



Write to Connect: Enhancing Emotional Learning through Mindful Journaling

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Abstract

This study investigates the potential of mindful journaling as a culturally responsive intervention to enhance emotional learning among religious education students aged 11-12 in Karachi, Pakistan. In a context of educational fragmentation and growing concerns about spiritual disconnection, this research examines how structured reflective writing can foster self-awareness, emotional regulation, and meaningful connections to cultural and religious heritage. The study critically analyses the intersection of mindfulness, expressive writing, and social-emotional learning within diverse cultural contexts. It challenges traditional pedagogical approaches, proposing mindful journaling as a holistic tool to address the pressing need for social-emotional learning in Pakistan's education system. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative measures of emotional competencies with qualitative analysis of students' journal entries and interviews. This methodology aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how mindful journaling affects participants' emotional growth and sense of cultural belonging. By situating the intervention within Karachi's unique socio-cultural landscape, this study contributes to the broader discourse on culturally sustaining educational practices. It critically reflects on the adaptability of mindful journaling across different cultural settings and its potential to empower diverse communities. The research aims to inform evidence-based strategies for enhancing student well-being and fostering stronger connections to cultural identity, with implications that extend beyond specific religious communities to the wider educational landscape of Pakistan and beyond.

Study Background

Renowned playwright David Hare once said, "The act of writing is the act of discovering what you believe" (Hare, n.d.). This profound insight speaks to the transformative power of the written word, particularly when it comes to mindful journaling. Researchers have dug deep into this idea and found that journaling is not just about jotting down thoughts—it is a transformative process that can heal us from within (Myers, 2010). Putting pen to paper can catalyse profound self-discovery and emotional growth in a world that commonly fosters the repression or disregard of our emotions. Through the meditative process of mindful journaling, individuals are empowered to explore the depths of their inner landscapes, giving voice to feelings, fears, and aspirations that may have previously remained buried. As one participant in a study on self-reflexivity through journaling described, "the journal has given me a place in which to experience myself and to discover my existence" (Graybeal et al., 2002, p. 297). Far from a mere hobby or indulgence, this practice can enhance emotional learning, foster meaningful connections, and cultivate greater self-awareness and purpose (Hölzel et al., 2011).



The education system in Pakistan faces significant challenges in supporting students' holistic well-being and development. The literature indicates that the country's education landscape is highly fragmented, with public schools, private English-medium institutions, and religious madrassas operating under different curricula and philosophies (Durrani & Halai, 2018; Sodhar et al., 2013). This fragmentation and broader socioeconomic and political instability have contributed to poor learning outcomes and high student disengagement and distress (Durrani & Halai, 2018; Sodhar et al., 2013).

Pakistan, an Islamic nation predominantly inhabited by Sunni Muslims, stands witness to a rich mosaic of faith communities, including the Ismaili community, amidst a backdrop of recent political transitions and an influx of Afghan migrants. This diversity manifests in myriad ways within educational classrooms – from differences in educational backgrounds to varying capacities for analytical thinking. In this context, the significance of adolescence, particularly the 11-12 age group, cannot be overstated. During this pivotal period, individuals form foundational beliefs and establish enduring connections with their cultural and religious heritage. Hence, fostering a sense of emotional connection and belonging among adolescents becomes paramount. Notably, researchers have highlighted the urgent need for a greater emphasis on social-emotional learning (SEL) and student well-being within Pakistan's education system, particularly given the emotional disconnection experienced by students, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of religious centres and prayer halls and the challenges of remote learning have exacerbated this disconnect, leaving a palpable void in our students' spiritual and educational journey (Durrani & Halai, 2018).

In addition to the academic and pedagogical considerations, a pressing societal concern further underscores the urgency of addressing emotional disconnection within religious education classrooms. The Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board (ITREB) of Pakistan has observed a considerable number of students and families are gravitating towards other faith communities or embracing atheism, highlighting the immediate need for a more holistic and engaging approach to religious education. Studies have found that the acquisition of SEL skills, such as self-awareness, self-management, and relationship building, can profoundly affect academic achievement, mental health, and overall life outcomes (Zins & Elias, 2007). However, integrating SEL-focused initiatives still needs to be improved, with the education system primarily oriented towards rote learning and exam performance (Durrani & Halai, 2018).

In this context, the research topic "Write to Connect: Enhancing emotional learning through mindful journaling" holds significant promise as a means of addressing the well-being needs of Pakistani students. The literature indicates that the practice of mindful journaling can serve as a powerful tool for self-discovery, emotional regulation, and the cultivation of meaningful connections (Graybeal et al., 2002; Hölzel et al., 2011; Myers, 2010). By providing students with a structured outlet to explore their inner landscapes, this intervention has the potential to empower them, complement the academic focus of the curriculum, and foster the development of crucial SEL competencies (Graybeal et al., 2002; Hölzel et al., 2011). Moreover, the relative simplicity and accessibility of journaling make it a particularly suitable approach for implementation within the diverse and resource-constrained educational settings of Pakistan (Durrani & Halai, 2018; Sodhar et al., 2013).

This innovative approach aims to empower students to forge meaningful connections with their community's practices and ethos by providing a structured avenue for introspection and



emotional engagement. Through thoughtful reflection and exploration of emotions, adolescents can navigate the complexities of their identity and develop a deeper appreciation for their cultural and religious heritage. Moreover, by exploring the impact of mindful journaling on the emotional learning and overall well-being of Ismaili Religious students, this research study can significantly contribute to the development of holistic, evidence-based strategies for supporting the country's youth. The findings may not only inform but also shape policy decisions, inspiring the adoption of similar SEL-focused interventions among IREB and across the broader education system, and ultimately enhancing the educational experience and life outcomes of students in Karachi, Pakistan.

Journaling has long been recognized as a powerful tool for self-reflection, emotional processing, and personal growth (Hiemstra, 2001; Hubbs & Brand, 2005; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999; Smyth & Pennebaker, 2008). However, "mindful journaling" has gained increasing attention in recent years, mainly to enhance emotional learning and foster meaningful connections within diverse cultural contexts. This literature review examines the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence surrounding mindful journaling, specifically focusing on its applications and adaptations across different cultural settings.

Defining Mindfulness and Journaling

As Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003) defined mindfulness, it involves cultivating a nonjudgmental, present-moment awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations. This practice has been shown to have many benefits, including improved emotional regulation, reduced stress and anxiety, and enhanced well-being (Hölzel et al., 2011).

On the other hand, journaling is a reflective writing practice that allows individuals to explore their inner experiences, process emotions, and develop a deeper understanding of themselves (Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009). Research has demonstrated that expressive writing can improve emotional and physical health and generate new ways of thinking about emotions, cognitive processing, and overall well-being (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999; Smyth & Pennebaker, 2008).

The literature on journaling reveals a crucial distinction between merely documenting daily events and engaging in more profound, reflective practices. At its core, journaling transcends surface-level occurrences, allowing individuals to delve deep within and process their thoughts, emotions, ideas, and experiences (Moses, 2019). This transformative power of journaling lies in its ability to challenge fixed mindset thinking and foster a growth-oriented perspective. This concept aligns closely with the current study's exploration of how mindful journaling can facilitate cognitive and emotional shifts among participants. Journaling also enables individuals to access different facets of the self, fostering a deeper understanding and connection with one's inner world (Guarino, as cited in Moses, 2019).

This communicative aspect of journaling with oneself underscores its potential as a tool for personal expression, cognitive exploration, and emotional healing (Haertl & Ero-Phillips, 2017). By providing a structured outlet for processing thoughts and emotions, journaling can lead to therapeutic benefits, including improved self-worth, enhanced mental health perspectives, increased coping strategies, and better stress management (Haertl & Ero-Phillips, 2017). Moreover, the literature emphasizes the fundamental human nature of paper journaling as a reflective practice, offering individuals a means to cope with stress and express their innermost thoughts and feelings (Ayobi & Sonne, 2018). This perspective further highlights the significance



of the current study's exploration of mindful journaling as a tool for personal growth and emotional well-being.

The Intersection of Mindfulness and Journaling

When the principles of mindfulness are applied to the journaling process, the resulting practice of "mindful journaling" can serve as a powerful tool for self-discovery, emotional regulation, and the cultivation of meaningful insights (Hölzel et al., 2011; Myers, 2010). By approaching the act of writing with a mindful orientation, individuals are encouraged to explore their inner experiences with curiosity, openness, and self-compassion rather than harsh self-criticism or avoidance (Graybeal et al., 2002). The literature suggests that mindful journaling can have a range of benefits, including enhanced self-awareness, improved social-emotional competencies, reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression, and increased personal agency and resilience (Graybeal et al., 2002; Hölzel et al., 2011; Myers, 2010; Pennebaker & Chung, 2011; Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009). These outcomes underscore the potential of mindful journaling to serve as a holistic, culturally responsive approach to emotional learning and well-being.

Emotional Learning and the Benefits of Mindful Journaling

Emotional learning, also known as social-emotional learning (SEL), refers to developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to manage emotions, build positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Zins & Elias, 2007). Research has shown that the acquisition of SEL skills can profoundly impact academic achievement, mental health, and overall life outcomes (Zins & Elias, 2007).

The literature suggests that mindful journaling can be a valuable tool for enhancing emotional learning. By providing a structured outlet for self-reflection and emotional exploration, mindful journaling can help individuals develop a greater understanding of their own emotions, improve their ability to regulate those emotions and foster stronger interpersonal connections (Graybeal et al., 2002; Hölzel et al., 2011; Myers, 2010). For example, a study by Dahlgren (2020) found that implementing a daily writing reflection program in a high school setting has positively impacted stress levels and improved communication between students and their teachers. Similarly, a review of the literature by Konishi and Park (2017) highlighted how journaling could enable students to explore their feelings and emotions, which can, in turn, support their social-emotional development.

Culturally Sustaining Approaches to Mindful Journaling

When implementing mindful journaling interventions, it is crucial to ensure that they are culturally responsive and sustaining, aligning with diverse student populations' unique values, beliefs, and lived experiences (Kim, 2021). As Aguilar and Bridges (2021) emphasised, culturally sustaining SEL frameworks prioritise concentrating on students' cultural identities and incorporating diverse forms of expression and meaning making.

In this regard, mindful journaling strategies can be adapted to be more culturally responsive, such as using culturally relevant prompts, incorporating traditional forms of artistic expression, and facilitating peer-to-peer sharing activities that honour students' unique perspectives and narratives (Aguilar & Bridges, 2021, pp. 12-15; McClure, 2021, pp. 4-6). By doing so, implementing mindful journaling can become a more empowering and transformative experience for students from diverse backgrounds.

Mindful Journaling across Cultures



The literature suggests that mindful journaling can be adapted and applied within diverse cultural contexts, potentially addressing unique emotional and social-emotional learning needs (Durrani & Halai, 2018; Sodhar et al., 2013). As discussed earlier, the integration of mindful journaling can serve as a culturally responsive intervention in Pakistan, addressing the emotional disconnection experienced by many students (Durrani & Halai, 2018).

In contrast, the application of mindful journaling within the United States has often focused on addressing the unique emotional and social-emotional needs of marginalised communities, such as racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those from low-income backgrounds (Pennebaker & Chung, 2011; Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009). Research has indicated that engaging in expressive writing can be a potent method for navigating traumatic experiences, challenging dominant narratives, and fostering a sense of empowerment and community (Pennebaker & Chung, 2011; Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009). Regardless of the cultural context, the search results strengthen the versatility of mindful journaling as a practice that can be adapted to address diverse populations' unique emotional and social-emotional learning needs. By combining mindfulness principles with reflective writing, mindful journaling can provide a holistic approach to supporting personal growth, community building, and the development of a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape.

Mindful Journaling Strategies and Outcomes

The mindful journaling literature underlines strategies and potential outcomes that can be leveraged within educational and therapeutic settings (Graybeal et al., 2002; Hölzel et al., 2011; Myers, 2010). Some key mindful journaling strategies include:

Structured Prompts:

Providing students with guided prompts that encourage self-reflection, emotional exploration, and the cultivation of specific social-emotional competencies, such as self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills (Graybeal et al., 2002; Hölzel et al., 2011). However, a critical consideration is ensuring these prompts are culturally relevant and empowering for diverse student populations (Aguilar & Bridges, 2021; Kim, 2021).

Creative Expressions:

Incorporating creative elements into the journaling process, such as drawing, poetry, or collage making, to facilitate the expression of emotions and the exploration of inner experiences in a more holistic, multi-sensory manner (Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009). This approach aligns with the principles of culturally sustaining SEL, which emphasise honouring and incorporating diverse forms of cultural expression (Kim, 2021).

Peer-to-Peer Sharing

Facilitating opportunities for students to share their journal entries with peers in a supportive, nonjudgmental environment fosters a sense of community, empathy, and mutual understanding (Graybeal et al., 2002; Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009). However, a critical consideration is ensuring that these peer-to-peer sharing activities are structured in a culturally responsive way and empowering for all participants (Aguilar & Bridges, 2021; McClure, 2021).

Mindfulness Practices

Integrating mindfulness exercises, such as breath awareness, body scans, or loving-kindness meditation, into the journaling process to cultivate present-moment attention, self-compassion, and emotional regulation (Hölzel et al., 2011; Myers, 2010). A critical question is



how to adapt these mindfulness practices to align with diverse student populations' cultural beliefs and practices (Kim, 2021).

Reflective Dialogues

Encouraging students to engage in reflective dialogues with educators or mental health professionals to deepen their understanding of their journal entries and explore the insights and patterns that emerge (Graybeal et al., 2002; Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009). A critical consideration is ensuring that these dialogues are conducted in a culturally responsive manner, valuing students' unique perspectives and lived experiences (Aguilar & Bridges, 2021; McClure, 2021).

The potential outcomes of mindful journaling interventions, as mentioned in the literature, include:

- Enhanced self-awareness and emotional regulation (Hölzel et al., 2011; Myers, 2010)
- Improved social-emotional competencies, such as empathy, communication, and relationship-building (Graybeal et al., 2002; Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009)
- Reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and trauma (Pennebaker & Chung, 2011; Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009)
- Increased sense of personal agency, resilience, and overall well-being (Graybeal et al., 2002; Myers, 2010)
- Stronger connections and a greater sense of belonging within educational or therapeutic communities (Graybeal et al., 2002; Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009)

These outcomes Amplify the potential of mindful journaling to serve as a holistic, culturally responsive approach to emotional learning and well-being, with applications across diverse educational and clinical settings. However, a critical question remains: How can implementing and evaluating mindful journaling interventions be designed to ensure that they are truly empowering and transformative for students from diverse cultural backgrounds?

Conclusion

The literature review on mindful journaling validates its potential as a culturally responsive intervention for enhancing emotional learning and fostering meaningful connections. By combining mindfulness principles with reflective writing, mindful journaling can provide a structured outlet for individuals to delve into their inner landscapes, foster self-awareness, and develop vital social-emotional competencies.

The adaptability of mindful journaling across different cultural contexts, as evidenced by its applications in settings like Pakistan and the United States, further reiterate its value as a holistic approach to supporting the well-being of diverse populations. Through integrating culturally relevant strategies and considering unique emotional and social-emotional needs, mindful journaling can be a powerful tool for promoting personal growth, community building, and the development of a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape.

However, the literature also raises critical questions about implementing and evaluating mindful journaling interventions, particularly ensuring that they are culturally responsive, empowering, and transformative for students from diverse backgrounds. As the research on mindful journaling continues to evolve, it will be crucial for educators, mental health professionals, and policymakers to engage in ongoing dialogue and collaboration with the communities they serve to ensure that the practice of mindful journaling truly aligns with the lived experiences, cultural values, and social-emotional needs of all students. By addressing these critical considerations, the field of mindful journaling can continue to grow and evolve, ultimately contributing to the development



of comprehensive, evidence-based strategies for supporting the emotional well-being and overall flourishing of individuals and communities.

Leadership Model

For this mindful journaling intervention focused on enhancing emotional learning, the Transformational Leadership model would be a well-suited approach to guide the implementation and evaluation of the program. The Transformational Leadership model, as developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), intervention is especially pertinent as it resonates with the fundamental tenets of mindful journaling, which aim to cultivate self-awareness, regulate emotions, and nurture a feeling of interconnectedness (Hölzel et al., 2011; Myers, 2010). Unlike other leadership models that focus more on task-oriented or transactional approaches, the Transformational Leadership model emphasises the leader's ability to inspire and motivate followers to transcend their self-interests for the organisation's or community's greater good (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Northouse, 2019). In contrast, a Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, while effective for fostering collaborative learning and professional development among educators, may not be the most appropriate framework for this particular intervention. PLCs typically involve improving instructional practices and student learning outcomes within a school or district context (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

In contrast, the mindful journaling intervention aims to address students' emotional and social-emotional needs more holistically. The transformational leadership model's stronger emphasis on inspiring and empowering followers aligns better with fostering a collective commitment to the mindful journaling practice among students. By adopting a transformational leadership approach, the facilitators of the mindful journaling program can serve as role models, inspiring students to engage in the practice and cultivate the social-emotional competencies necessary for personal growth and collective well-being (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Northouse, 2019). By implementing idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, transformational leaders can create an environment that supports students' autonomy, encourages active participation, and validates their unique experiences and perspectives (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Northouse, 2019). Moreover, the Transformational Leadership model's emphasis on empowering followers and fostering a shared vision aligns well with the culturally responsive approach advocated in the literature on mindful journaling (Kim, 2021). By involving students in the design and implementation of the program, transformational leaders can ensure that the mindful journaling activities and strategies are tailored to the participating communities' specific needs and cultural contexts (Aguilar & Bridges, 2021; McClure, 2021).

Results

Planning and Implementation of Intervention: A Reflective Journey

As an informed approach, this project was meticulously planned to be conducted over 15 classes, each lasting 2 hours. The target audience was Class 7 students aged 9-11 years old. The broader educational aim was to nurture an intellectual and ethical commitment to the students' faith while encouraging them to understand and respect the beliefs of others. Additionally, the project aimed to assist students in examining and reflecting on their present and future roles within their family, community, and society.



The "Ethical Pathways to Human Development" module was strategic, providing a suitable platform for implementing mindful journaling and enhancing emotional learning. This module covers topics ranging from the challenges faced by the world to how individuals and communities can contribute to the betterment of society. It also delves into the Ismaili community's volunteering projects, the work of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), and the importance of harmony with the environment and global relations, promoting the values of embracing diversity and pluralism.

Reflective Practice: A Critical Lens

As an Educator, the researcher engaged in a continuous process of self-reflection, drawing upon Schon's (1983) model of "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action." This approach allowed the researcher to examine the intervention's implementation critically, make informed adjustments, and enhance the overall effectiveness of the project. The researcher's approach to implementing the mindful journaling intervention was also aligned with the principles of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Specifically, the emphasis on "individualized consideration," where leaders provide a supportive climate and attend to the individual needs of followers, is closely linked to the researcher's efforts to create a safe and nurturing environment for the students to engage in emotional exploration through journaling (Good et al., 2016; Pinck & Sonnentag, 2017). This alignment with transformational leadership theory further strengthened the researcher's ability to foster student well-being and personal growth throughout the implementation of the intervention.

During the initial stages, the researcher planned to incorporate journaling activities during the plenary, which is reflected in the proposal (Appendix B), as the students would be aware of the topic and in the present moment, making it easier for them to comprehend and engage. However, upon daily reflections and analysis, it was observed that the students felt overwhelmed by the end of the lesson, treating the journal as a mere task rather than a mindful practice. For instance, one student expressed feeling "dizzy" and "just wanting to finish the journal" rather than engaging with it meaningfully. This realization prompted the researcher to adjust the implementation strategy, which is in line with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, which emphasizes the importance of reflective observation and active experimentation.

Adapting the Journaling Activity

Based on the guidance and analysis, the researcher decided to attempt journaling in other segments of the lesson: the "during" phase and the starter, which is 'pre.' Each lesson segment had its own merits and demerits, and the researcher reflected on the outcomes, making amendments to achieve the desired results. During the "during" phase of the lesson, the researcher observed that the students were more engaged and focused on the journaling activities, as they were still in the learning momentum. However, the researcher noted that the journaling sometimes overlapped with the classwork, creating a sense of confusion among the students. In contrast, when journaling was attempted during the starter, the students seemed more receptive and willing to express their thoughts and emotions. However, the researcher found that the limited time frame sometimes hindered the depth of their reflections.

Promoting Mindful Journaling

To ensure that the journaling activity served its actual purpose and connected the students emotionally, the researcher carefully explained the concept of mindful journaling. Drawing on the literature on the benefits of reflective journaling (Lai & Land, 2009; Malchiodi, 2020), the



researcher emphasized the importance of using the journal as a personal space for self-expression, emotional exploration, and personal growth. The researchers also promoted journaling by highlighting its potential long-term benefits, such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and the ability to connect with one's inner self (Goleman, 1995; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). This approach aimed to encourage the students to engage in journaling activities not as a mere task but as a meaningful and transformative practice.

As mindful journaling serves the purpose of enhancing emotional learning, it was important to make students aware of their emotions in order to feel and express them. So, In the first class, the Teacher did Emotional charades with the students and started the class with the intriguing question, 'I wish my teacher knew' as shown in (Appendix C). Recognizing the sensitivity of emotional exploration, the researcher ensured in the orientation class that the students were provided with a safe space and were assured that their journals would not be read by anyone without their consent, as this was a personal mindful practice. This aligns with the literature on the importance of creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment for emotional learning (Goleman, 1995).

Mindful Journaling Practice

Many creative strategies and methods were incorporated into the lesson plans. The literature informed the activities well. There were guided prompts in all the daily mindfulness journals. The journal prompts were carefully prepared, following Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956), starting with lower-order questions and tasks and gradually progressing to higher-order ones. (See Appendix D). This approach, supported by the literature on cognitive and affective domains (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), aimed to engage the students' emotional and intellectual capacities, fostering a deeper connection with the content. Moreover, all the prompts were structured and attempted to cater to the student's diverse needs, as suggested by (Aguilar & Bridges, 2021; Kim, 2021) in the above literature review. As the literature on SEL (Kim, 2021) and (Sexton & Pennebaker, 2009) points out are, active expressions as a mindfulness strategy; the daily journal had variety and creativity as it had activities such as writing a poem, creating projects, and giving green points (Appendix 1A), writing a prayer and many more. (Appendix 1B) As suggested in the literature by (Myers 2010), mindfulness practices were also embedded throughout the intervention. It includes mindful minutes, such as meditation, guided visualization, free drawing, and playing with colours in Mandala. (Appendix 1C)

Collaborative Feedback and Continuous Improvement

The researcher's close collaboration with the mentor and discussions with other colleagues, STEP teachers, and ITREB members provided valuable feedback that helped shape the project's direction. (Appendix 2A). This approach, grounded in the principles of professional learning communities (Hord, 1997), allowed the researcher to reflect on the implementation critically, address challenges, and make informed decisions to enhance the overall effectiveness of the intervention. Throughout the implementation, the researcher constantly reflected on the differentiation between the journaling practice and regular reflective or concluding activities, as there were instances where the journal writing overlapped with the classwork. Although the journal writing was not a formative assessment and was not graded or judged, it was intended to serve as a significant task. Notably, the students were not forced to do the journals but were encouraged through the presentation of facts and benefits and the potential for developing a habit that they could use in the future. The researcher's critical self-reflection, the incorporation of relevant



theoretical frameworks, and the continuous collaboration with mentors and colleagues all contributed to the ongoing refinement and enhancement of the intervention, ensuring that the goals of emotional learning and personal growth were effectively achieved.

Evaluation:

Observing Increased Engagement and Thoughtfulness

As the students became more familiar with the journaling practice, the researcher observed a noticeable difference in the depth and quality of their responses. In the initial classes, the students' journal entries were relatively brief and lacked the level of detail and reflection that the researcher had hoped for as seen in (Appendix 3A). However, as the intervention progressed, the students' journal entries became more thoughtful, with students expressing their emotions, connecting the content to their personal experiences, and demonstrating a deeper engagement with the topics evidenced in (Appendix 3B). This shift in the students' approach to journaling suggested that the researcher's efforts to promote mindful journaling and create a safe, supportive environment were paying off. The students began to view the journal as a personal space for self-exploration, rather than just another task to complete, aligning with the intended goals of the intervention (Goleman, 1995; Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Limitations

One significant limitation was the potential for student resistance or lack of engagement with the journaling practice. While the researcher tried to promote the benefits of mindful journaling and create a safe, supportive environment, some students may have been reluctant to embrace this unfamiliar activity, particularly those who were more accustomed to traditional, assessment-focused learning. Overcoming ingrained educational norms and fostering a genuine commitment to self-reflection can be challenging, requiring sustained effort and patience on the part of both the teacher and the students. Additionally, the highly personal nature of the journaling process raised concerns about privacy and confidentiality. Despite the researcher's assurances that the journals would not be read without the students' consent, some participants may have felt hesitant to fully express their thoughts and emotions, fearing potential judgment or exposure. It could have limited the depth and authenticity of the student's reflections, undermining the intended emotional and personal growth outcomes of the intervention. Another limitation stemmed from the potential for inconsistency in implementing the journaling activities across the 15 lessons. While the researcher made adjustments based on ongoing reflection and feedback, the varying placement of the journaling exercises within the lesson structure (e.g., plenary, during, starter) may have resulted in uneven student engagement and learning experiences. Ensuring a coherent and consistent integration of the journaling practice throughout the module could have strengthened the intervention's overall effectiveness.

Furthermore, some students may have perceived the lack of formal assessment or grading of the journaling activities as a lack of importance or relevance to their academic performance. In a context where grades and test scores often take precedence, the voluntary nature of the journaling practice could have been viewed as a peripheral or optional activity rather than a core component of the learning experience. Addressing this perception and finding ways to integrate the journaling into the overall assessment framework meaningfully enhanced student buy-in and commitment. Finally, the limited duration of the intervention, spanning only 15 lessons, raises questions about the long-term sustainability and impact of the mindful journaling practice. Developing lasting habits and transformative emotional awareness and self-reflection changes often require more



extensive and continuous engagement. Exploring ways to extend or incorporate the intervention into the broader curriculum strengthened its potential for lasting influence on the student's personal and academic growth. These limitations underscore the complexities and challenges of implementing innovative educational interventions, particularly within resource-constrained environments. Addressing these limitations through thoughtful planning, ongoing evaluation, and a willingness to adapt and refine the approach could have enhanced the overall effectiveness and impact of the mindful journaling intervention.

Conclusion

The mindful journaling intervention explored in the search results presents several compelling implications and opportunities for sustained impact, both for the researcher and other educators looking to implement similar approaches. One key implication is the potential for journaling to serve as a more holistic and illuminating research method when investigating mindfulness-based interventions, as highlighted in the final search result. By engaging students in reflective journaling throughout the process, the researcher gained deeper, more nuanced insights into their experiences, emotional responses, and the evolution of their mindfulness practices. It aligns with the call in the literature for a shift towards more qualitative and mixed-method approaches that can capture the complexities of mindfulness and its impacts (Felder et al., 2016). Building on this, an action plan to sustain the intervention could involve incorporating regular journaling as a research tool and an integral part of the curriculum and learning experience. The lessons could involve setting aside dedicated journaling time during each class, providing prompts and scaffolding to support students' reflective practice, and potentially even incorporating peer-sharing or teacher-student dialogues around the journal entries. By making journaling a consistent and meaningful component of the learning experience, the researcher could help foster long-term mindfulness habits and deepen the student's engagement with the content.

Furthermore, the search results suggest that integrating mindfulness practices across the curriculum, rather than treating them as standalone activities, can enhance the intervention's effectiveness and sustainability. The researcher could explore ways to weave mindful journaling into other subject areas, such as language arts, social studies, or even STEM subjects, demonstrating the relevance and applicability of these practices in diverse contexts" (Felder et al., 2016). If the researcher were to carry out the intervention again, a fundamental change could be to address the practical challenges and barriers identified in the search results, such as resource constraints, accessibility issues, and the potential for student resistance. It could involve exploring more cost-effective journaling solutions, leveraging digital tools and platforms to enhance accessibility, and dedicating more time to introducing and promoting the benefits of mindful journaling to both students and their families. Additionally, the researcher could consider incorporating more explicit connections between the mindful journaling practices and the broader themes of the "Ethical Pathways to Human Development" module. By highlighting how the journaling activities can deepen the student's understanding of the module's content and their roles within their communities, the researcher could further strengthen the relevance and impact of the intervention. The mindful journaling intervention presents a compelling opportunity to foster sustainable, holistic learning experiences that nurture students' emotional, social, and ethical development. By building upon the lessons learned, addressing the identified challenges, and integrating the journaling practice more deeply into the curriculum, the researcher and other



educators can work towards creating transformative, long-lasting impacts on their students' well-being and engagement with the world around them.

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