and resources for individual practice (Brown & Ryan, 2019; Kabat-Zinn, 2020).

Mindfulness involves focusing on the present moment with a non-judgmental manner. It includes practices, meditation, deep breathing exercises, and mindful movement that basically help individuals in cultivating heightened awareness and acceptance of their thoughts and emotions. Research has demonstrated that mindfulness can reduce stress, improve emotional regulation, and enhance overall well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Shapiro et al., 2018). It offer several significant benefits, notably in reducing stress and preventing burnout among teachers. By fostering awareness of their stressors and developing healthier coping mechanisms, mindfulness enables teachers to handle challenging situations with greater calm and clarity, thereby decreasing the likelihood of burnout. This enhanced stress management contributes to increased job satisfaction and a more positive professional outlook (Jennings et al., 2017; Roeser et al., 2013).

Additionally, mindfulness practices improve emotional regulation skills in teachers. Given that educators often face emotionally charged situations, such as managing disruptive behavior and supporting struggling students, mindfulness helps them recognize and manage their emotional responses effectively. This capability leads to better relationships with students, colleagues, and parents, thus fostering a more harmonious school environment (Brackett et al., 2011). Mindfulness is also known to enhance focus and concentration, essential skills for effective teaching. By training their minds to remain present, teachers can improve their ability to concentrate on tasks, manage classroom dynamics, and deliver engaging lessons. Enhanced focus aids in organization and time management, reducing the sense of overwhelm often associated with their workload (Lutz et al., 2008; Zeidan et al., 2010). Moreover, the benefits of mindfulness extend to physical health. Stress significantly contributes to various physical ailments, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and weakened immune function. By mitigating stress, mindfulness practices help teachers maintain better physical health, resulting in fewer sick days and increased productivity (Creswell et al., 2012). Mindfulness fosters a compassionate and empathetic school climate where both teachers and students feel supported and valued. This positive environment enhances student engagement, reduces behavioral issues, and promotes a culture of mutual respect and understanding (Meiklejohn et al., 2012)

In the light of above dissuasion this study aims to understand the potential advantages of teaching mindfulness techniques for overall health and happiness teachers.

Objective of the Study

- To see the impact of mindfulness intervention positive affect of teachers.
- To see the Impact of mindfulness intervention on negative affect of teachers.

Hypotheses of Study

- The positive affect of teachers will be enhanced after engaging in mindfulness intervention
- The negative affect of teachers will be decreased after mindful intervention

Method

This study examines into if mindfulness techniques affect teachers' well-being using a quasi-experimental research approach. The rationale of using quasi-experimental design was its practicality and adaptability as random assignment to treatment and control groups may not be possible in real-world contexts. This method makes it possible to examine changes over time in the same individuals, after giving them detailed information about mindfulness techniques.

Participants

The study consists of 35 teachers (N=35) from different schools who voluntarily decided to enroll in the mindfulness program. The selection process for participants involved considering their availability for the scheduled sessions as well as their desire to participate in mindfulness activities. A variety of demographics, including age, gender, teaching experience, and subject expertise, were included in the sample in order to increase the generalizability of the results.

Procedure

The three main stages of the process are the pre-test, the intervention, and the post-test.

1. Pre-Test Phase

All participants completed a standard test beforehand to the intervention, which aims to assess their baseline levels of positive and negative affect which depict overall well-being of each individual too.

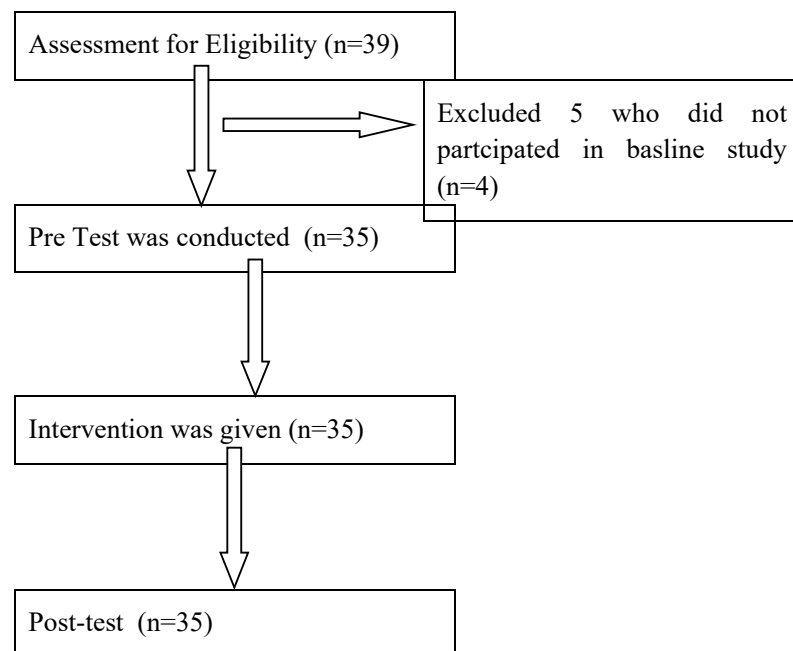
2. Intervention Phase

A weekly schedule of guided mindfulness activities, such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, and mindful movement, are provided to participants in a 4-week mindfulness program. Every class lasts for about sixty minutes. For the purpose of to keep track of the events and reflections, participants are additionally encouraged to practice mindfulness within their homes and maintain a daily mindfulness journal.

3. Post-Test Phase

After completing the mindfulness training, participants take the same standardized test as in the pre-test phase. The post-test results are compared to the pre-test results to determine changes in positive and negative affect, which basically depict overall well-being.

Figure. 1 Flowchart of study participants

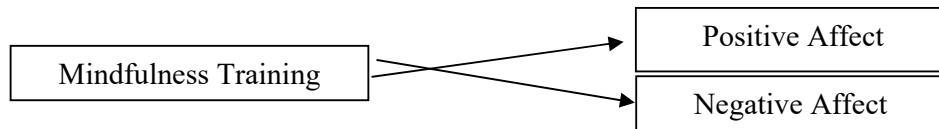


Measures

Information was gathered on sociodemographic (such as age, married status, and gender) and professional (such as years of education and experience).

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF) is a 20-item self-report questionnaire, English version, developed by Watson and his colleagues in 1988. This scale consists of two distinct subscales designed to measure positive and negative affect independently. It uses a Likert-type format, allowing respondents to rate the extent to which they have experienced various emotions. According to Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (2018), the PANAS-SF demonstrates strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.80 to 0.90 for both the positive and negative affect subscales.

Figure. 2 Conceptual model of the within subject analysis



After excluding the participants who did not participate in the baseline study, sample included 35 teachers (all identified as women (100 %) from 23 to 40 years old and a mean age of 30.0 (SD=6.65). 31 (86.5%) participants were married, 4 (11.4%) were single, 14 (13.6%). Most of the participants had completed a Master's degree (n=33; 94.2.7%), and 2(5.7%) have a postgraduate. Participants were teaching in public schools from Rawalpindi Pakistan, mean of 7.51 (SD=6.8) years.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis for Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (N=35)

Scale	M	SD	Ranges	Cronbach α
Positive Affect	42.54	6.78	10-50	0.81
Negative Affect	14.6	5.67		0.78

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha

The table 1 shows the psychometric properties for the scales used in present study. The Cronbach's α values for positive affect was .81 (>.80) which indicate high internal consistency. The Cronbach's α value for Negative affect was .86 (>.80) indicating high internal consistency

To understand if mindfulness training increased the positive affect and decreased the negative affect of teachers, we performed paired sample t-test using SPSS 20. Table 2 shows the results of how the intervention increased or decreased the both outcome variables.

Table 2

Mean Comparison on Scores of Pre-test and Post-test of Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (N=35)

Variables	Pre-test		Post-test		$t(34)$	P	r	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD				
Positive Affect	34.57	6.75	42.54	6.78	-6.46	0	.42*	1.09
Negative Affect	18.22	7.19	14.6	5.67	4.26	0	.72***	0.72

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha

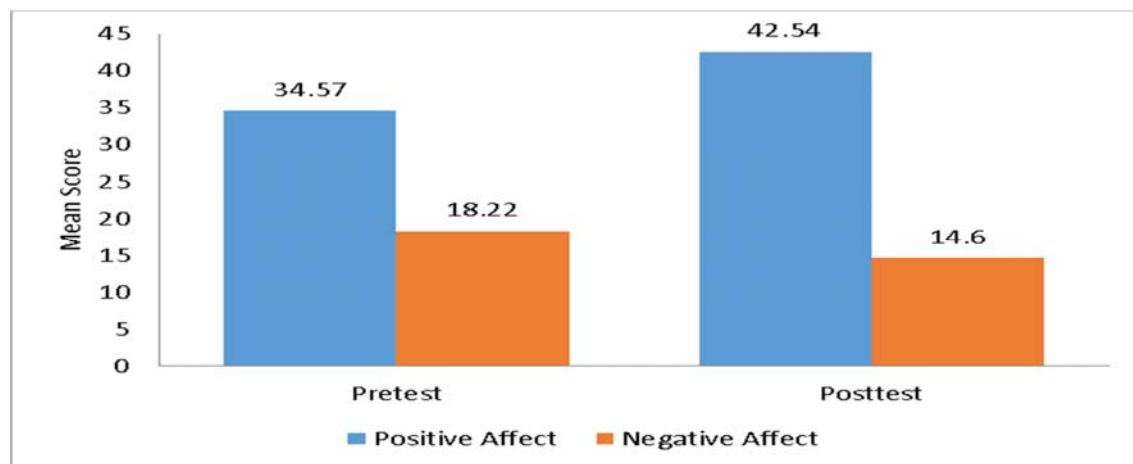
The result shows that Positive Affect scores were assessed before and after the intervention (Table 2,

figure 3). The pre-test mean (M) score for Positive Affect is 34.57 (SD = 6.75, $\alpha = .77$), with a 95% confidence interval. Following the intervention, the post-test mean score for Positive Affect increased to 42.54 (SD = 6.78, $\alpha = .81$), with a 95% confidence interval.

Negative Affect scores were also measured before and after the intervention. The pre-test mean score for Negative Affect was 18.23 (SD = 7.19, $\alpha = .86$), with a 95% confidence interval. The post-test mean score for Negative Affect decreased to 14.60 (SD = 5.67, $\alpha = .78$), with a 95% confidence interval.

These results indicate an improvement in Positive Affect and a reduction in Negative Affect following the intervention.

Figure 3.



Understanding how and why an intervention works is crucial for making it more effective. (McCracken & Gutiérrez-Martínez, 2011). Thus, the primary objective of the current study was to understand change in mindfulness skills as result of mindfulness intervention changes in teacher's positive affect and negative affect at post-intervention. Our results shows that mindfulness intervention brings changes in positive affect of teachers which was increased and negative affect is also changed and was lower after the intervention. Mindfulness training revealed promising results in reducing teachers' depressive, anxiety, stress, and burnout symptoms (Kuyken et al, 2013; ;Flook et al, 2013; Sibinga; Huppert and Johnson, 2010; Greenberg and Jennings, 2009 & Stewart, 2008)

Teachers must be able to handle the mental demands of their work in addition to being kind, personable, and have strong emotional and social abilities. Teachers who practise mindfulness are more likely to be inquisitive and compassionate rather than very certain and judgemental. Therefore, they are more likely to think clearly, make wise decisions, and manage pressure well and these are the abilities that are essential for teaching.

Limitation: Despite the careful study design employed in the current research there are some limitations. First, the study included only female participants, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, the data collected were exclusively quantitative and self-reported, which may have influenced the results. Additionally, the small sample size could affect the broader applicability of the outcomes.

Future Direction: Future researchers could enhance such studies by implementing the following suggestions. Incorporating a mixed-methods approach could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Including male participants could offer a broader perspective. Moreover, integrating physiological markers alongside self-report data could enhance the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the findings.

This research provides valuable insights for stakeholders in developing intervention plans aimed at

creating a healthier and more resilient workforce among teachers. These findings highlights the significant benefits of mindfulness interventions in stress management, contributing to the expanding body of knowledge in this field.

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