

IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINED MINDFULNESS TRAINING TO REDUCE STRESS LEVELS AND IMPROVE THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS AT SD NEGERI MLARANGAN

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Abstrak. High levels of work-related stress among elementary school teachers negatively affect the quality of learning and interpersonal relationships within the school environment. This school action research aimed to examine the effectiveness of sustained mindfulness training in reducing stress levels and improving the social-emotional competence of teachers at SD Negeri Mlarangan. The study was conducted in two cycles involving 10 teachers as research subjects. The instruments used included the Teacher Work Stress Scale, the Social-Emotional Competence Scale, observation sheets, and reflective journals. Data were analyzed descriptively using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings revealed that the implementation of sustained mindfulness training over eight weeks successfully reduced the average teacher stress score from the high category (76.4) to the low category (42.3), while social-emotional competence increased from 58.2% to 84.7%. The most significant improvement occurred in the dimensions of self-awareness and emotional management. This study concludes that sustained mindfulness training is an effective and applicable intervention for improving the mental health and social-emotional competence of elementary school teachers.

Keyword: mindfulness, teacher stress, social-emotional competence, sustained training, elementary school

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The teaching profession is one of the professions characterized by very high work demands, academically, administratively, and emotionally. In the context of elementary education in Indonesia, elementary school teachers face various pressures arising from the increasing administrative workload associated with the implementation of the new curriculum, demands for managing heterogeneous classrooms, as well as pressure from parents and the school social environment. These conditions have the potential to generate chronic work stress if not managed properly (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, p. 104).

SD Negeri Mlarangan, as one of the public elementary schools in Kulon Progo Regency, faces similar problems. Based on preliminary observations and unstructured interviews conducted with the principal and several teachers in Februari 2026, it was found that most teachers experienced symptoms of work stress such as fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and limited ability to manage emotions in the classroom. These conditions affected the declining quality of teacher-student interactions and weakened the teachers' overall social-emotional competence.

Teachers' social-emotional competence (SEC) refers to abilities encompassing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020, p. 7). Teachers with high SEC have been proven to be more capable of creating a positive classroom climate, building healthy relationships with students, and demonstrating greater resilience to occupational stress (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 492). Conversely, unmanaged stress may gradually erode teachers' SEC.

One evidence-based approach proven effective in addressing stress and improving SEC is mindfulness training. Mindfulness is defined as the ability to intentionally focus attention on the present moment without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Numerous studies have demonstrated that mindfulness-based interventions significantly reduce

stress and improve emotional regulation across various professional groups, including teachers (Roeser et al., 2013, p. 777; Meiklejohn et al., 2012, p. 294).

Nevertheless, the implementation of mindfulness practices in Indonesian elementary schools remains very limited. Most existing studies focus on Western contexts or clinical populations, while research specifically examining the effectiveness of sustained mindfulness training for elementary school teachers in Indonesia, particularly in regency areas, remains scarce. This gap serves as the primary justification for conducting this study.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) analyze the initial stress levels of teachers at SD Negeri Mlarangan prior to the intervention; (2) describe the implementation process of sustained mindfulness training; (3) measure the effectiveness of mindfulness training in reducing teacher stress levels; and (4) assess the improvement in teachers' social-emotional competence after participating in the training. The findings of this study are expected to provide an applicable intervention model that can be replicated in other elementary schools in Indonesia.

II. METHOD

Research Method

This study employed a School Action Research (SAR) design using a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative data. The SAR design was selected because the study aimed to solve practical problems within the school through planned and measurable actions while simultaneously enhancing the capacity of human resources within the institution (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 595). The research was conducted in two cycles, each lasting four weeks.

Time and Place of the Study

The study was conducted for one month in February 2026 at SD Negeri Mlarangan, Panjatan District, Kulon Progo Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta (NPSN: 20403042). This location was selected based on the identification of significant work stress problems within the teacher community at the school.

Research Subjects

The research subjects consisted of all teachers at SD Negeri Mlarangan, totaling 10 participants, including 7 classroom teachers and 3 subject teachers (Islamic Religious Education, Physical Education, and English). All teachers voluntarily participated after receiving an explanation regarding the objectives and procedures of the study. There were no specific exclusion criteria; therefore, all teachers were eligible to participate in the training.

Research Procedure

The study followed the Kemmis & McTaggart (2000) model, consisting of four stages in each cycle: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The first cycle focused on introducing basic mindfulness techniques (mindful breathing, body scan, and a 10-minute short meditation). The second cycle deepened the practice by adding mindful communication techniques and the application of mindfulness in classroom management. Each session lasted 60 minutes and was conducted twice a week outside effective teaching hours.

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

The instruments used in this study consisted of: (1) the Teacher Work Stress Scale adapted from the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) by Fimian (1988), comprising 40 items with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.89; (2) the Teacher Social-Emotional Competence Scale developed based on the CASEL (2020) framework, consisting of 30 items with a reliability coefficient of 0.87; (3) structured observation sheets to observe teachers' behaviors during and after the training; and (4) weekly reflective journals completed by each participant.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and gain score) to measure changes in stress and SEC scores between pre-action, Cycle I, and Cycle II. Qualitative data obtained from observations and reflective journals were analyzed using the thematic analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The indicators of success were determined as follows: the average stress score decreased to the low category (<50), and the percentage of teachers achieving good SEC reached at least 80%.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained from the two cycles of mindfulness training intervention, including quantitative data on changes in stress and SEC scores, as well as qualitative findings derived from observations and teachers’ reflective journals.

Initial Conditions of Teachers’ Work Stress and SEC

The pre-action measurement results indicated that 8 out of 10 teachers (80%) were categorized as experiencing high stress, with an average score of 76.4 (scale 0–100). Only 2 teachers were categorized as experiencing moderate stress. In terms of SEC, the average initial achievement was only 58.2%, with the lowest dimensions found in self-awareness (52.1%) and emotional management (55.4%). These conditions confirmed the urgency of the intervention and served as the baseline for measuring the effectiveness of the actions implemented.

Introduction to Basic Mindfulness Techniques

The first cycle was conducted for one month in January. The training began with an orientation session explaining the concept and scientifically proven benefits of mindfulness. Subsequently, teachers were trained in three basic techniques: (1) mindful breathing for 5–7 minutes, (2) body scan to recognize bodily sensations, and (3) a 10-minute sitting meditation. Sessions were conducted in the library room, which had been modified into a quiet space equipped with comfortable seating mats.

Observations during Cycle I recorded several initial obstacles, namely the difficulty experienced by some teachers in maintaining focus and the tendency to feel awkward during initial practice sessions. Nevertheless, reflective journals showed that 9 out of 10 teachers (90%) reported experiencing temporary calmness after the sessions ended. At the end of Cycle I, the average stress score decreased to 58.7, while the SEC percentage increased to 71.3%.

Deepening and Contextualization

Based on reflections from Cycle I, the second cycle was designed to be more applicable by adding two advanced techniques: mindful communication and micro-mindfulness (brief 2–3 minute practices that can be applied amidst teaching activities). Teachers were also taught how to apply mindfulness principles in classroom management, for example through the “pause for a moment” technique before responding to challenging student behaviors.

In Cycle II, teacher participation increased significantly. All teachers attended at least 7 out of 8 sessions. Reflective journals indicated more positive mindset changes, with 9 out of 10 teachers (90%) reporting improved emotional management abilities in the classroom. The final measurement results in Cycle II showed that the average stress score decreased to 42.3 (low category), while the SEC percentage increased to 84.7%.

Recapitulation of Measurement Results

The following table summarizes changes in teachers’ stress and SEC scores from the initial condition to the end of the intervention:

Table 1. Recapitulation of Changes in Stress and SEC Scores of Teachers at SD Negeri Mlarangan

Measurement Aspect	Pre-Action	End of Cycle I	End of Cycle II
Average Stress Score	76.4 (High)	58.7 (Moderate)	42.3 (Low)
Percentage of Good SEC	58.2%	71.3%	84.7%
Self-Awareness Dimension	52.1%	68.5%	86.2%
Emotional Management Dimension	55.4%	70.1%	83.9%
Social Awareness Dimension	61.3%	73.8%	85.4%
Relationship Skills Dimension	63.7%	72.4%	84.1%

The findings of this study confirm the effectiveness of sustained mindfulness training in reducing work stress and improving the SEC of teachers at SD Negeri Mlarangan. The reduction in stress scores by 44.7% from the initial condition is consistent with the meta-analysis conducted by Lomas et al. (2017), which identified significant effects of mindfulness-based interventions on teacher well-being. The underlying mechanism is the enhancement of

emotional regulation capacity through sustained attention practices, enabling teachers to respond more adaptively to occupational stressors.

The most prominent increase in SEC occurred in the self-awareness dimension (from 52.1% to 86.2%), supporting the theoretical proposition of Goleman (2001, p. 63) that self-awareness constitutes the primary foundation of emotional intelligence. When teachers possess full awareness of their emotional and cognitive states, they tend to be more capable of managing emotional responses and building more empathetic relationships with students. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Jennings et al. (2017, p. 149) in the CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) program.

The primary advantage of this study compared with existing literature lies in the contextualization of mindfulness practices within the realities faced by elementary school teachers in regional areas. The micro-mindfulness technique was highly appreciated because it could be implemented during short breaks between teaching sessions without disrupting schedules. This finding is relevant to the conditions of elementary school teachers in Indonesia, who generally have limited time for lengthy self-development programs.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the absence of a control group limits the ability to make strong causal inferences. Second, the eight-week duration may not have been sufficient to observe long-term impacts. Further studies employing quasi-experimental designs with longer follow-up periods are strongly recommended.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that sustained mindfulness training over eight weeks was proven effective in significantly reducing the work stress levels of teachers at SD Negeri Mlarangan, from the high category (average score of 76.4) to the low category (average score of 42.3). Simultaneously, teachers' social-emotional competence increased from 58.2% to 84.7%, exceeding the predetermined success indicator of 80%. The most significant improvements occurred in the dimensions of self-awareness and emotional management, which constitute the foundation for enhancing the quality of teacher-student interactions in the classroom. The micro-mindfulness technique integrated into Cycle II proved to be a practical innovation distinguishing this approach from conventional mindfulness programs, making it more suitable for the real conditions faced by elementary school teachers. The replicable intervention model derived from this study is summarized as the "4-L Teacher Mindfulness Model": (1) Latih basic techniques consistently, (2) Lekatkan practices to daily routines, (3) Libatkan the teacher community in collective practice, and (4) Lanjutkan through continuous monitoring and mentoring. School principals play a crucial role as facilitators and role models in implementing this model.

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