Building social and emotional competencies in elementary teachers through movement and mindfulness: A case study from Pakistan

by

Ramsha Usman Khan

B.Sc., Lahore University of Management Sciences, 2015
M.S., Kansas State University, 2020

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
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Abstract

Teacher well-being is foundational to effective teaching, yet it remains underemphasized in both policy and school reform efforts, particularly in the Global South. When teachers feel emotionally supported, regulated, and reflective, they cultivate classroom environments that promote student belonging, resilience, and academic engagement. Culturally adapted Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), mindfulness, and movement-based practices offer meaningful and contextually relevant pathways for strengthening teachers' social and emotional competencies in ways that honor local values, languages, and lived realities. Grounded in the CASEL framework and principles of mindfulness and informed by Ecological Systems Theory and the Prosocial Classroom Model, this study examined how cultivating teacher well-being can influence personal growth, professional practice, and the broader educational ecosystem.

This qualitative intervention case study, conducted over one academic year (September 2024–May 2025), involved eight elementary teachers at Chand Bagh Day School (CBDS) in Muridke, Pakistan. The research explored four questions: (1) How does SEL, mindfulness, and movement training impact teachers' self-perception of well-being? (2) In what ways, if any, do teachers integrate these practices into personal life, and what challenges emerge if they do not? (3) In what ways, if any, do teachers integrate these practices into their classrooms, and what barriers hinder implementation? (4) What forms of support do teachers need to sustain SEL and mindfulness in the long term?

Findings indicated meaningful personal and professional gains. Personally, teachers reported increased emotional literacy, greater self-awareness, improved emotional regulation, and stronger relationships with family and peers. Professionally, teachers described enhanced confidence, more positive classroom climates, improved classroom management, and closer

student–teacher relationships. Despite these gains, challenges such as time constraints, limited conceptual understanding, and external disruptions, including school closures due to climate events or political instability, affected consistency. Teachers emphasized the need for ongoing coaching, subject-specific models, structured planning time, and school-wide adoption to sustain these practices.

This study demonstrates the transformative potential of culturally adapted SEL, mindfulness, and movement-based interventions for promoting teacher well-being in non-Western contexts. It contributes to the growing discourse on contextualized SEL implementation and highlights the importance of supporting teachers as whole human beings in efforts to improve educational quality and equity.

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Dedication

To my parents, Ruby and Aji, who have always given me the very best. Thank you for teaching me to live with compassion, purpose, and integrity. Your love, support, and values continue to guide and carry me forward.

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To all the educators, who continue to show up for their students every day, often without recognition or support. May this work honor your resilience and contribute, even in a small way, to your well-being and growth.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the role of teachers extends beyond the mere transmission of academic knowledge; it encompasses a complex interplay of nurturing students' intellectual, emotional, and social growth. The conventional focus solely on academics has gradually expanded to include a more comprehensive approach that acknowledges the essentiality of equipping students with not just subject-specific expertise, but also with the social-emotional skills and resilience necessary to navigate an increasingly intricate world. Consequently, the integration of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) initiatives into educational frameworks has gained prominence, aiming to holistically cultivate students' capabilities. However, amidst this paradigm shift, critical oversight emerges: the neglect of educators' own well-being and their preparedness to effectively facilitate this transformative educational journey especially in low-resource contexts like Pakistan (Barlas et al., 2022). The multifaceted demands placed upon teachers, compounded by mounting stress and numerous responsibilities, often leave them grappling with the challenge of striking a balance between student care and personal welfare. This oversight of teacher development within the context of evolving educational paradigms forms the crux of this inquiry, positioning it at the nexus of teacher education and wellness.

Acknowledging this critical juncture at the intersection of teachers' well-being and effective pedagogy, this study seeks to delve into the transformative potential of providing teachers with targeted training and holistic support. By bridging the gap in teacher education and emphasizing their well-being, not only can educators cultivate their own resilience and ability to navigate the challenges of the modern classroom, but they can also profoundly impact the school culture. Empowering teachers to prioritize their own self-care and professional development

holds the promise of fostering a more supportive and enriching educational environment, ultimately benefiting both educators and their students alike.

Purpose of Inquiry

This study explores how training in social and emotional learning (SEL), mindfulness, and movement impacts elementary teachers' perceived well-being and how they integrate these practices into their personal and professional lives. It further examines the challenges they face, and the support needed to sustain such practices in school settings.

This inquiry is guided by four key objectives. First, it seeks to evaluate how SEL and mindfulness training enhance teachers' understanding of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies as well as their personal well-being. Second, it aims to explore the practices teachers adopt in their personal lives to nurture their own well-being. Third, the study explores how educators apply SEL and mindfulness strategies in their classrooms and how they perceive changes in student behavior, engagement, and overall classroom culture. Finally, it examines the role of institutional and systemic support in sustaining these interventions and promoting long-term teacher development and well-being.

Through this multi-dimensional approach, the study seeks to offer meaningful insights into how strengthening teacher development through SEL and mindfulness can positively influence educators' well-being, enrich student–teacher relationships, and foster more nurturing classroom environments. Ultimately, it aims to advocate for a compassionate and holistic model of teacher education, especially in Pakistan, that recognizes educators as pivotal agents in cultivating emotionally supportive and socially responsible schools.

Research questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways, if any, does training in SEL, mindfulness, and movement impact teachers' self-perception of their wellbeing?
2. a) In what ways, if any, do elementary Pakistani teachers incorporate the SEL based professional development in their personal life?

   b) If not, what challenges are they facing?
3. a) In what ways, if any, do elementary Pakistani teachers incorporate the SEL based professional development in their classroom?
4. In the teachers' perception, what support do they need to incorporate and sustain SEL and mindfulness in their classroom?

Research context

While mindfulness has been extensively studied over the past several decades, and adult SEL continues to emerge as a vital field in education (Plate et al., 2025), what distinguishes this research is its grounding in the semi-urban Pakistani context. This study investigates how SEL and mindfulness intersect with the lived experiences of teachers in settings where cultural values, systemic constraints, and community dynamics significantly influence how such practices are understood, embodied, and applied. By situating this work within a non-Western educational landscape, it contributes to a more inclusive understanding of educator well-being and expands the discourse beyond dominant Western-centric narratives in existing scholarship.

This study takes place at Chand Bagh Day School (CBDS), a private institution located in the sub-urban outskirts of Muridke, in the Sheikhupura District of Punjab, Pakistan. The school was established in 1998 by the Chand Bagh Foundation with a vision to offer inclusive education rooted in both academic rigor and character development (n.d.). It currently serves around 935 students, primarily from upper middle-class backgrounds, and employs 52 qualified

teachers committed to delivering quality education. The school emphasizes personality development, confidence-building, and the integration of technology and co-curricular engagement into its learning environment (n.d).

While the school offers a relatively supportive institutional culture, teachers still operate within a broader educational system that often overlooks their emotional and professional well-being. Across Pakistan, as in many parts of the world, teachers face ongoing stressors such as heavy workloads, low salaries, and a lack of structured opportunities for emotional or mental health support (Barlas et al., 2022). Nationally, SEL and mindfulness remain largely absent from teacher training programs and are often seen as non-essential or foreign, with little formal institutional backing.

Interestingly, many of the core principles of SEL, such as compassion, emotional regulation, self-reflection, and community-mindedness, are deeply embedded in Islamic teachings and local cultural practices (Ali, 2023). Although teachers may not use the formal terminology of SEL or mindfulness, they often recognize and relate to these underlying values when they are presented in culturally and spiritually resonant ways. This alignment offers a meaningful foundation for adapting SEL and mindfulness approaches that respect and draw upon local moral frameworks, spiritual traditions, and community-based understandings of well-being.

This context provides a valuable site for exploring how culturally relevant SEL and mindfulness-based professional development can impact teachers' self-perception of well-being, influence classroom practices, and highlight the supports needed to sustain these approaches in everyday teaching life.

Reflexivity and subjectivity statement

My personal and professional experiences have shaped my deep curiosity about how SEL can be cultivated among educators in Pakistan, particularly in ways that support teachers' own emotional growth and well-being. Having taught at the middle school level in various private institutions and volunteered as a teacher trainee in low-cost private schools, I developed an intimate understanding of the challenges teachers face in these contexts, including heavy workloads, limited institutional support, a lack of personal and professional resources, and the resulting stress and burnout.

Later, during my master's in the US, I experienced the transformative and grounding effects of yoga on my physical and emotional well-being. Motivated to deepen my understanding, I completed a 200-hour yoga teacher training certification with *My Vinyasa Practice* in 2020. This ongoing personal practice, combined with my academic exploration of yoga's impact, sparked a deeper curiosity about how breathwork, mindfulness, and movement could support educators. As I engaged with research, I found extensive studies highlighting the benefits of yoga for both teachers and students, primarily within Western contexts. This prompted me to wonder how such practices might unfold within Pakistan's distinct cultural and educational landscape. Recognizing the importance of cultural nuance in shaping educational practices, I began to explore how these ancient traditions could be meaningfully integrated into Pakistani schools to enhance teachers' emotional well-being and, in turn, foster healthier learning environments. This line of inquiry ultimately led me to pursue this research.

To further this growing interest in exploring the potential of SEL within the Pakistani educational framework, my research journey has been marked by both scholarly inquiry and active engagement with educators' lived experiences. Building upon my prior teaching and

training background, I completed an additional 200-hour yoga teacher training program with *Breathe for Change,* a program specifically designed for educators that integrates SEL and mindfulness principles. This experience allowed me to engage deeply with current research and connect with educators worldwide, offering valuable insights into their professional challenges, well-being, and growth. Drawing from these enriched experiences and my expanding research foundation, I facilitated a few short training sessions in Pakistan to explore educators' receptiveness to SEL-based practices and to assess the contextual need for such interventions. The overwhelmingly positive response from school administration and teachers not only validated the relevance of this work but also deepened my resolve to investigate it further through systematic research.

Through this study, I aim to generate insights that inform the design of culturally responsive and sustainable approaches to teacher well-being in Pakistan. In doing so, this research aspires to contribute both to the advancement of education within the country and to the broader global literature on SEL and mindfulness in teacher development.

Dissertation overview

This dissertation explores the impact of SEL and mindfulness training on teacher well-being and classroom dynamics. This chapter outlines the research topic, purpose, and guiding questions, and presents my positionality as a researcher. Establishing this foundation provides context for the subsequent literature review and informs the selection of research methodology and methods.

Chapter 2 reviews literature on SEL and mindfulness, examining their theoretical foundations, global applications, and relevance for teacher well-being. It draws on key frameworks such as the CASEL framework (CASEL, 2020), adult learning theories (Knowles et

al., 2012), ecological model of behavior (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), and the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) to guide the discussion. The chapter explores how SEL and mindfulness training enhances teacher resilience, emotional regulation, and classroom practice (Roeser, Braun, & Choles, 2025). Most significantly it situates these ideas within Pakistan's educational context highlighting systemic inequities, cultural dynamics, and the limited focus on teacher SEL (Barlas et al., 2022). This synthesis lays the conceptual groundwork for understanding how culturally grounded SEL and mindfulness practices can strengthen teacher well-being and classroom environment in Pakistan.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, which uses a qualitative intervention case study to center and honor the voices and experiences of participating teachers. It outlines the research design, context, and ethical considerations, as well as the methods used to collect data, including pre- and post-training questionnaires, individual interviews, monthly reflections, and researcher memos. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences with SEL and mindfulness. The chapter also explains the data analysis process and the steps taken to ensure the ethical integrity and trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and key findings of this research study. It begins with detailed portraitures of the participating teachers to provide context about their personal backgrounds, professional experiences, and teaching environments. The chapter then presents the codes and themes that emerged from analyzing multiple data sources using NVivo. These are organized according to each research question to maintain a clear alignment between the data and the study's aims. The chapter concludes with a summary that brings together the major findings in relation to the study's central research aims.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusions drawn from the study's key findings and acknowledges its limitations. It proposes a theory of change and a model for future implementation. The chapter also offers recommendations for schools and suggestions for future research to inform policy and educational practice, with the broader aim of enhancing teacher well-being and classroom dynamics.

Definitions

The following terms and their explanations will help establish a clear understanding of essential concepts within the context of this dissertation. These definitions and explanations serve as a guide, ensuring a consistent interpretation of these terms throughout the research.

Mindfulness: "Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). Mindfulness involves the practice of maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment without judgment. It entails being present and fully engaged in the present moment.

Motivation: Motivation refers to the internal drive or external influences that initiate, sustain, and direct an individual's efforts toward achieving goals. In the context of education, teacher motivation encompasses the passion, commitment, and purpose that inspire educators to engage in teaching, overcome challenges, pursue professional growth, and foster student learning. It is shaped by personal values, workplace conditions, recognition, and a sense of efficacy and impact.

Movement Practices: Movement practices encompass a variety of physical activities aimed at fostering physical, mental, and emotional well-being, often including gentle yoga,

breathing exercises, and other physical activities integrated into educational settings to enhance holistic wellness.

Socio-Emotional Competence (SEC): SEC is an outcome of SEL. It encompasses the abilities, attitudes, and skills essential for managing emotions, fostering positive relationships, demonstrating empathy, making responsible decisions, and effectively navigating social situations within various contexts. (CASEL, 2020)

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): SEL refers to the process through which individuals acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for understanding and managing emotions, setting and achieving positive goals, feeling and showing empathy for others, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and making responsible decisions. (CASEL, 2020)

Teacher Training/Education: Teacher training or education refers to the formal process of preparing educators for their roles in instructing, managing classrooms, and facilitating student learning. It involves acquiring pedagogical knowledge, instructional strategies, classroom management skills, and professional development to enhance teaching effectiveness.

Well-being: Well-being encompasses an individual's overall state of physical, emotional, and psychological health and satisfaction in various aspects of life, including work-related contexts. It involves achieving a balance between personal and professional life, managing stress effectively, and experiencing a sense of fulfillment and purpose.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Overview

SEL, mindfulness, and movement-based practices are increasingly recognized as vital for enhancing teacher well-being and creating supportive educational environments (Jennings P. A., 2011; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Research shows these approaches help educators manage stress, build emotional resilience, and foster compassionate classrooms (Roeser, Braun, & Choles, 2025). Yet, while most studies focus on student outcomes, lesser attention has been given to how such practices support teachers particularly in the Global South, where emotional fatigue, resource constraints, and limited institutional support are common.

This review examines four key areas: (1) foundational theories and applications of SEL and mindfulness in teacher development; (2) the crisis of teacher well-being and the promise of embodied practices; (3) SEL on the world stage and its adaption across the world; and (4) contextual challenges and opportunities for integrating these approaches in Pakistan.

By synthesizing insights from psychology, education, and health sciences, the review positions teacher SEL as a pathway to sustainable and equity-driven educational reform. Integrating mindful movement into teacher development extends beyond stress reduction to cultivate awareness, compassion, and presence as essential pedagogical skills, forming the foundation for this study's conceptual framework.

Theoretical foundations

Researchers employ theoretical frameworks to provide structure and coherence to their studies, offering a guiding lens through which to interpret existing literature and situate their own work. Such frameworks help identify key relationships among concepts and establish a foundation for understanding how the current research connects to broader scholarly discourse.

This study is informed by two complementary theoretical frameworks: the CASEL model of social and emotional learning (CASEL, 2020) and the principles of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Social and emotional learning

Social and Emotional Learning, or SEL, is widely recognized as a foundational process through which individuals develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve meaningful goals, demonstrate empathy, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020). Rather than being a single program or intervention, SEL represents a lifelong developmental process that supports both personal and academic growth. It equips learners with essential intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive tools to navigate life's complexities with awareness and compassion.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), established in 1994, has been instrumental in advancing SEL research, policy, and practice. Through its evidence-based framework, CASEL has played a pivotal role in positioning SEL as a fundamental component of education from early childhood through high school (Weissberg, 2019). Over time, its efforts have expanded beyond classroom-based student programs to encompass a systemic approach that integrates SEL into schools, districts, and communities. This approach acknowledges that SEL is not only for students but also for educators, families, and the broader school ecosystem (CASEL, 2020).

Social and emotional competence is recognized as "a broad construct viewed as an outcome of social and emotional learning" (Jennings, 2011, p. 134). It enables educators and students alike to respond constructively to challenges, manage stress, and engage in prosocial

behavior. The five interrelated core competencies identified by CASEL (2020) are described as follows:

1. Self-awareness: The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

2. Self-management: The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

3. Social awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

4. Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

5. Responsible decision making: The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

These competencies provide a shared language for understanding and implementing SEL across educational settings. Originally developed to enhance student outcomes, the framework now also emphasizes the social and emotional development of educators, recognizing that teachers' well-being and emotional intelligence are critical to creating supportive and effective

learning environments. The CASEL wheel (Figure 2.1) shows how these competencies how these core competencies through interactions and experiences across key settings such as classrooms, schools, families and caregivers and communities.

Figure 2.1. CASEL framework

Mindfulness and embodied practices

Mindfulness has been widely defined as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Similarly, Bishop et. al (2004), Gethin (2011), and Milton (2011) describe mindful awareness as "present-centered, nonjudgmental attention" (as cited in Young, 2016). Although its modern applications are often presented through a secular lens, mindfulness is rooted in the doctrinal framework of Buddhism and was adapted in Western contexts during the 1980s and 1990s (Young, 2016). Comparable concepts appear across other Eastern traditions, such as *samadhi* and *dhyana* in Sanskrit, *zikr* in Arabic (Islamic Sufism), and *shouryi* in Chinese, all emphasizing awareness and presence (Young, 2016). Across these traditions, mindfulness is understood as both a state of consciousness and a cultivated practice that allows individuals to

observe their thoughts, emotions, and sensations with curiosity and acceptance. Today, it has found relevance across diverse fields, including education, healthcare, sports, business, and even military training (Young, 2016).

While mindfulness originates in contemplative traditions such as Buddhism, its integration into education is often presented through a secular lens that highlights its psychological and cognitive benefits (Young, 2016). This distinction is particularly important in culturally diverse contexts where mindfulness practices may intersect with local spiritual or religious beliefs. In contemporary educational and psychological research, mindfulness is understood as both a mental and embodied process that integrates awareness of the mind, body, and emotions. It extends beyond cognitive attention to include somatic awareness acknowledging that emotions and stress are experienced not only mentally but also physically (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Shapiro et al., 2011). Embodied mindfulness has been associated with greater well-being, including enhanced positive emotions, resilience, and reduced stress and anxiety (Harris et. al, 2015).

Embodiment refers to the lived experience of being present within one's body and attuned to its sensations and rhythms. When mindfulness is practiced through this embodied lens, awareness becomes a holistic state that unites mind and body. The body serves as an anchor for present-moment attention, grounding awareness through breath, posture, and movement. Research in contemplative and somatic fields shows that embodied mindfulness enhances interoceptive awareness which is the ability to sense internal bodily states, which strengthens emotional recognition and regulation (Haris et. al, 2015). Among embodied approaches, yoga stands out as a deeply integrative practice that connects the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of experience. Rooted in ancient Indian philosophy, yoga encompasses ethical

principles (*yamas* and *niyamas*), postures (*asana*), breathwork (*pranayama*), and meditative awareness. Practiced mindfully, yoga becomes a form of "moving meditation" that cultivates presence, compassion, and balance (Desikachar, 1999). Studies show that mindful movement practices such as yoga reduce psychological distress, enhance attention, and promote emotional well-being (Haris et al., 2015).

Educator well-being

Teaching is widely recognized as one of the most emotionally demanding professions. Beyond lesson delivery, teachers are constantly managing relationships, responding to diverse student needs, navigating administrative pressures, and meeting accountability standards. This continuous emotional labor can lead to chronic stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). When left unaddressed, such conditions not only diminish teachers' personal well-being but also affect their capacity to teach effectively and remain engaged in the profession. In these circumstances, prioritizing educator well-being becomes essential, not as a luxury, but as a foundational element for sustainable education systems.

Educator well-being encompasses the emotional, mental, social, physical, and even financial health of teachers. It extends beyond the absence of stress or burnout to include a deeper sense of fulfillment, efficacy, and emotional balance in both personal and professional life. Well-being reflects how teachers perceive their work, manage challenges, and find meaning in their roles. It is shaped by multiple factors, including individual coping strategies, supportive school culture, effective leadership, and broader systemic conditions such as workload, resources, and policy support. As Schonert-Reichl (2017) emphasizes, emotionally healthy teachers are the cornerstone of emotionally healthy classrooms. When teachers experience well-being, they are better equipped to model emotional intelligence, manage their classrooms

effectively, and build trusting, compassionate relationships with students. Conversely, persistent stress and burnout can lead to disengagement, absenteeism, and attrition, disrupting learning continuity and undermining school morale (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The state of teacher well-being influences not only individual performance but also the broader dynamics of classroom climate, student motivation, and school culture (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

In under-resourced and rural contexts, such as many schools in Pakistan, these challenges are often intensified by infrastructural deficiencies, large class sizes, and limited access to professional development or mental health support. Female educators, in particular, may face additional pressures related to gender norms and emotional labor both at school and home (Khan, 2012; UNESCO, 2015).

These intersecting stressors highlight the need for systemic approaches that value and protect teacher well-being as a critical dimension of educational quality. In response to these challenges, mindfulness and SEL offer practical pathways forward by helping educators cultivate self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience consequently creating the foundation for compassionate and thriving school communities.

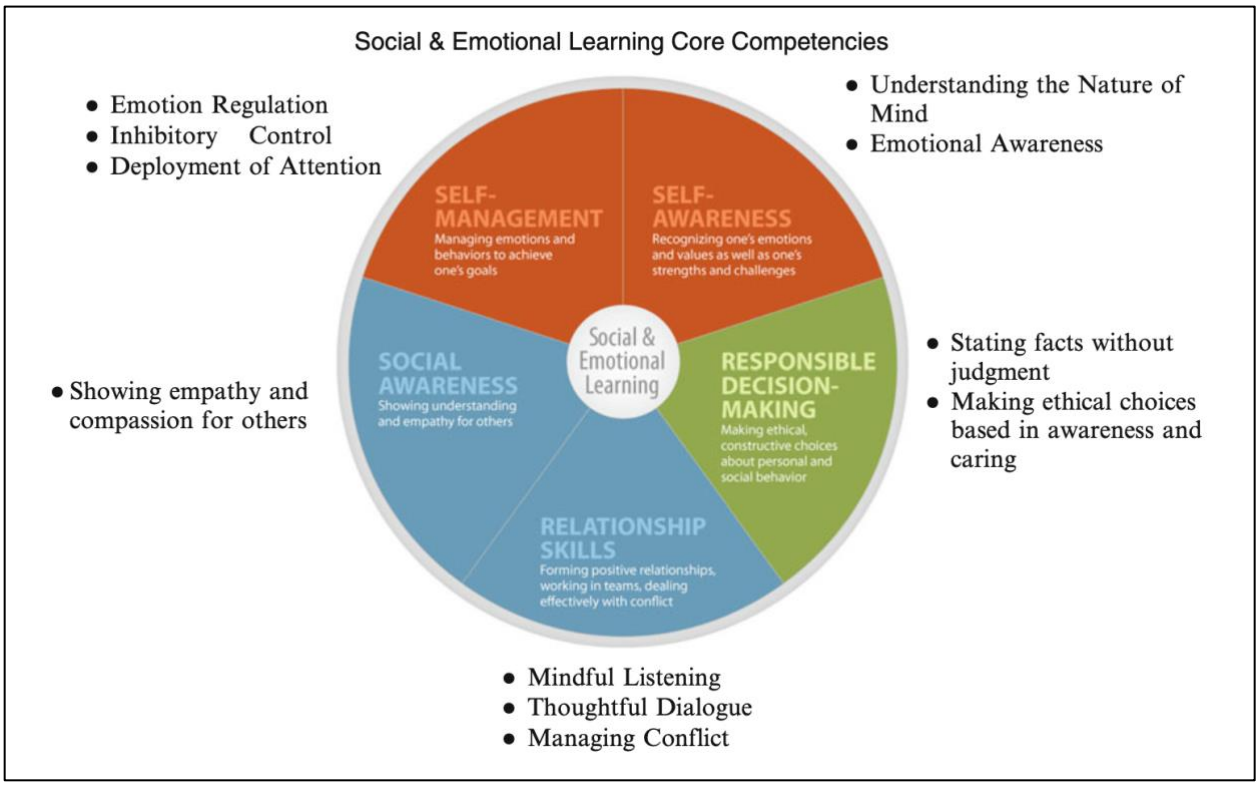
SEL and mindfulness for teacher well-being

The development of social and emotional competencies in teachers is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of educational quality and teacher well-being. These competencies enable educators to cultivate self-awareness, manage stress, build positive relationships, and make thoughtful decisions all of which are essential for effective teaching and learning (CASEL, 2020). Emotionally competent educators create classrooms characterized by safety, trust, and inclusion, which in turn promote stronger student engagement and healthier school cultures (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Research consistently shows that teachers with higher levels of

emotional competence experience greater job satisfaction, lower burnout, and more effective classroom management (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The development of these competencies is strengthened through mindfulness, which supports present-moment awareness and nonjudgmental reflection. Greenberg (2014) conceptualized mindfulness as a mechanism that enhances all five CASEL competencies (Figure 2.2). As shown in the figure, mindfulness deepens self-awareness by improving emotional awareness and understanding of the mind, and supports self-management through emotion regulation, inhibitory control, and focused attention. It also promotes social awareness by cultivating empathy and compassion, strengthens relationship skills through mindful listening and thoughtful dialogue, and improves responsible decision-making by encouraging nonjudgmental observation and ethical, caring choices.

Figure 2.2. Social emotional competencies and mindful awareness. Adapted from Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2013) and Greenberg (2014**)** (as cited in Lawlor, 2016)



Through mindfulness, teachers become more attuned to their inner experiences and better equipped to manage stress, regulate emotions, and respond compassionately to others. Practical classroom strategies such as mindful breathing, reflective journaling, mindful movement such as yoga *asana*, short meditations, and active listening support these skills (Lawlor, 2016). By linking internal awareness with external behavior, mindfulness serves as a bridge that strengthens the transformative potential of SEL for both teachers and students.

Teachers' personal social and emotional competence forms the foundation for effective SEL implementation in classrooms (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Their ability to regulate emotions, manage stress, and build positive relationships directly shapes classroom climate and student behavior. However, before teachers can model these skills for students, they must first internalize them. As Brackett et al. (2010) emphasize, "you cannot give what you do not have," highlighting that authentic and sustained SEL instruction begins with teachers' own emotional development. Educators who cultivate self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation are more likely to integrate SEL practices into their pedagogy and respond to student behaviors with compassion rather than reactivity. For example, a teacher who notices their stress response may choose to pause, breathe, and de-escalate a tense situation, thereby modeling emotional regulation for students. Moreover, teachers' personal experiences with SEL and mindfulness, such as reduced anxiety, improved focus, and stronger relationships, influence how genuinely and effectively they implement these practices in the classroom. When educators experience the benefits firsthand, they are more likely to teach with authenticity, consistency, and care.

A growing body of international research demonstrates that well-designed SEL and mindfulness-based programs can significantly enhance teacher well-being and improve classroom environments. One of the most widely studied initiatives is CARE (Cultivating

Awareness and Resilience in Education), a professional development program that integrates mindfulness, emotion skills training, and compassion practices to help teachers manage stress and cultivate emotional balance (Jennings, et al., 2017). Studies show that CARE participation leads to reductions in burnout and psychological distress, along with improvements in emotional regulation, mindfulness, and classroom interactions (Jennings et al., 2017). Similar programs, such as RULER developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and MindUP created by the Hawn Foundation, emphasize emotional literacy, reflective practice, and mindfulness as core tools for strengthening teacher-student relationships and fostering compassionate, positive classroom climates (Jones et al., 2013; Plate et. al, 2025)).

In the last decade, global evidence has increasingly reinforced the idea that teacher SEL is not a peripheral concern but a central component of educational reform and teacher effectiveness. For instance, the Happiness Curriculum introduced in Delhi, India, in 2018 provides a large-scale example of integrating SEL and mindfulness into the formal education system. Implemented across thousands of public schools, the curriculum focuses on mindfulness exercises, emotional awareness, empathy, and reflective dialogue, aiming to nurture both student and teacher well-being (NIEPA, 2020). Early evaluations suggest that teachers participating in the Happiness Curriculum report greater emotional awareness, patience, and satisfaction in their teaching roles.

Comparable findings have emerged across diverse cultural contexts. Research from the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia shows that educators who engage in SEL training or mindfulness-based interventions demonstrate significant gains in emotional regulation, instructional efficacy, classroom management, and overall job satisfaction (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Jennings et al., 2011; Roeser et al., 2013). These benefits are especially pronounced in

high-stress environments where teachers face systemic challenges, limited resources, and emotional exhaustion. Collectively, such programs underscore the transformative potential of integrating SEL and mindfulness into teacher education and professional development promoting not only individual well-being but also the cultivation of more empathetic, resilient, and effective learning communities.

Measuring social and emotional competencies

As interest in SEL and mindfulness programs for educators has grown, so too has the need to assess their impact through reliable and valid measurement tools. These assessments are essential for understanding how teachers develop and apply social and emotional competencies in their professional practice, how they recognize and regulate emotions, build meaningful relationships, and make ethical, compassionate decisions in their classrooms. Measuring these competencies provides valuable insight into the ways SEL and mindfulness initiatives enhance teacher well-being, instructional effectiveness, and the overall emotional climate of schools (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

A range of psychometric tools has been developed to assess teachers' social and emotional competencies, capturing how educators perceive, regulate, and apply emotions in their professional lives. These standardized instruments rely on self-report data to measure psychological constructs that are not directly observable, such as empathy, mindfulness, or emotional regulation (DeVellis, 2003; Merrell, 2008). Prominent examples include the Teacher Subjective Well-being Questionnaire (Renshaw, Long, & Cook, 2015), which measures professional satisfaction and school connectedness, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), which assesses emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The Five Facet Mindfulness

Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006) evaluates mindfulness across dimensions such as observing, describing, and acting with awareness, while the Social Emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) and Six Seconds Emotional Vital Signs (Six Seconds, 2018) focus on SEL competencies and emotional intelligence within educational contexts. These psychometric instruments have undergone extensive analyses, including tests of reliability, construct validity, and cross-cultural consistency, demonstrating strong applicability across diverse settings. Collectively, they provide a robust and evidence-based means of quantifying teacher well-being, mindfulness, and emotional competence.

While quantitative tools provide structure and comparability, they also have limitations. Self-report data may be influenced by social desirability or may not fully capture how teachers apply emotional competencies in real-life interactions. As a result, researchers emphasize multi-method assessment, integrating surveys or questionnaires with qualitative or observational approaches (Greene, 2007; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Observational frameworks such as the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008) assess how teachers demonstrate emotional sensitivity and responsiveness in the classroom. Other qualitative methods, including interviews, reflective journals, and focus groups, also add depth by revealing teachers' lived experiences and personal growth through SEL and mindfulness practices (Jennings et al., 2017).

Recent studies highlight and emphasize the benefits of combining these approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of teacher competencies. Quantitative data identify measurable trends, such as improved emotional regulation or mindfulness, while qualitative insights reveal how these changes manifest in relationships, pedagogy, and classroom climate (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016). This integrated approach reflects a growing consensus

that social and emotional competencies are not fixed traits but dynamic capacities that evolve through reflection, interaction, and professional experience.

As with other disciplines, there is no single best method for accurately measuring social and emotional competencies. The choice of approach depends largely on the research questions, context, and design. Measuring teachers' social and emotional competences therefore requires a balanced and context-sensitive strategy that captures both measurable outcomes and lived experiences. Psychometric instruments provide reliable and standardized indicators of key emotional skills, while qualitative and observational methods reveal the nuanced ways in which these competencies are expressed and developed in real educational settings. Together, these approaches can offer a more holistic understanding of how educators cultivate emotional awareness, regulation, and resilience through SEL and mindfulness-based interventions.

SEL on the world stage

SEL is increasingly recognized around the world as an essential part of quality education that supports both academic learning and emotional well-being. As societies face growing challenges, including technological change, social inequality, climate crises, COVID -19 pandemic, and armed conflict, there is a greater need to help individuals develop the emotional and interpersonal skills to navigate uncertainty with compassion and resilience. In this context, SEL helps individuals build resilience, empathy, and ethical decision-making, while also promoting peace, cooperation, and understanding within and across communities.

Originating in the United States through the work of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL has since been adapted across diverse cultural and educational contexts worldwide (CASEL, 2020; Weissberg et al., 2015). However, the terminology and frameworks used to describe SEL vary across regions, particularly between the

Global North and South. Researchers have identified multiple overlapping terms—such as *non-cognitive skills*, *21st-century skills*, *character education*, *emotional intelligence*, *peace education*, and *global citizenship education*—that reflect similar underlying competencies (Berg, 2017; Jones, 2016). International organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN) often use the term *life skills*, defined as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO, 1997, p. 1). This concept has been widely adopted in research and practice across regions including the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, reflecting the global relevance of SEL's core principles under different cultural and linguistic frames. This diversity in terminology and conceptualization reflects the varied social, cultural, and educational contexts in which SEL is being implemented. It also underscores the growing global recognition of SEL as a vital element of education that supports both personal development and social cohesion

This diversity in terminology also reveals how SEL is understood and applied differently across regions. In some contexts, SEL is framed around moral development and culturally accepted behaviors, while in others it is shaped by local or religious traditions (Smart & Sinclair, 2022b). Such variation can be beneficial, as it allows SEL to align with existing values and educational practices rather than imposing entirely new frameworks. As Cefai (2020) notes, this adaptability can make SEL more relevant, relatable, and sustainable within diverse cultural settings.

Contextualizing SEL and mindfulness in Pakistan

The integration of SEL and mindfulness within Pakistan's education system remains an emerging but increasingly necessary area of focus. As a country navigating socio-economic disparities, political instability, and the residual effects of colonial legacies, Pakistan's education

system faces challenges that extend far beyond academic instruction. Overcrowded classrooms, underfunded schools, limited teacher training, and weak institutional support have long constrained the holistic development of both teachers and students (UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2021). Within these realities, SEL and mindfulness offer powerful frameworks for fostering resilience, empathy, and self-regulation as qualities that are essential for teaching and learning as well as navigating broader social and emotional challenges.

Historical and policy landscape since 1947

Since independence in 1947, Pakistan's education policies have largely emphasized access, moral development, and national unity over holistic human development. The National Education Policies (NEP) of 1970 and 1979 prioritized Islamic and ideological objectives, while neglecting emotional literacy and psychological well-being. A gradual shift emerged with the NEP 2009, which referenced "character building" and life skills, and the National Curriculum Framework (2017), which introduced goals related to personal development. However, these efforts lacked concrete strategies for embedding SEL into curricula or teacher education. Chronic underinvestment in education—hovering around 2–2.5% of GDP—has further limited implementation (UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2021). Barlas et al. (2021) argue that although policymakers increasingly acknowledge the importance of student well-being, SEL in Pakistan remains marginal, often appearing in rhetoric rather than policy. Most initiatives addressing social and emotional competencies are externally driven by NGOs and donor agencies, rather than nationally institutionalized frameworks.

Structural inequalities

Pakistan's education system is marked by deep structural inequalities that cut across rural-urban, public-private, and socioeconomic lines. These disparities shape not only access to

education but also the depth and quality of social, emotional, and cognitive learning available to both teachers and students. Urban private schools, particularly those catering to higher-income families, typically provide smaller class sizes, better infrastructure, and greater curricular flexibility. Teachers in these settings are more likely to encounter professional development opportunities that include reflective pedagogy or elements of SEL. In contrast, educators in rural public schools often face overcrowded classrooms—sometimes exceeding fifty students per teacher—and limited access to training that extends beyond content delivery or exam preparation.

Support for SEL and teacher well-being is similarly uneven. While some elite urban schools have begun introducing well-being and mindfulness initiatives, often supported by NGOs or private organizations, such programs are largely absent from rural public education. These schools operate within rigid, exam-driven curricula that leave little room for emotional engagement or innovative teaching. Infrastructure limitations—including inadequate classroom space, scarce learning materials, and minimal administrative support—further constrain teachers' ability to create nurturing and emotionally supportive environments.

As Barlas et al. (2021) note, these systemic disparities present significant barriers to the equitable implementation of SEL across Pakistan. Teachers in rural areas, in particular, face multiple pressures: excessive workloads, limited autonomy, and a lack of institutional or emotional support. Without ongoing professional development and access to resources that build emotional literacy, many work in isolation, struggling to meet both academic and socio-emotional demands. Addressing these structural inequities is therefore critical to ensuring that SEL and mindfulness initiatives are inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the diverse realities of Pakistan's educational landscape.

Socio-cultural dimensions

The Gender roles, cultural expectations, and emotional labor intersect in powerful ways to shape teachers' well-being and their capacity to engage with SEL in Pakistan. Female educators, who form a substantial portion of the primary teaching workforce, often shoulder multiple and conflicting responsibilities: maintaining professional competence, adhering to cultural expectations of modesty and deference, and managing extensive domestic and caregiving duties. These intersecting pressures heighten emotional strain, restrict autonomy, and increase the risk of burnout and professional fatigue (Hassan, 2021). The emotional labor required to balance these demands is frequently unacknowledged within institutional structures, leaving teachers to navigate emotional exhaustion in isolation.

Beyond gender, broader socio-cultural norms influence how emotions are perceived, expressed, and managed in educational contexts. In many schools, particularly public and rural ones, emotional expression is discouraged or viewed as a sign of weakness, unprofessionalism, or loss of control. Teachers—especially women—are expected to demonstrate composure, patience, and endurance regardless of personal or professional stress. This cultural suppression of emotional expression stands in tension with SEL's emphasis on self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation. Consequently, teachers may struggle to internalize or model SEL competencies that are perceived as conflicting with local norms of restraint and emotional containment.

For SEL and mindfulness to take root meaningfully in Pakistan, they must be contextualized within indigenous moral, spiritual, and cultural frameworks that already value emotional discipline and reflection. Islamic and South Asian philosophical traditions provide rich resources for this adaptation. Concepts such as *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in

God), *ihsan* (doing good with sincerity), and *muhasaba* (self-accountability) align closely with SEL competencies like self-management, empathy, and responsible decision-making. When framed through these familiar idioms, SEL and mindfulness practices—such as breathwork, journaling, or reflective dialogue—can be seen not as Western imports but as extensions of deeply rooted ethical traditions.

This cultural alignment is particularly significant for female teachers, who often draw strength and identity from spiritual and communal sources. Integrating SEL with these local values can validate their experiences of emotional labor while providing tools for self-care and resilience. Moreover, it opens space for reimagining teacher well-being not merely as an individual pursuit but as a collective, relational, and spiritual practice—one that honors Pakistan's social fabric while addressing the emotional realities of teaching.

Emerging practices and programs

Despite systemic barriers, recent years have seen growing efforts to integrate SEL into Pakistan's education system. Organizations such as Teach for Pakistan, The Citizens Foundation (TCF), and Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) have introduced reflective pedagogy, empathy training, and mindfulness-based classroom practices that promote relationship-building and student well-being. Similarly, Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE) programs implemented with UNFPA have incorporated decision-making, communication, and empathy into secondary education (Barlas et al., 2021).

Notable research by Inam, Tariq, and Zaman (2015) adapted the PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) curriculum for Pakistani children, demonstrating how emotional literacy and problem-solving can be effectively taught when aligned with local language and

cultural values. The study highlighted that culturally grounded SEL programs can meaningfully enhance students' social awareness and emotional regulation.

A more recent initiative, The Happiness Project, developed by Project Everyone in partnership with Wall's Ice Cream, has extended SEL to a global scale, including Pakistan**,** Türkiye, Indonesia, China, Sweden, and Germany. Targeting children aged 6–12, it emphasizes creativity, connection, movement, kindness, and gratitude (The Happiness Project, 2023). The pilot in Pakistan, involving 5,000 students and 50 teachers, showed significant improvements in students' self-awareness, peer relationships, problem-solving, and well-being, alongside healthier lifestyle habits.

However, as Barlas et al. (2021) caution, most initiatives remain fragmented, externally funded, and student-focused, with limited attention to teacher SEL. Sustainable progress will require shifting toward educator-centered approaches that strengthen teachers' emotional resilience and mindfulness as they are foundations essential for modeling SEL and fostering compassionate, thriving classrooms.

Implications for policy and practice

The literature points to a clear conclusion: SEL and mindfulness must be contextualized, not merely imported, into Pakistan's education system (Barlas et al., 2021). Culturally responsive models should draw upon local values, religious teachings, and linguistic idioms while addressing systemic inequities and teacher well-being. Policy reform should begin with integrating SEL into teacher education programs, professional development frameworks, and school leadership training. Creating supportive environments that prioritize emotional health—through reflective supervision, peer learning communities, and school-wide well-being policies—can enable teachers to embody the competencies they seek to instill. Long-term

sustainability will require embedding SEL within national curriculum standards, teacher evaluation systems, and educational funding priorities.

When thoughtfully localized, SEL and mindfulness hold transformative potential for Pakistan's educators. They can help shift classroom culture from compliance to compassion, from rote instruction to reflective practice, and from emotional fatigue to resilience. In doing so, these approaches offer not only a framework for teacher and student well-being but also a foundation for social cohesion, empathy, and peacebuilding in a society navigating profound educational and cultural change.

Gaps in Literature

While global research on SEL and mindfulness has grown substantially over the past two decades, significant gaps remain in understanding their implementation and impact within diverse cultural and systemic contexts. Most existing studies originate from high-income countries, particularly the United States, where SEL frameworks such as CASEL were first conceptualized. As a result, much of the current evidence base reflects Western assumptions about emotional expression, classroom dynamics, and teacher-student relationships. There is limited research exploring how SEL and mindfulness translate across different cultural, linguistic, and religious settings—particularly in the Global South, where social norms, pedagogical practices, and institutional capacities differ markedly (Cefai, 2020; Smart & Sinclair, 2022b).

Empirical studies examining teachers' own social and emotional competencies also remain comparatively scarce. While numerous programs target students, far fewer focus on developing the emotional awareness, resilience, and mindfulness of educators themselves. Research often emphasizes student outcomes without fully investigating how teacher well-being

mediates these effects. Moreover, the majority of existing interventions are short-term or externally funded, limiting insight into long-term sustainability and institutional integration of SEL practices within school systems (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Barlas et al., 2021).

Methodologically, the field is dominated by quantitative psychometric assessments that rely on self-reported measures of emotional competence and well-being. Although these instruments, such as the FFMQ, TSWQ, and SECTRS, offer reliability and comparability, they often fail to capture the contextual and experiential dimensions of teachers' emotional lives. Qualitative and mixed-method approaches, which could illuminate how teachers experience and apply SEL principles in real-world settings, remain underutilized. There is also limited evidence on how mindfulness-based professional learning specifically supports teacher well-being and classroom relational dynamics in non-Western contexts.

In Pakistan, research on SEL and mindfulness is especially limited. Existing efforts are fragmented, primarily student-centered, and heavily donor dependent. Few studies have examined SEL from the perspective of teacher well-being, nor have they explored how educators conceptualize and embody SEL within local cultural and religious frameworks. Despite promising pilots such as PATHS (Inam et al., 2015), LSBE, and The Happiness Project, there remains little systematic evaluation of their long-term impact or scalability. Furthermore, the influence of gender, structural inequities, and cultural norms on teachers' emotional labor and professional resilience remains an under-researched area.

The literature reveals a clear need for contextually grounded, teacher-centered research on SEL and mindfulness. In response, this dissertation develops a theoretically informed, context-sensitive framework for understanding educator well-being through the integration of SEL, mindfulness, and movement. Focusing on Pakistani teachers, it examines

how educators experience and internalize emotional learning practices within their professional and personal lives. By centering teachers' voices, the study aims to show how SEL and mindfulness can be culturally adapted to promote sustainable well-being, effective pedagogy, and educational reform in Pakistan and similar contexts

Conceptual frameworks

A conceptual framework provides the structural foundation of a research study by illustrating how theoretical perspectives, key concepts, and empirical evidence interconnect to guide inquiry. It serves as a bridge between theory and practice, clarifying what is being studied, why it matters, and how different components relate to one another. In doing so, it helps the researcher make sense of complex social phenomena and provides a coherent structure for data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Ravitch & Riggan, 2017).

While the theoretical framework of this study was grounded in the principles of social and emotional learning and mindfulness, the conceptual framework integrates these with adult learning theories (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015), ecological models of human development and behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Sallis & Fisher, 1985), and the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) to understand how teachers develop and sustain SEL and mindfulness practices in real-world contexts.

Dewey and Adult learning theories

Adult learning theories provide a useful foundation for understanding how educators acquire, internalize, and apply new knowledge. Building on John Dewey's (1938) philosophy of learning through experience, these theories emphasize that education is not a passive transfer of information, but an active and reflective process rooted in real-life engagement. Dewey

argued that learning occurs through the interaction of experience and reflection, enabling individuals to reconstruct understanding in ways that inform future action—a principle that continues to underpin modern theories of adult learning.

Knowles's (1980) theory of andragogy similarly views adults as self-directed and experience-based learners who engage most deeply when learning is relevant, problem-centered, and connected to authentic contexts (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). In professional development, this means designing learning opportunities that resonate with teachers' lived experiences and classroom realities. Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory builds on Dewey's ideas by framing learning as a cyclical process of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation—allowing educators to test new strategies, evaluate outcomes, and refine practice.

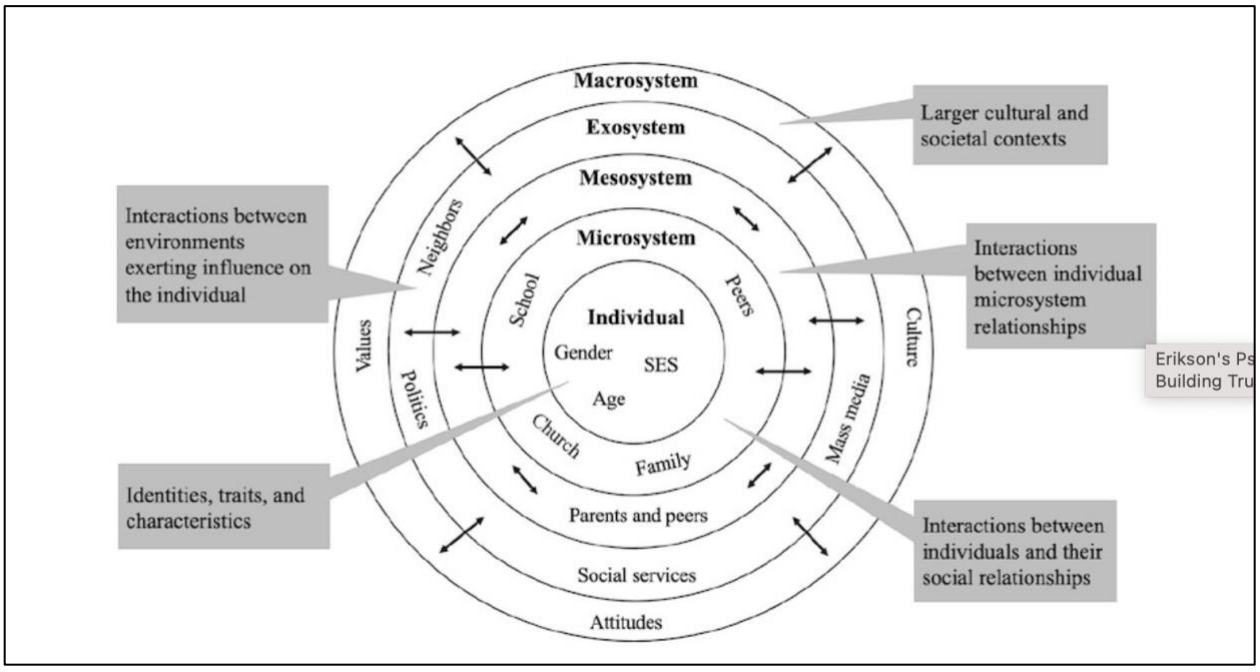
Extending this lineage, Mezirow's (1997) Transformative Learning Theory emphasizes critical reflection as a catalyst for personal and professional growth. By examining and reinterpreting their assumptions, adult learners develop deeper self-awareness, empathy, and adaptability. These outcomes closely align with the aims of SEL and mindfulness, both of which foster reflective awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience in educators.

Together, these perspectives highlight that adult learning is not merely about acquiring skills but about integrating experience, reflection, and emotional insight. Grounded in Deweyan principles, this study views SEL and mindfulness as experiential and transformative processes that enable teachers to connect inner awareness with outer practice—nurturing the reflective, compassionate, and resilient dispositions essential for educator well-being.

Ecological Models of human development and behavior

Recognizing that teacher well-being and professional development are shaped by multiple layers of influence, this study draws on ecological models of human development and behavior to contextualize teachers' experiences within broader systems. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model provides a foundational framework for understanding how human development occurs within nested environmental systems that interact dynamically over time (Figure 2.3). These include the microsystem (immediate contexts such as classrooms and schools), mesosystem (interactions between these settings), exosystem (institutional structures such as leadership and policy), and macrosystem (societal and cultural norms). The model emphasizes that individual growth is deeply influenced by the social, institutional, and cultural environments in which individuals are embedded.

Figure 2.3. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model

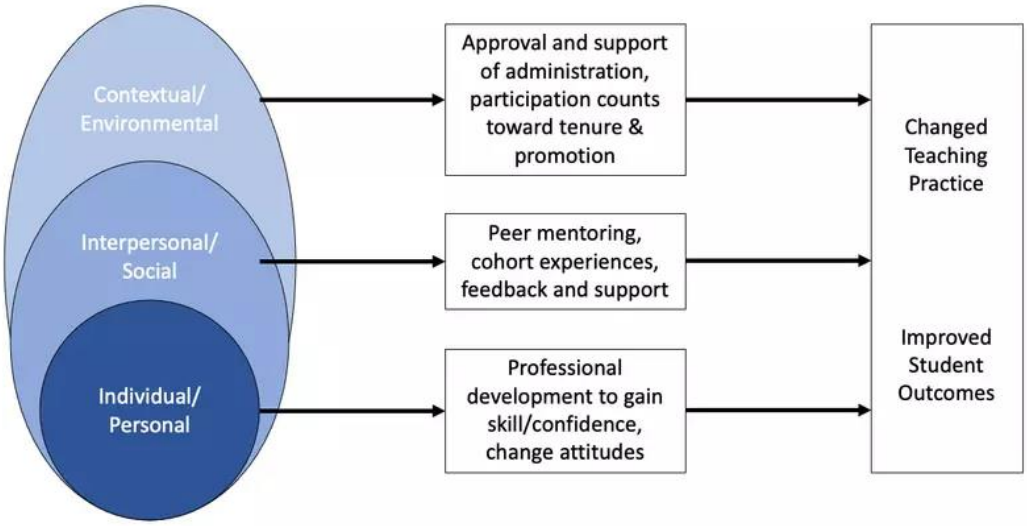


In the Pakistani educational context, Bronfenbrenner's framework is particularly salient. Teachers in rural schools navigate complex social ecologies shaped by gendered expectations,

hierarchical school structures, systemic inequities, and resource constraints (Barlas et al., 2021). These contextual factors affect not only how teachers engage with professional learning but also their capacity to sustain well-being and implement practices like SEL and mindfulness.

Complementing Bronfenbrenner's perspective is the ecological model of behavior proposed by Sallis, Owen, and Fisher (2008), which identifies five interconnected levels that influence human behavior: intrapersonal (knowledge, attitudes, skills), interpersonal (social support and relationships), organizational (institutional policies and climate), community, and policy (Figure 2.4). This model emphasizes that behavioral change, such as the adoption of SEL and mindfulness practices, cannot be achieved solely through individual effort. Instead, it requires supportive social networks, organizational structures, and enabling policy environments.

Figure 2.4. Sallis, Owen and Fisher's ecological model of behavior change



Caption: Individuals exist within social and contextual environments. Project activities can target multiple levels of the system to achieve the desired outcomes.

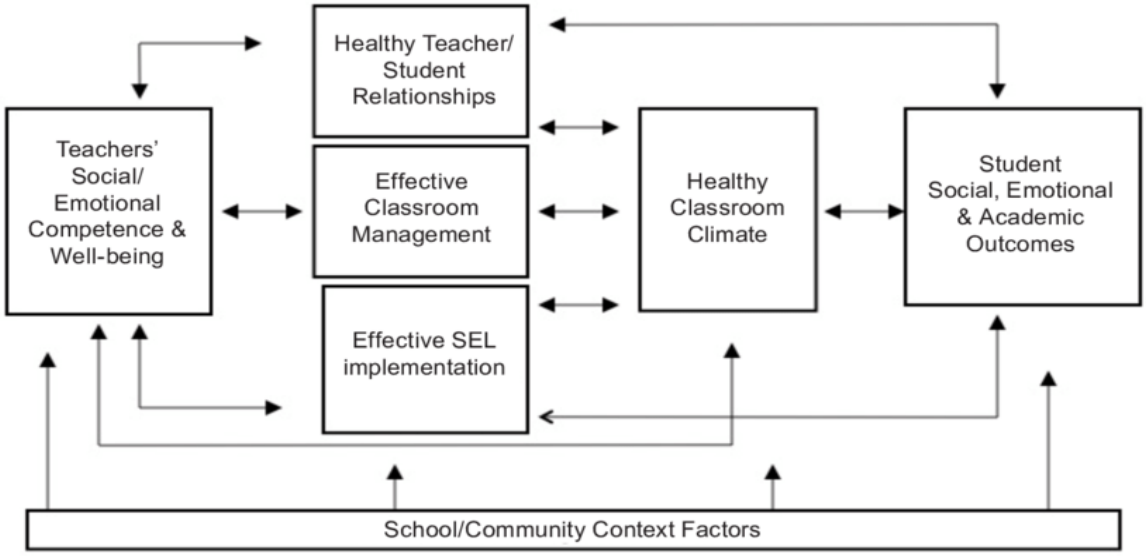
Together, these ecological perspectives provide a comprehensive lens for analyzing how personal, relational, and systemic factors interact to shape teachers' professional and emotional growth. They acknowledge that a teacher's ability to practice mindfulness, regulate emotions, or

integrate SEL strategies is influenced not only by individual motivation but also by the broader institutional culture, leadership support, workload, and prevailing socio-cultural norms. By applying these models, the study situates teacher well-being within the interconnected systems that either facilitate or constrain sustainable change, thereby linking individual development to organizational and societal transformation.

The Prosocial Classroom Model

The Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) provides an essential framework for understanding the interconnection between teacher well-being, social and emotional competence, and classroom climate. This model posits that teachers' emotional awareness, regulation, and social competence directly influence the quality of their relationships with students, the emotional tone of the classroom, and ultimately, students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Figure 2.5). In this view, the teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but a regulator of the classroom's emotional ecosystem, shaping how safety, empathy, and engagement are experienced by learners.

Figure 2.5. The Prosocial Classroom Model



According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), teachers with strong social and emotional competence (SEC) are better able to manage the daily stressors of teaching, model calm and empathy, and respond to students' needs with sensitivity and consistency. Conversely, teachers experiencing high levels of stress, burnout, or emotional dysregulation are more likely to create classrooms characterized by conflict, disengagement, and emotional instability. The model therefore emphasizes a reciprocal process: a teacher's internal state affects classroom interactions, which in turn influence student behavior and feedback loops that either reinforce or alleviate teacher stress.

Subsequent research has expanded the model to highlight how mindfulness and SEL-based professional developmentcan serve as protective factors that enhance teacher well-being and instructional effectiveness (Greenberg et al., 2016; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Mindfulness, in particular, strengthens teachers' capacity for emotional regulation, attention, and compassion, which supports both personal resilience and prosocial classroom relationships (Roeser et al., 2013). Within this framework, cultivating teacher well-being is not a peripheral goal but a core component of effective education, as emotionally balanced and reflective teachers are more capable of fostering equitable, inclusive, and nurturing learning environments.

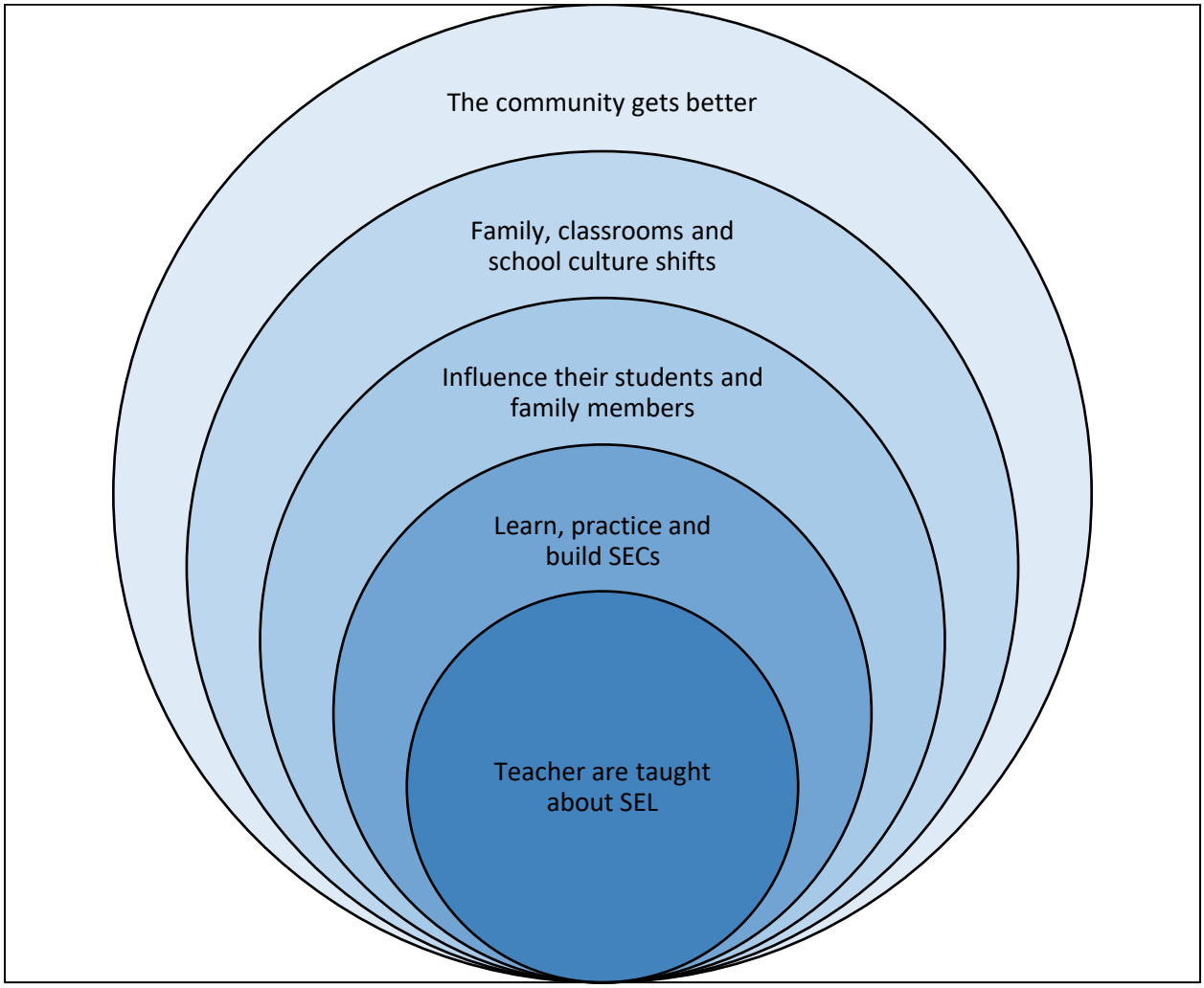
By incorporating the Prosocial Classroom Model into this study's conceptual framework, teacher well-being is positioned as both an individual outcome and a systemic influence that shapes the broader school climate. This perspective aligns closely with ecological and adult learning theories, emphasizing that teacher growth occurs within interdependent systems and through continuous reflection, emotional skill-building, and relational engagement.

Hypothesized Theory of Change

This study integrates multiple frameworks to explain how teachers learn, apply, and sustain SEL and mindfulness within their professional and cultural contexts. Drawing on complementary perspectives, it examines the processes, environments, and outcomes that shape teacher growth and well-being. Adult learning theories (Knowles, 1980; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1997) describe how teachers internalize SEL and mindfulness through experience, reflection, and self-directed practice. Ecological models of behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Sallis, Owen, & Fisher, 2008) situate this learning within interconnected systems, identifying the contextual and structural factors that influence its sustainability. The Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) highlights the broader significance of this process by demonstrating how teacher well-being directly shapes classroom climate and student learning outcomes.

Together, these frameworks offer a holistic lens for understanding the dynamic, reciprocal nature of teachers' SEL and mindfulness development. They suggest that when teachers are supported to cultivate self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassion, the impact extends beyond individual transformation enhancing classroom relationships, strengthening school culture, and contributing to systemic educational well-being. Building on these insights, the study proposes a theory of change (Figure 2.6) that envisions a developmental pathway from personal growth to collective and institutional transformation.

Figure 2.6. Hypothesized theory of change



This theory of change illustrates how teacher-focused SEL and mindfulness training can spark meaningful, multi-level transformation. The model begins with teachers learning about SEL, then practicing and building their own social and emotional competencies. As teachers develop these skills, they become better equipped to influence their students and family members through improved relationships, emotional modeling, and mindful interactions. Over time, these individual shifts contribute to positive changes in classroom dynamics, family interactions, and school culture. As these effects accumulate across multiple teachers and settings, the broader community begins to benefit through strengthened relationships, increased empathy, and a more

supportive social environment. The figure highlights how teacher growth serves as the foundation for wider, systemic change, expanding outward from the individual to the school and eventually to the community.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive review of the literature on SEL and mindfulness, emphasizing their significance for both students and educators. The review revealed a clear gap in existing research, particularly within the Global South, where few studies have explored teachers' perceptions, understanding, and implementation of SEL. This study seeks to address that gap and contribute to the growing body of scholarship by examining how SEL and mindfulness can enhance teacher well-being and professional practice in low-resource educational contexts such as Pakistan.

The literature underscores the critical role of teacher well-being in shaping classroom environments and student outcomes. It highlights how SEL and mindfulness not only foster emotional regulation and resilience among educators but also strengthen relationships and instructional quality. Despite these benefits, SEL remains under-implemented in many developing contexts due to structural inequalities, limited training opportunities, and systemic barriers. Addressing these challenges is essential for creating supportive and sustainable educational ecosystems that nurture both teacher and student growth.

The chapter also introduced the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide this study. Grounded in the CASEL framework and the principles of mindfulness, the study draws on Dewey's and adult learning theories, ecological models (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Sallis, Owen, & Fisher, 2008), and the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) to understand how teachers develop and sustain SEL and mindfulness practices within their

professional and cultural contexts. Together, these frameworks inform a relational and collectivist-oriented theory of change, proposing that when teachers are supported to cultivate self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassion, the effects extend beyond individual transformation to systemic educational improvement.

Chapter 3 will outline the research methodology and methods employed in this study, demonstrating how these theoretical and conceptual foundations guided the design, data collection, and analysis processes.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction and overview

The purpose of this case study was to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions of their well-being following an SEL and mindfulness-based training, and to examine how they integrated these practices into their personal and professional lives. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the study was conducted across one academic year (September 2024 – May 2025) in two phases (Figure 3.1). The first phase involved an SEL, mindfulness and movement-based training, followed by monthly coaching sessions. The second phase focused on systematic data collection and qualitative analysis, which were carried out simultaneously to capture teachers' evolving experiences throughout the study. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways, if any, does training in SEL, mindfulness, and movement impact teachers' self-perceptions of their well-being?
2. a) In what ways, if any, do elementary Pakistani teachers incorporate the SEL-based professional development into their personal lives?

   b) If not, what challenges do they face?
3. a) In what ways, if any, do elementary Pakistani teachers incorporate the SEL-based professional development into their classrooms?

   b) If not, what challenges do they face?
4. In teachers' perceptions, what forms of support are needed to incorporate and sustain SEL and mindfulness practices in the classroom?

This chapter presents and justifies the methodological approach used to address the research questions. It begins by introducing the research context, situated at Chand Bagh Day

School (CBDS) in Muridke, Pakistan, and by describing the process of participant selection. It then outlines the chosen qualitative research design - an intervention case study - and explains why this approach is most appropriate for capturing the complexities of participant teachers' lived experiences.

The chapter further details the data collection methods, which included pre- and post-questionnaires, semi-structured initial and closing interviews, and monthly written reflections of the participant teachers. Each method is discussed in relation to its role in addressing the research questions. Finally, the chapter concludes with a rationale for how the selected design, data collection strategies, and conceptual framework align to effectively explore teachers' perceptions, ensuring that the study's aims are thoroughly and rigorously addressed within the chosen context.

Methodology

To examine teachers' perceptions and implementations of SEL and mindfulness in both their personal lives and classrooms, this study distinguishes between methodology and methods, following Grbich's (2007) definitions. The methodology, framed as a qualitative intervention case study, reflects the guiding principles of the research approach. This design enabled an in-depth exploration of the participant teachers' lived experiences while examining how the training shaped their well-being and practice over time. The methods, by contrast, refer to the specific strategies used to collect data. These included pre- and post-training questionnaires, individual semi-structured initial and closing interviews, and monthly teacher reflections. Collectively, these methods provided multiple entry points for understanding how teachers experienced and applied SEL and mindfulness in their personal and professional lives.

Qualitative inquiry

Qualitative research is a form of inquiry that seeks to "make sense" of the world by exploring meaning, context, and experience (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). Unlike quantitative approaches that rely on numerical data, qualitative research emphasizes the "complex, holistic picture" of human experience (Yin, 2018). It involves engaging with participants in their natural settings, paying attention to their "detailed views" and lived realities (Stake, 1995). Through this process, researchers aim to construct a deep, nuanced understanding of phenomena rather than reduce them to variables or measurements.

A key distinction between qualitative and quantitative research lies in their aims and outcomes. Whereas quantitative research seeks to test hypotheses and produce generalizable findings, qualitative research prioritizes depth over breadth. It involves "rigorous and thorough data collection and analysis" to identify themes and patterns (Creswell, 2007, p. 117). Rather than striving for universal claims, qualitative inquiry emphasizes transferability allowing research users to assess the applicability of findings to their own contexts (Yin, 2018). This constructivist orientation acknowledges multiple perspectives and meanings, highlighting the richness of individual and collective experience (Stake, 1995).

For this study, a qualitative approach was chosen because it aligns with the research aim of understanding teachers' perceptions of SEL and mindfulness training and how these practices are integrated into their personal and professional lives. Quantitative measures alone could not capture the depth of these teachers' lived experiences, the challenges they encountered, or the contextual factors shaping their experience. A qualitative case study, however, provided the flexibility to gather rich, layered data and the interpretive tools needed to explore meaning,

growth, and complexity within the specific cultural and educational setting of semi-urban Pakistan.

Case study

A case study is a qualitative research approach that involves a detailed investigation into a specific situation with an emphasis on understanding the qualitative aspects of human behavior (Stake, 1995). Louis Smith, a pioneering educational ethnographer, described a case as a "bounded system" comprising interconnected parts of a "specific, complex, functioning thing" (Stake, 1995, p. 2). Rather than simplifying findings, case studies aim to uncover the complexities, nuances, and tensions within systems. By focusing on these intricate, non-linear relationships, case study research enables a deeper grasp of human experience situated in context.

Case studies hold several special characteristics that distinguish them from other research designs. They privilege understanding over generalization. As Stake (1995) noted, "case study seems a poor basis for generalizations" (p. 7). Instead, the emphasis is placed on the uniqueness of the case and the meanings participants construct, with findings understood in terms of transferability rather than universal applicability. Case studies also require multiple data sources, such as interviews, observations, surveys, questionnaires or artifacts, which allow for triangulation and strengthens the trustworthiness of findings (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2018). Furthermore, case studies acknowledge the interpretive role of the researcher, who may act as teacher, advocate, evaluator, or constructivist, but whose aim is to understand participants empathetically without disrupting their lived realities (Stake, 1995).

This methodology was particularly suitable for the present research because the aim was to explore how a group of elementary school teachers in Pakistan experienced and implemented

SEL and mindfulness training. By conceptualizing the case as a community of teachers (a single case) rather than multiple individual cases, the study emphasizes the interconnectedness between individual identities and collective growth within a shared professional learning context (Stake, 1995). This framing highlights both the distinct voices of teachers and their collective experience as members of a collaborative community of practice.

Like all case studies, this research is bounded by specific parameters that define what is included and excluded. The bounds for this study included: time, limited to one academic year during which the training, coaching, and data collection occurred; place, situated within CBDS in Muridke, Pakistan; participants, elementary school teachers with at least two years of teaching experience who received the SEL and mindfulness training; focus, centered on the impact of SEL and mindfulness training on teachers' well-being, personal lives, and classroom practices; and data sources, which consisted of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and monthly reflections. Defining these boundaries ensured clarity in scope and facilitated the collection and analysis of rich, layered data for this study.

Research design

The research design serves as the blueprint for this study, outlining the approach, guiding frameworks, and procedures used to address the research questions. This study employed a qualitative intervention case study design to explore how an academic year-long SEL and mindfulness training shaped teachers' well-being and professional practices. Informed by the CASEL framework (CASEL, 2020), adult learning theories (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012), Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (2006) and The Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), the design was well-suited to examine how individual growth of teachers intersects with their classroom practices and possibly the broader school environment.

The interpretive lens allowed for a nuanced understanding of the participant teachers' lived experiences, emphasizing both personal meaning-making and the collective dynamics of a professional learning community.

The following sections describe the research design in greater detail, including the setting, research plans, recruitment process, and participant sample. It also includes an explanation of the data collection methods, strategies for data analysis, and ethical considerations that shaped the conduct of the study. Together, these components provide a coherent framework for examining the impact of SEL and mindfulness training on teachers' personal well-being and professional practices.

Research setting

This study was conducted at Chand Bagh Day School (CBDS), a private co-educational institution located in the suburban outskirts of Muridke, in the Sheikhupura District of Punjab, Pakistan. Established in 1998 by the Chand Bagh Foundation, the school is known for its emphasis on academic excellence, character development, and the integration of co-curricular activities and technology into its educational practices (n.d).

While the school fosters a supportive institutional culture, it operates within a national educational context where teachers often face significant challenges. These included heavy workloads, limited financial compensation, and a lack of structured support for emotional and mental well-being. Although SEL was not formally included in the school's annual professional development programs, many of its core values such as compassion, emotional regulation, self-reflection, and community orientation align closely with local cultural norms and religious teachings. This cultural alignment provided a meaningful entry point for introducing SEL and mindfulness in ways that were contextually relevant and respectful.

My prior professional engagement with the school as a teacher trainer contributed to a strong understanding of its internal dynamics, further supporting the design and implementation of the study. This setting offered a valuable context to examine how SEL and mindfulness-based professional development could impact teachers' perceptions of well-being, influence their classroom practices, and reveal the types of support needed to sustain such initiatives over time.

Research plan

The research plan was structured into two phases with sequential stages that provided a clear roadmap for the academic year-long study, ensuring coherence between the research aims, methodological approach, and data collection strategies (Table 3.1). It began with an in-depth review of the literature, which informed and refined the research questions. This was followed by the design of the SEL and mindfulness training, as well as the development of questionnaires and interview protocols to be implemented once the intervention began. Prior to the training and data collection, an IRB approval was obtained.

The intervention formally began with a pre-questionnaire, followed by two-day teacher training workshop and monthly coaching sessions. Individual interviews and monthly reflections supported ongoing implementation and generated multiple sources of data. Toward the end of the study, final interviews were conducted to capture participants' final reflections on the overall experience. The process concluded with a comprehensive thematic analysis of all data using NVivo which eventually generated the key findings related to the research questions.

This staged approach offered both structure and flexibility, enabling systematic data collection while accommodating participants' needs. It was particularly well-suited for capturing both the immediate and sustained impacts of SEL and mindfulness training on teachers' well-being and professional practice.

Table 3.1. Research plan

Phase	Stage	Activity	Details
1	0	Literature Review + Research Questions	Conducted an in-depth literature review and refined research questions. This process was ongoing throughout the study.
	1	Training Design + Initial Preparation	Designed the SEL and mindfulness training; conducted baseline interviews and questionnaires; obtained IRB approval.
	2	Intervention Launch	Facilitated a 2-day teacher training workshop; conducted individual interviews and collected initial questionnaires.
2	3	Ongoing Implementation + Data Collection	Held monthly coaching sessions (adapted to participant needs); began initial data analysis and theme generation.
	4	Closing Phase	Conducted final interviews; continued analysis and refined emerging codes and themes.
	5	Final Analysis + Write-Up	Completed comprehensive analysis and wrote the final research findings and interpretations.

Intervention

2-day initial training

After obtaining IRB approval, a two-day training on SEL and mindfulness was conducted for the entire teaching staff at CBDS. The training was designed to ensure that all members of the school community, including administrators, teachers, and support staff, were introduced to the core principles of SEL and the objectives of the research. By involving everyone, the training

fostered meaningful dialogue and collaboration among staff, promoting a shared commitment to enhancing both teacher and student well-being.

The training content was informed by several established frameworks and professional learning experiences undertaken by the researcher, including the CASEL framework, the *Breathe for Change* (B4C) curriculum, the Six Seconds model of emotional intelligence, and professional development resources from Antioch University. Together, these influences shaped the pedagogical approach and overall vision of the study.

On the first day, teachers were introduced to the foundational concepts of SEL and mindfulness. The session began with a pre-training questionnaire to assess participants' baseline understanding, followed by a two-hour workshop on the purpose and significance of SEL, supported by brief research evidence on its impact. Teachers engaged in interactive activities, small group discussions, and personal reflections to bridge theory and practice. The day concluded with a short reflection survey designed to gather feedback on the session's effectiveness and identify areas of interest for further learning.

The second day built on these concepts by introducing mindful movement practices and exploring how such practices can support the development of social and emotional competencies. Activities such as breathwork, gentle stretches, twists, folds, and a short sun salutation were adapted into chair-based formats to make them accessible and practical within the school environment. The term *mindful movement* was intentionally used instead of *yoga* to honor the broader philosophical and spiritual dimensions of yoga practice and to avoid reducing it to physical postures alone. The session concluded with the distribution of consent forms to teachers who wished to participate in the study.

A comprehensive training manual was also shared with all participant teachers (see Appendix H). The manual included the content covered during the training, literature on SEL and mindfulness and their role in supporting teacher well-being, and a set of practical strategies with clear descriptions, purposes, and reflective questions. To support ongoing learning, the manual also included blank pages for teachers to use for personal reflections during discussions or as part of their own mindfulness and SEL practice.

At the end of both days, feedback was collected from the teachers through reflection surveys and written comments. These responses were analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the sessions and to identify areas where teachers desired additional support. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the key components, activities, and feedback mechanisms from the two-day training

Table 3.2. 2-day SEL and mindfulness training.

	Focus area	Activities and content	Assessment and feedback
Day 1	Introduction to SEL and mindfulness	Pre-training questionnaire to assess baseline understanding of SEL Overview of SEL and mindfulness concepts Interactive activities and group discussion	- Reflection survey to evaluate session effectiveness - Feedback collected to inform future planning
Day 2	Mindful movement and applied practice	Continuation of SEL/mindfulness concepts Introduction of mindful movement (adapted chair	Consent form distributed for participation in the research - Participant reflections

		yoga) Breathwork, stretches, and energizing sun salutation	gathered to assess facilitation and identify support needs

Monthly coaching

Professional learning does not end with a single workshop; it requires continuity and sustained support to translate new knowledge into effective practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). With this understanding, monthly coaching sessions were integrated into the research design to reinforce and extend the implementation of SEL and mindfulness practices. These sessions were intended not merely as follow-up meetings but as an evolving, dialogic learning space where teachers could integrate concepts, reflect on their experiences, and co-construct strategies for applying SEL and mindfulness in their specific contexts.

Each monthly session functioned as a community of practice, providing space for teachers to revisit key ideas from the initial training, share successes and challenges, and collaboratively generate contextually relevant solutions. The coaching format was semi-structured, balancing pre-planned prompts with organically emerging discussions so that sessions remained responsive to participants' evolving needs. The sessions combined guided reflection, experiential practice, collaborative dialogue, and structured activities to deepen both personal and professional application of SEL and mindfulness.

Prior to each coaching session, teachers completed a monthly reflection using Google Forms (see Appendix G). These reflections, often detailing emotional experiences, classroom challenges, and successes with specific practices, served as a foundational planning tool for the upcoming session. They also supported teachers' metacognitive growth by helping them observe

shifts in their emotional regulation, classroom practices, and self-awareness over time. Importantly, this pre-session feedback enabled the researcher to tailor each session's discussions, activities, and examples to participants' evolving needs, ensuring that the coaching process remained intentionally responsive and contextually grounded.

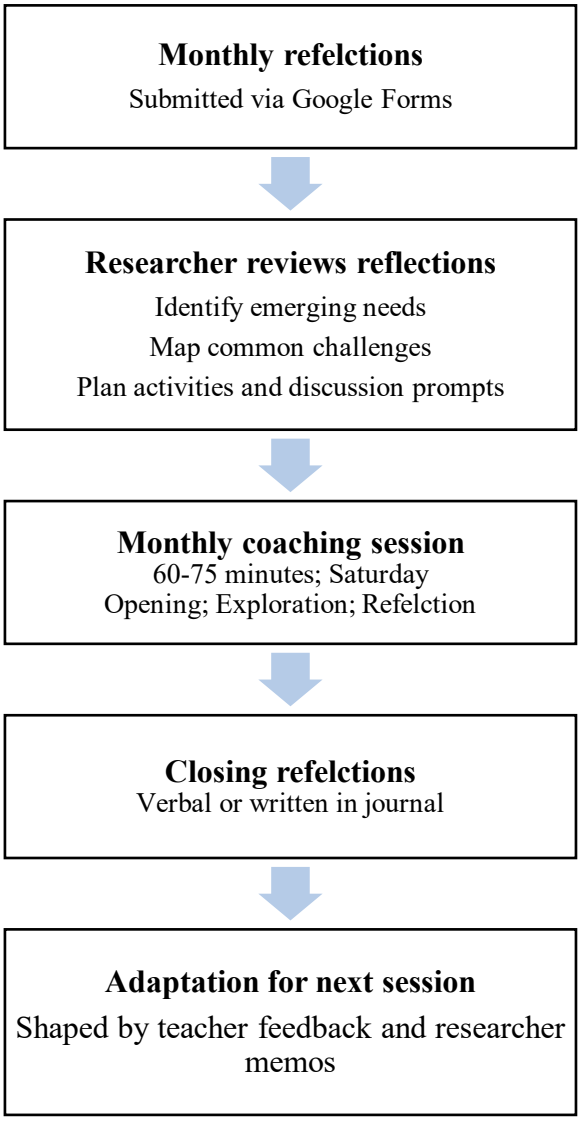
Coaching occurred on the first Saturday of each month, a staff workday without students present. This ensured teachers were not removed from instructional time. For those unavailable on the scheduled day, the session was shifted to the preceding or following Saturday to maintain continuity.

Each session lasted approximately 60–75 minutes and followed a three-part structure: Opening check-in and grounding; guided exploration and discussion and closing reflections. Sessions began with a brief grounding practice, such as breathwork, emotional check-ins, or gentle chair-based movement, to help participants settle into mindful awareness (see Appendix H). These openings modeled practices teachers could later integrate into their classrooms and established an emotionally attuned learning environment. The central segment of each session focused on the month's theme (see Table 3.3). A short activity reinforced prior learning or introduced new strategies to support emotional regulation, relationship-building, or classroom routines. This was followed by open dialogue in which teachers reflected on real classroom experiences, raised concerns, and co-developed practical adaptations. For example, in January 2025, teachers explored the *Wheel of Life*, a tool that helped them map areas of personal well-being and set actionable goals for the new year. In December 2024, teachers practiced Non-Violent Communication (NVC), adapted from Rosenberg (1999), with scenarios drawn directly from their classrooms or staffroom interactions. They collaboratively re-scripted responses, later reporting that these strategies improved interactions with both students and colleagues. Teachers'

concerns about crowded classrooms and limited time informed the inclusion of modified chair-based movement practices in multiple sessions, demonstrating how movement and grounding could be integrated even in restrictive environments.

Sessions concluded with reflective prompts such as *"What resonated with you today?"* or *"What is one mindful or emotional-awareness practice you will try before we meet again?"* Participants recorded reflections in their own journals or shared them verbally. These reflections informed the researcher's analytic memos and contributed to the interpretive depth of the study. Such active involvement of teachers in shaping each month's session was a defining feature of the monthly coaching sessions. Feedback from both written reflections and verbal discussions directly informed session design, ensuring that coaching remained adaptive, culturally responsive, and participant-led. After the November gratitude session, for example, teachers requested additional classroom-ready mindfulness tools that could be used during transitions. In response, the December session incorporated brief, one-minute grounding practices and techniques for student self-calming. Similarly, in anticipation of Ramadan, teachers expressed a desire for spiritually aligned practices. The March session then integrated mindfulness and kindness reflections rooted in Ramadan traditions of compassion and self-awareness. This cyclical, feedback-driven process ensured that the coaching model honored teachers' expertise, grounded learning in lived experience, and supported meaningful application of SEL and mindfulness. Figure 3.1 summarizes the cyclical structure of the monthly coaching sessions.

Figure 3.1. Monthly coaching cycle



Monthly themes were intentionally aligned with cultural, seasonal, and religious rhythms to strengthen relevance and resonance. Gratitude in November connected with Thanksgiving; goal setting in January aligned with the New Year; and mindfulness and kindness in March corresponded with Ramadan. Teachers consistently noted that this grounding in familiar traditions made mindfulness practices "feel natural" and "spiritually compatible," increasing their authenticity and accessibility.

Table 3.3. Monthly coaching and themes

Month	Theme	Practices
October 2024	Emotional Awareness and Regulation	Emotional check-ins; breathwork
November 2024	Gratitude	30 days of gratitude
December 2024	Conflict resolution	Non-violent communication
January 2025	Setting Goals and Intentions	Wheel of Life; Intention setting
February 2025	Loving-Kindness	Mindful meditations
March 2025	Mindfulness and kindness	30 days of kindness in Ramzan
April 2025	Self-compassion	Words of affirmation
May 2025	Celebration	Sharing *Glows and Grows*

The coaching sessions fostered a sustained professional learning community, characterized by relational trust, collective problem-solving, and emotional support. Teachers expressed appreciation for having a space where peers "understood their struggles" and where they could share openly without judgment. Through this consistency and community-based learning, the coaching model demonstrated that durable change in teacher well-being and classroom culture emerges from ongoing, collaborative engagement rather than one-time interventions

The monthly coaching sessions were not only a support structure but also a crucial data source. Teachers' verbal reflections, written monthly submissions, and experiential feedback directly informed the researcher's analytic memos, which played a foundational role in theme development. The coaching conversations triangulated patterns emerging from interviews, observations, and questionnaires, enabling the researcher to confirm, refine, or complicate emerging interpretations. The iterative, participatory nature of the coaching process therefore

strengthened the credibility and confirmability of the study by grounding analysis in teachers' ongoing, lived experiences.

Participants

Recruitment

The recruitment process began after Ms. Farryal Qureshi, Principal of CBDS, approved the study. Having previously collaborated with her, the researcher shared an understanding of her commitment to professional development and to fostering a supportive classroom environment. The researcher sent a formal email outlining the research vision and objectives (see Appendix A), and Ms. Qureshi responded with enthusiasm, granting permission to conduct the training and data collection during the school's professional development week.

During the initial two-day training, the researcher introduced the entire teaching staff of CBDS to the study's purpose and structure. The researcher explained the research objectives and distributed consent forms (see Appendix B) to invite voluntary participation. Given the study's design limitations, the researcher selected up to ten participants from among those who expressed interest.

Sampling

The study focused on teachers who could provide meaningful insights into the understanding and integration of SEL and mindfulness in elementary classrooms. To guide selection, two criteria were used: (1) a minimum of two years of teaching experience, and (2) a current teaching assignment in grades 1 through 5. These requirements ensured that participants brought a basic level of professional experience and pedagogical knowledge to the study. Focusing on early grade levels was especially important, as this stage is a critical period in children's cognitive and emotional development, making SEL and mindfulness highly relevant.

Teachers with at least two years of experience were also expected to be better able to reflect on both the challenges and opportunities of applying these practices in their classrooms.

After the two-day SEL and mindfulness training, the researcher distributed consent forms to all teaching staff at CBDS (see Appendix B). Of the 43 staff members, 40 teachers expressed interest in participating in the study, regardless of whether they met the selection criteria. This strong response reflected the staff's enthusiasm and genuine interest in the topic. One teacher even followed up via email to further emphasize her willingness to participate.

According to the research design, only ten participants could be included. From the pool of interested teachers, the researcher purposefully and systematically selected those who met the established criteria. Initially, the researcher compiled a list of the 40 interested teachers and identified 20 who met the inclusion criteria. Their names were then listed alphabetically. In consultation with the principal, the researcher selected teachers who were likely to contribute actively during discussions and reflections. The principal assisted in identifying teachers who were more vocal and reflective in nature. Additionally, one male teacher was intentionally included to ensure gender diversity within the sample. The remaining volunteers were thanked for their interest and were informed that they would not be included in the study.

The 10 selected teachers were notified in person and invited to join a WhatsApp group named *SEL with Ramsha* to support communication and community building. During the early stages of the study, two teachers withdrew due to personal and professional reasons. The final participant group consisted of eight teachers, who together formed a supportive learning community committed to exploring the use of SEL and mindfulness in both their personal and professional lives. Although the number of participants was small, it was appropriate for a qualitative case study, where the emphasis is on depth of insight rather than breadth, and where

smaller groups allow for more detailed and nuanced exploration of participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995).

Demographics

The participants in this study consisted of eight teachers from CBDS school, representing a range of ages, genders, and professional roles. Most of the participants were female (n=7), with only one male participant (n=1). This gender distribution is reflective of the broader trend in elementary and middle-level teaching in Pakistan, where teaching continues to be a female-dominated profession.

In terms of age, the group was relatively diverse. Two participants were under the age of 25, while two were between 25–30 years. Three participants fell in the 31–40 range, and one participant was between 41–50 years. This age spread indicates a mix of early-career, mid-career, and more experienced educators, allowing for a variety of perspectives on well-being, SEL and mindfulness practices.

Participant inclusion in development

Following participant selection, an initial meeting was held to revisit the research goals and clarify expectations. During this session, the purpose and scope of the study were discussed in greater depth, emphasizing its collaborative and participatory nature. Key discussion points included an overview of the research objectives, the importance of participants' input throughout the process, and the creation of a supportive space for sharing professional experiences and engaging in mentorship. The meeting also discussed the joint exploration of creative strategies to enhance teaching practices. All participants expressed enthusiasm and commitment to these goals. Consistent with the participatory design of the study, they were informed that the project would remain flexible and open to adaptation based on their evolving needs, experiences, and

feedback. This approach aimed to promote shared ownership of the research process and ensure that the study remained grounded in the lived realities of the participants.

Data collection methods

This study employed a qualitative approach to data collection to yield a complete understanding of the research questions. A central feature of qualitative case study research is the use of multiple methods, which provide a more holistic picture of participants' perspectives than any single approach could offer (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2018). In this study, varied methods were used to engage teachers in reflection and dialogue, while also tracing how their understanding and practices of SEL and mindfulness evolved over the course of the intervention.

Data were collected through pre- and post-training questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, and monthly reflections. This combination allowed the study to document both personal and professional applications of SEL and mindfulness, as well as the challenges teachers faced in implementation. Using multiple sources of data also enhanced trustworthiness by enabling triangulation across methods (Patton, 2015).

Questionnaires

To gauge the teachers' understanding of SEL concepts and their readiness to integrate mindfulness practices into their classrooms, both pre- and post-training questionnaires were conducted (see Appendix C). These questionnaires were designed to evaluate multiple aspects related to teachers' professional practice and personal well-being.

Extensive research on individual well-being has led to the development of numerous validated tools, most commonly self-report scales that assess social and emotional traits not directly observable (DeVellis, 2003; Merrell, 2008). Advances in these instruments provide reliable insights into teachers' well-being, self-efficacy, stress, and burnout. To ensure cultural

relevance and psychometric rigor, the questionnaire developed for this study drew upon several established instruments: the *Teacher Subjective Well-being Questionnaire* (TSWQ; Renshaw, Long, & Cook, 2015), the *Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey* (MBI-ES; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), the *Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire* (FFMQ; Baer et al., 2006)), the *Social Emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale* (SECTRS; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), and the *Six Seconds Emotional Vital Signs* (EVS; Six Seconds, n.d.). Table 4 summarizes each instrument's constructs, dimensions, validated populations, psychometric strengths, and relevance to the present study.

Table 3.4. Review of existing survey instruments

Instrument	Construct Measured	Key Dimensions	Population Validated On	Psychometric Strengths	Relevance to Study
Teacher Subjective Well-being Questionnaire (TSWQ)	Teacher well-being	Teaching efficacy, school connectedness	K–12 educators (USA, cross-cultural adaptations)	High internal consistency ($\alpha > .80$); validated structure	Assesses overall well-being and professional satisfaction, aligned with SEL outcomes
Maslach Burnout Inventory—Educators Survey (MBI-ES)	Teacher burnout	Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment	Teachers in varied global contexts	Strong construct validity; widely cited; consistent across cultures	Measures stress and burnout, key factors influencing SEL and mindfulness uptake

Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)	Mindfulness	Observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging, non-reactivity	Clinical and non-clinical adult populations, including educators	Strong factor structure; high reliability (α ~ .75–.91)	Captures personal mindfulness practices critical to implementing classroom strategies
Social Emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale (SECTRS)	SEL competence	Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, decision-making	Pre-service and in-service teachers	Aligned with CASEL; moderate to high reliability depending on subscales	Directly measures SEL competencies, providing insight into professional growth
Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment (EVS)	Emotional intelligence in action	Know Yourself, Choose Yourself, Give Yourself	Global educators and professionals	Validated through extensive use in schools and organizations; practical focus	Supports development of actionable emotional intelligence, linking SEL to classroom behavior

Adapted from established scales and researcher-developed items, the questionnaire for this study included a mix of open- and close-ended questions designed to capture teachers' perceptions, experiences, and practices related to SEL, mindfulness, and movement. It consisted of 10 sections in the pre-questionnaire and an additional section in the post-questionnaire (see Appendix C). The instruments were administered before and after the SEL and mindfulness

coaching intervention to assess changes in participants' understanding, well-being, and classroom integration of these practices. In total, the pre-questionnaire comprised approximately 90 items, including both Likert-type scales and open-ended prompts, while the post-questionnaire mirrored the same sections and added one reflective component.

The first two sections, *Demographics* and *Work Information*, collected foundational details such as participants' age, gender, educational background, years of teaching experience, and subject or grade level taught. These data provided essential context for interpreting participants' responses and allowed for meaningful comparisons across diverse professional and personal backgrounds.

The third section, *Familiarity and Perception of Well-being*, assessed teachers' baseline awareness of SEL-related concepts, including the CASEL framework, mindfulness, yoga, and breathwork, using 5-point Likert scales (1 = least familiar; 5 = most familiar). It also included self-assessments of overall health, physical and mental well-being, quality of life, and social relationships. This section provided a holistic snapshot of teachers' initial well-being and served as a foundation for evaluating post-intervention change.

The fourth section, *Emotional Regulation*, explored teachers' feelings, thoughts, and classroom emotional responses over the previous school year. Participants indicated how often they experienced emotions such as fatigue, frustration, and overwhelm, or felt equipped to manage off-task student behavior. Items followed a five-point frequency scale ranging from *Always* to *Never*, offering insight into teachers' emotional regulation and classroom management before and after the intervention.

The fifth section, *Workload*, focused on teachers' professional responsibilities and the stressors associated with them. Participants reported the number of hours spent on work-related

tasks outside school hours, their preparedness to handle workload demands, and specific challenges encountered. Both closed- and open-ended questions captured the extent to which workload affected teachers' well-being and instructional effectiveness.

The sixth section, *Organizational and Peer Support*, examined the degree of support teachers received within their school environments. Items assessed satisfaction with school culture, communication effectiveness, transparency in decision-making, and perceived value from school leadership. Several open-ended questions invited teachers to describe policies or practices that influenced their well-being and to propose organizational changes that could improve support systems.

The seventh section, *Self-care and Self-compassion*, explored participants' personal practices and attitudes toward maintaining balance and emotional resilience. Teachers reflected on the frequency of activities such as yoga, breathwork, meditation, and relaxation routines, as well as their ability to prioritize self-care amidst professional demands. This section also incorporated items adapted from the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) to gauge how often teachers responded to themselves with kindness, tolerance, and balanced perspective when facing difficulties.

The eighth section, *Mindfulness*, measured participants' ability to remain present and aware, drawing from items inspired by the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2006). Participants rated statements such as *"I am aware of my thoughts and feelings without getting lost in them"* and *"I am able to respond to difficult situations with clarity and calmness rather than react impulsively."* These items captured teachers' awareness, nonjudgmental observation, focus, and capacity for emotional regulation - skills directly related to SEL competencies and mindfulness integration.

The ninth section, *Barriers and Support*, examined the contextual factors influencing teachers' ability to sustain mindfulness and movement practices. Through a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions, participants identified logistical constraints such as classroom space, time limitations, and institutional resistance. They also reflected on their comfort level in seeking help from colleagues or mental health professionals and described barriers to maintaining consistent self-care and movement routines.

The tenth section, *Readiness to Integrate SEL in Classrooms*, assessed teachers' confidence in supporting students' development across the five CASEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Using 5-point confidence scales, participants rated their perceived ability to foster these skills and reflected on the potential of SEL and mindfulness to enhance student engagement and classroom well-being.

The post-questionnaire mirrored these ten sections to ensure comparability and allow for analysis of change over time. It also included an additional section titled *Closing Reflections*, which consisted entirely of open-ended questions. This section invited participants to define well-being in their own words, describe how they cared for themselves at home and at work, and discuss how participation in the study influenced their emotional health and teaching practice. Participants also identified tangible outcomes from the training such as improved self-awareness, emotional balance, or classroom calm, and expressed interest in future professional learning opportunities related to SEL and mindfulness.

The questionnaires were designed and administered through SurveyMonkey and conducted in the school's computer lab to ensure accessibility and consistency in data collection. Each participant was allocated one hour to complete the questionnaire, which typically took 30–

45 minutes, depending on reading speed and reflection depth. Because of the questionnaire's comprehensive nature, all questions were set as mandatory to ensure completeness before submission and to minimize missing data. The questionnaire was intentionally extensive to capture a holistic understanding of teachers' well-being, emotional regulation, classroom practices, and contextual challenges within a single instrument. By incorporating multiple dimensions - ranging from self-compassion and mindfulness to institutional support and SEL readiness - it provided rich, interconnected data that supported triangulation across qualitative sources such as interviews, coaching sessions, and monthly reflections.

Overall, the questionnaires provided a comprehensive framework for exploring teachers' well-being, classroom practices, and contextual challenges before and after the intervention. Although the instruments included quantitative elements such as Likert-type scales, the data were not subjected to statistical testing. Instead, numerical responses were used descriptively to track general trends (e.g., mean familiarity), while the open-ended responses offered nuanced qualitative insights. Together, these mixed-format instruments contributed to methodological triangulation, complementing data from interviews, coaching sessions, and reflections to construct a holistic understanding of teachers' evolving engagement with SEL, mindfulness, and movement.

Monthly teacher reflections

Reflections are widely recognized as a valuable research tool because they provide participants with the space to critically examine their own experiences, perspectives, and growth over time (Jennings, 2019). Unlike questionnaires or interviews, written reflections allow participants to pause, process, and articulate their thoughts in ways that may not surface during group discussions. They often capture subtle shifts in attitudes, dispositions, and meaning-

making processes that are central to understanding the lived experience of professional learning. In qualitative research, such reflections not only enrich the data but also deepen the interpretive possibilities by highlighting personal insights that participants may otherwise hesitate to share openly.

In this study, monthly teacher reflections were used to track how participants integrated SEL and mindfulness practices into their personal lives and classroom settings. These reflections aimed to surface both successes and challenges, offering an ongoing record of teachers' evolving practices and perceptions. Prompts were designed to elicit responses that aligned with the study's main research questions, focusing on areas such as emotional well-being, classroom implementation of SEL and mindfulness strategies, student responses, and barriers to sustained practice. This process also ensured that the reflections complemented other data sources by providing individualized accounts that captured the nuance of teachers' personal and professional journeys.

Reflections were collected at the beginning of each month through guided questions sent via Google Forms (see Appendix G). The design allowed teachers to engage in private, thoughtful responses at their own pace, creating space for insights they might not feel comfortable voicing in group settings. Sample prompts included: *How are you doing emotionally? How have you implemented mindfulness practices at home, or in your classroom this month? What challenges have you faced? What support or resources would help you move forward?* These responses then informed the subsequent monthly coaching sessions by highlighting key challenges, questions, or areas where additional resources and support were needed. In this way, the reflections not only contributed to the study's data set but also served a

practical purpose, shaping the direction of group dialogue and ensuring that professional learning remained responsive to participants' needs.

One-one-one semi-structures interviews

Interviews are a key tool in qualitative research because they allow participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and emotions in depth, often in ways that cannot be fully captured through the questionnaires or written reflections (Creswell, 2007). They create opportunities for participants to clarify their thoughts, expand on ideas, and provide rich narratives about their personal and professional lives. Semi-structured interviews work well because they provide structure through guiding questions but still leave room for participants to share ideas and experiences that feel most relevant to them (Creswell, 2007).

For this study, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Zoom to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences with SEL and mindfulness. These conversations offered a supportive space for participants to discuss their identities as educators, their motivations, their understanding of SEL, and the challenges they faced in applying it, including the level of support from school leadership. The interviews were carried out in two phases. The initial round, held after the training and pre-questionnaires, focused on participants' professional backgrounds, motivations to teach, and early perceptions of SEL and mindfulness. The second round, conducted at the end of the study, invited teachers to reflect on their year-long experiences, including how they implemented SEL and mindfulness in their classrooms and personal lives, what practices were most effective, what challenges persisted, and what support they believed would be necessary moving forward. Together, these two stages offered insight into both teachers' starting points and the changes they experienced over time, highlighting the complexities of integrating SEL and mindfulness into educational practice

Invitations to participate in the interviews were sent through WhatsApp, the agreed-upon mode of communication, allowing participants to select time slots that suited their schedules. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. It was conducted in a mix of Urdu or English, depending on the participant's preference, to ensure comfort and authentic expression. With participants' consent, the sessions were recorded, translated where necessary, and transcribed by the researcher for analysis. To ensure accuracy and authenticity, the translated transcripts were shared with the participating teachers for member checking. They were invited to review the transcriptions and confirm that their words and intended meanings were accurately represented. All participants validated the transcripts and did not request any changes. This process enabled the data to be systematically coded and compared with findings from questionnaires, reflections, and coaching sessions. By capturing detailed personal accounts in a confidential setting, the interviews added depth and nuance to the study, enhancing the understanding of how SEL and mindfulness training influenced teachers' well-being and professional practices.

The following table highlights the alignment between each research question, its corresponding theoretical framework, and the primary data sources used to address it, illustrating the coherence and methodological rigor of the study's design:

Table 3.5. Alignment of research questions, theoretical frameworks and data sources

Research Question	Theoretical Framework	Data sources
RQ1) Impact of SEL and mindfulness-based training on teachers' perceived well-being	Adult learning theories; Bronfenbrenner; and Sallis, Fisher and Owen's ecological model of human behavior	Pre- and post-questionnaires; closing interviews
RQ2a) Incorporation in personal life RQ2b) Challenges	Adult learning theories; Bronfenbrenner; and Sallis, Fisher	Monthly reflections; Closing interviews; post-questionnaires

	and Owen's ecological model of human behavior	
RQ3a) Incorporation in classrooms RQ3b) Challenges	Bronfenbrenner; and Sallis, Fisher and Owen's ecological model of human behavior; Prosocial classroom model	Monthly reflections; closing interviews; post-questionnaires
RQ4) Support for sustainability	Bronfenbrenner; and Sallis, Fisher and Owen's ecological model of human behavior; Prosocial classroom model	Closing interviews; post-questionnaires

Data management and analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing and inductive process, where strategies develop in response to new insights that emerge during the study (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). Rather than following a fixed path, the process remains flexible and responsive, allowing the researcher to notice and pursue unexpected patterns. In this study, coding was used as the main approach to interpret the data, with NVivo software supporting the management of the large dataset. Drawing on multiple forms of evidence allowed for triangulation, which helped strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

All data were carefully managed to ensure accuracy, confidentiality and ethical integrity. They were stored on a password-protected laptop and prepared before uploading to NVivo for analysis. All identifying details, such as name, gender, role, email addresses, phone numbers, were removed from all the data. Pre- and post-questionnaires were cleaned by extracting key information from open-ended responses. Interviews were conducted in a mix of Urdu and English, allowing participants to express themselves in the language they were most comfortable using. The interview recordings were translated and transcribed into English by the researcher,

who is fluent in both languages. To ensure that participants' words and sentiments were accurately represented, the translated transcripts were shared with them for member checking; none reported any discrepancies. For example, one teacher originally stated in Urdu, *"Main jab students ke saath breathing exercise karti hoon to lagta hai ke class mein sukoon sa chaa gaya hai"* which was translated to, "When I do the breathing exercises with my students, it feels like the classroom has become calm". She confirmed that the translation captured her intended meaning. Monthly reflections were compiled in separate documents for each participant to trace the development of their practice and perceptions over time. These procedures ensured both the credibility and reliability of the data, supporting the overall trustworthiness of the study.

Coding

Coding is a central process in qualitative research, used to organize and interpret data by labeling meaningful segments of text. As Saldaña (2021) notes, coding is not only a way to structure information—it is also an active process of thinking, comparing, and making meaning. In this study, the analysis unfolded through several carefully sequenced stages that moved from raw data toward coherent themes grounded in participants' lived experiences.

Data preparation began as soon as the information was collected. Interview recordings were translated when needed, transcribed, and saved as Word documents. Monthly reflections and coaching notes were organized into individual files for each participant, and questionnaire responses were exported into Excel. All files were checked for accuracy, cleaned to remove identifying information, and printed to allow for careful, line-by-line reading. During this first review, the researcher highlighted important sections including words or phrases, wrote notes in the margins, and recorded early observations about recurring ideas, emotions, or contradictions. These notes were then compared with the researcher's ongoing analytic memos to identify initial

patterns and refine the questions that would shape later stages of analysis. For instance, during early data review, the researcher noted that when participants were asked how they were feeling, their responses were typically brief and generic words like "good," "fine," or "okay." Margin notes reflected this pattern, such as: *"Emotional descriptions are very surface-level", "Limited vocabulary."* As the months progressed, the researcher observed a gradual shift. Participants began choosing more precise emotional language, offering responses like "excited," "pleased," or "exhausted," and often paused before answering to think more carefully about their feelings. Analytic memos captured this change: *"They are reflecting before responding now", "pausing before responding", "actively selecting words that match their emotions."* This development later informed a key finding related to teachers' growing emotional awareness and expanding feeling vocabulary over the course of the study.

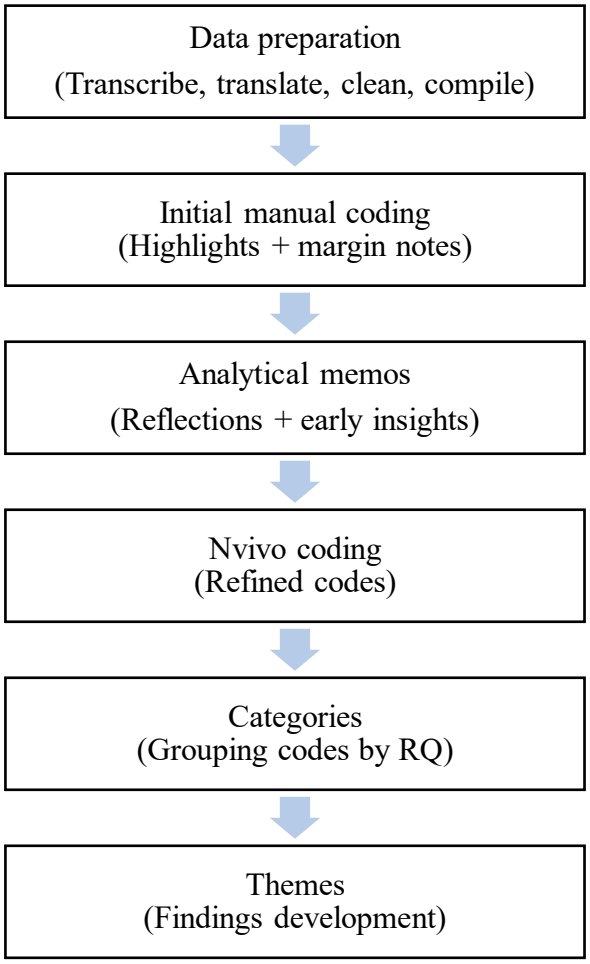
Following this manual exploration, all cleaned data including transcripts, reflection documents, and questionnaire text were imported into NVivo to support systematic coding. A comprehensive first cycle of open coding was conducted across the full dataset. This stage involved assigning short, descriptive labels to meaningful segments of text. For example, statements such as "I often feel tired by the end of the school day," "exam season drains me," and "I struggle when workload increases" were initially coded as *fatigue*, *workload stress*, and *emotional strain*. Similarly, references to "students enjoying breathing exercises," "girls adapting faster than boys," or "boys laughing before trying mindfulness" were coded as *positive student response*, *gender differences*, and *initial resistance*.

Once initial coding was complete, a second cycle of analysis refined these codes into broader, conceptually meaningful categories. This process required grouping related codes together and examining how they spoke to the research questions. For example, codes such

as *fatigue*, *headaches*, and *limited energy* were collapsed into the category 'Physical challenges', while *positive student response*, *greater calmness in class*, and *improved transitions* were grouped into 'Classroom impact of SEL practices'. Codes related to *space constraints*, *packed classrooms*, and *no room for movement* were combined into 'Logistical barriers', whereas *political instability*, *smog-related school closures*, and *inconsistent schedules* formed the category 'External Disruptions'.

As categories stabilized, they were gradually synthesized into overarching themes that captured the broader narratives shaping teachers' experiences. For instance, the categories 'Student gender' and 'Student receptivity' eventually informed the theme 'Student related challenges'. Similarly, 'Logistical barriers and External disruptions together contributed to the theme 'Context and Environment', illuminating how structural conditions affected the implementation of SEL and mindfulness practices. These themes connected individual experiences to systemic influences, offering a layered understanding of the data. The following figure 3.2 illustrates the step-by-step process used for data preparation, coding, memo-ing, categorizing, and theme development throughout this stage.

Figure 3.2. Cleaning and coding process



Crucially, this analytic journey was not linear. Codes, categories, and themes were revisited multiple times. The researcher moved back and forth between raw data, memos, and coded files to ensure that emerging interpretations remained grounded in participants' voices and accurately reflected the complexity of their experiences. Each stage involved returning to the research questions to verify that the analytic decisions stayed aligned with the purpose of the study and did not drift into unrelated storylines which is a particular risk when working with large, rich qualitative datasets.

Throughout this iterative process, the researcher remained attentive to the danger of confirmation bias which is the tendency to privilege data that affirms prior assumptions or

desired outcomes (Maxwell, 2012). To mitigate this, contradictory examples were intentionally sought. For example, although many teachers reported improved emotional regulation after mindfulness practices, the researcher noted and coded instances where teachers described "no change" or "difficulty practicing regularly." These counterpoints informed more nuanced categories, such as 'Inconsistent practice' and 'Mixed emotional outcomes', which enriched rather than threatened the credibility of the final themes. Analytic memos were used to interrogate assumptions, question early interpretations, and document shifts in thinking, serving as a reflexive anchor throughout the analysis.

An additional organizational step supported rigor and clarity. After refining categories, the researcher transferred them into a structured MS Word table organized by research question. This ensured that every code and category directly addressed the study's core aims and helped maintain analytic coherence. These tables made visible how raw data moved through multiple interpretive layers to become findings. To support transparency for readers, the detailed coding summaries, categories, and themes for each research question will be presented in Chapter 4, allowing readers to clearly trace how the analysis produced the results.

Together, these iterative processes. from manual coding to software-assisted analysis, and from initial codes to refined themes, created a comprehensive and rigorous analytic framework. By grounding interpretations in participants' own words, triangulating across multiple data sources, and maintaining a reflexive stance throughout, the coding process generated a rich, trustworthy account of how teachers experienced and implemented SEL, mindfulness, and movement across the school year.

Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources, methods, or perspectives to develop a more comprehensive and credible understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 2015). In qualitative research, triangulation serves not only to enrich the interpretation of data but also to test the consistency and validity of findings (Yin, 2018). By drawing from varied sources, the research moves beyond individual perspectives, allowing patterns to emerge that are more robust, reliable, and contextually grounded (Yin, 2018).

This study employs methodological triangulation, which involves using multiple qualitative methods to collect data (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Triangulation strengthens the validity of the findings by allowing cross-checking of insights across different types of data. In this research, data sources included questionnaires, interviews, monthly reflections, and, in some cases, researcher memos. Each of these methods offered a unique perspective on the research questions, with one serving as the primary source of evidence and others providing complementary support. For example, questionnaire responses indicated that several teachers reported greater emotional awareness but expressed uncertainty about applying mindfulness strategies in their classrooms. Follow-up interviews provided deeper insight into this hesitation, revealing contextual barriers such as workload and limited time for practice. During the coaching sessions, these challenges were observed firsthand, as teachers initially struggled to integrate mindful pauses but gradually gained confidence through guided support. Together, these multiple sources of data contributed to a more comprehensive and credible understanding of teacher growth and well-being. Table 3.6 outlines how each method contributed to addressing the study's research questions.

Table 3.6. Data triangulation matrix

Research questions	Primary data source	Complementary data sources
RQ1) Impact of SEL and mindfulness training on teachers' perceived well-being	Questionnaires – Measured baseline and post-intervention shifts in well-being and emotional awareness	Interviews and monthly reflections – Explained reasons behind changes and tracked ongoing self-awareness and growth
RQ2a) Incorporation in personal lives RQ2b) Challenges	Interviews – Explored use of SEL and mindfulness in daily life and barriers faced	Monthly reflections and questionnaires – Showed evolving personal practices and supported trends in self-regulation and self-compassion
RQ3a) Incorporation in classrooms RQ3b) Challenges	Interviews – Examined classroom application of SEL and mindfulness practices	Monthly reflections and questionnaires – Captured classroom experiences and adaptations and indicated changes in confidence and readiness
RQ 4) Support for sustainability	Questionnaires – Identified areas of need and desired institutional support	Interviews and monthly reflections – Provided detailed perspectives on sustaining practices and highlighted ongoing support needs and motivation

Memos

Writing analytic memos is an essential part of data analysis during the research. It allows the researcher to capture their thoughts, challenge assumptions, make connections and comparisons, and promotes interactive space to converse with oneself (Saldana, 2021). By memo-ing, the researcher does not just summarize data but engages in reflection and dialogue about the data and the emergence of ideas (Saldana, 2021).

In this study, the approach to memo-ing involved maintaining a reflective journal throughout data collection and analysis. Notes were taken during interviews, transcribed, and later coded using NVivo software. During the interviews, brief observations and reflections

were written in the margins of the journal to capture initial impressions and ideas for follow-up. These notes guided subsequent steps in the research process such as revising reflections questions or identifying areas that required deeper exploration through practice.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the handwritten notes were revisited and rewritten to synthesize emerging insights. After coding in NVivo, earlier memos were re-examined to ensure that no significant ideas had been overlooked. This iterative process of revisiting memos and coded data enabled the identification of patterns and relationships, which were then grouped into broader thematic categories. Throughout this process, the research questions were continually revisited to maintain analytic focus.

For example, an analytic memo written after a coaching session noted: *"Repeated mention the challenge of finding physical space to move with students; desks are tightly packed."* Another memo noted, *"Frequent and unexpected school closures due to political conflict and climate issues (smog) making it harder to maintain consistency".* This reflection later contributed to the theme "Context and Environment," highlighting how logistical limitations and external disruptions such as overcrowded classrooms, political instability, and environmental conditions interfered with teachers' ability to sustain mindfulness and movement practices over time. Based on these observations, practical tools were introduced to help teachers navigate these challenges. For instance, teachers were encouraged to try short chair-based yoga practices involving gentle twists and stretches to accommodate limited space. They also experimented with brief breathwork exercises, such as 30-second pauses instead of two-minute sessions, to integrate mindfulness more easily into busy classroom routines. In coaching discussions, teachers reflected on how these adaptations could also be applied in online settings,

offering flexible ways to sustain mindful practices even in the face of environmental or institutional constraints.

Analytic memos thus served as both a thinking tool and an organizational scaffold, linking raw data to conceptual understanding. They played a central role in shaping the final themes by tracing how early reflections evolved into coherent categories that addressed the study's core questions.

Data representation

In qualitative research, the representation of findings is a vital step that goes beyond summarizing responses as it involves constructing meaning through layered, contextualized accounts (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Once the data collected for this study through various methods was cleaned, coded and analyzed in NVivo, the findings were organized and presented according to each research question.

The presentation begins with individual participant profiles that highlight each participant's demographic backgrounds, motivations, and baseline familiarity with SEL and mindfulness. These profiles help establish an understanding of participants' initial attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions. They also provide context for anticipating how teachers engaged with the training.

The main findings are then presented through the codes and themes generated in NVivo, organized by each research question. Coding combined a priori categories, i.e. pre predetermined codes, drawn from the research questions and theoretical frameworks, along with emergent codes that reflected unexpected insights from the data (Saldaña, 2021). Through iterative cycles of initial and focused coding, broad themes and sub-themes were developed, ensuring that the analysis remained both systematic and responsive to teachers' lived experiences. To enhance

clarity and transparency, direct participant quotes are included to ground abstract findings in authentic teacher voices. These quotes were carefully selected to reflect diverse perspectives while maintaining confidentiality, allowing both shared patterns and individual nuances to be visible. In addition, narrative vignettes are used to illustrate central themes. Vignettes, as Stake (1995) explains, are short stories drawn directly from the data that capture the depth of an issue in ways that simple summaries cannot. They offer what Creswell (2007) calls a "three-dimensional inquiry," situating experiences within personal, social, and contextual frames.

This approach to data representation ensures that teachers' voices remain at the center of the study, with their stories and reflections shaping the findings in authentic ways. By combining systematic coding with narrative techniques, the analysis honors both the rigor of research and the lived experiences of educators, presenting results that are meaningful, accessible, and grounded in practice.

IRB and ethical considerations

When conducting research with international participants, it is essential to uphold ethical standards to protect both the researcher and the participants. This includes maintaining cultural sensitivity, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and safeguarding participant well-being. Adherence to these principles is vital for preserving the integrity of the research process and upholding the rights and dignity of all involved.

Before beginning this case study, all required IRB trainings, including those specific to international research, were completed. An application was then submitted to the IRB for review and underwent several revisions based on feedback before final approval was granted. The research proceeded in full compliance with the approved IRB guidelines and conditions.

To protect participant anonymity, pseudonyms were used in all reporting and documentation. This measure was particularly important because revealing participants' identities could have jeopardized their employment due to the personal and professional views expressed. All data were shared solely between the principal investigator and the researcher. Raw interview recordings will be retained for up to two years before being securely disposed of, allowing sufficient time for potential follow-up studies or extensions of the research. All coded and analyzed data were stored securely on a password-protected computer and may be used to inform future research or publications.

A member-checking process was also conducted to ensure accuracy and credibility. Participants were given the opportunity to review their data and verify that it accurately represented their perspectives and experiences. Member checking was integrated throughout data collection by confirming interpretations during interviews, journal reflections, and observations. This iterative process enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings by incorporating participants' feedback directly into the analysis.

Trustworthiness

Ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research involves demonstrating that the findings are credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout this study, multiple strategies were implemented to strengthen the rigor and transparency of the research process. While the terms *validity* and *reliability* are often associated with quantitative research (Yin, 2018) in qualitative inquiry these principles are reflected through the lens of trustworthiness, which emphasizes authenticity, depth, and contextual relevance.

To enhance credibility, the study employed methodological triangulation by using multiple data sources including questionnaires, interviews, monthly reflections, coaching

observations, and researcher memos. Insights from each were compared and cross-checked to confirm patterns and ensure a robust understanding of teachers' experiences. For example, increases in emotional awareness reported in post-questionnaires were echoed in interviews where teachers described feeling calmer and more intentional, and these patterns were later observed in coaching sessions. Credibility was further established through member checking: translated interview transcripts were shared with participants to verify that their words and sentiments were accurately represented. None reported discrepancies, confirming that the translations reflected their intended meanings.

Transferability was strengthened by providing rich, contextual descriptions of the research setting, participant demographics, and school environments. Participants taught in a sub-urban school, facing varied institutional and cultural realities. By presenting these detailed accounts and incorporating direct quotations, the study enables readers to assess the relevance of its findings to similar contexts. For instance, one teacher shared, *"Using gentle stretches lime yoga on our chairs is so simple yet effective to make the class quiet, energetic and focused,"* illustrating how movement and mindfulness was adapted to crowded classrooms, a scenario that may resonate with educators in other resource-limited settings.

To ensure dependability, a clear audit trail was maintained throughout data collection and analysis. All raw data, transcripts, and NVivo coding files were securely stored and systematically organized. Analytic memos captured the researcher's evolving reflections, decisions, and interpretive shifts. For example, one memo noted: *"Teachers express calm after breathing pauses but still feel guilty taking time from syllabus coverage. This tension between well-being and academic pressure deserves attention."* Such memos informed iterative

adjustments to coding and theme development, ensuring consistency and transparency in the analytic process.

Finally, confirmability was achieved through ongoing reflexivity and ethical rigor. The researcher maintained a reflective journal to critically examine assumptions, positionality as a mindfulness practitioner, and potential biases. These reflections were revisited during analysis to ensure interpretations remained grounded in participants' voices rather than researcher expectations. Ethical safeguards including informed consent, confidentiality, and data anonymization, further reinforced confirmability by upholding integrity and accountability throughout the research process.

Together, these strategies established the study's trustworthiness, ensuring that the findings authentically represent teachers' lived experiences of engaging with SEL, mindfulness, and movement within their personal and professional contexts. The combination of triangulation, member validation, detailed documentation, and reflexive practice enhanced both the rigor and the credibility of the research outcomes.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the intentional boundaries set by the researcher to narrow the scope of a study, such as the sample size, geographical location, or setting (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This study was situated within Chand Bagh Day School, a semi-urban elementary school in Muridke, Pakistan, and spanned one academic year (September 2024–May 2025). Participation was limited to elementary teachers with at least two years of experience, as this ensured a baseline level of professional expertise. Selected teachers took part in structured SEL and mindfulness training and were required to join the ongoing monthly coaching sessions. The SEL training was grounded in the CASEL framework and emphasized mindfulness and movement for

teacher well-being. It did not include subject-specific SEL integration. It was also adapted for cultural relevance through locally appropriate language (Urdu) and examples. The study did not examine how SEL might be received in other regional or linguistic contexts in Pakistan.

The focus of this research remained on teachers' perceptions and reflective accounts. Student academic or behavioral data, as well as broader community outcomes, were not collected or analyzed. While the perspectives of administrators, students, and parents are acknowledged as valuable, they were intentionally excluded to maintain the focus of this study on teachers' experiences.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology that guided this qualitative intervention case study investigating the impact of SEL and mindfulness-based training on elementary school teachers in Pakistan. Conducted over the course of one academic year at Chand Bagh Day School, Muridke, this research employed a case study approach to explore the lived experiences of teachers as they engaged with the training in both personal and professional contexts. Participants were purposefully selected based on their teaching experience and willingness to participate, ensuring rich, contextual insights. Data were collected through a combination of questionnaires, monthly reflections and semi-structured interviews. The use of multiple data sources allowed for triangulation, strengthening the study's trustworthiness. All data were coded and analyzed thematically using NVivo, with findings illustrated through participant profiles and narrative vignettes to highlight key themes and sub-themes. Ethical approval was obtained through the IRB, and reliability was addressed through consistent documentation of procedures and careful attention to researcher bias. The delimitations of the study included a focus on a single school

setting, the perspectives of teachers only (excluding students, administrators, and parents), and a culturally grounded SEL intervention delivered bilingually in English and Urdu.

Chapter 4 - Data findings and analysis

Overview

This chapter presents the study's findings drawn from questionnaires, interviews, monthly reflections, and the researcher's analytic memos. It begins with brief portraitures of the eight participating teachers, highlighting their backgrounds, personalities, motivations for entering the profession, and reasons for joining this research.

After the portraitures, the chapter presents the results organized by research question. For each question, the initial codes, categories, and themes are outlined, integrating evidence from all data sources. Organizing the findings in this way demonstrates how the data collectively address each research question rather than separating results by instrument. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key insights that emerged across the questions, offering a clear picture of the teachers' learning, challenges, and growth over the course of the intervention.

Teacher participants

Participants were selected using two main criteria: they were elementary school teachers (grades 1–5) and had at least two years of teaching experience to ensure a basic level of professional expertise. Following the initial two-day SEL and mindfulness training, consent forms were distributed to all 43 staff members at CBDS. Of the 40 teachers who expressed interest, 10 eligible volunteers were purposefully and systematically selected according to the research design. Eight ultimately remained in the study, as two withdrew due to scheduling constraints. Seven of the eight participants were female and one was male, reflecting the typical gender distribution of schools in Pakistan.

To gain a richer understanding of the participants' lives and contexts, an initial questionnaire and individual interviews were conducted at the start of the study. These

conversations provided insight into their personal and professional backgrounds, family life, work–life balance, and existing understandings of SEL and mindfulness, as well as their motivations for joining the program. They also revealed aspects of each teacher's personality, emotional disposition, and way of relating to others as these insights were essential for interpreting their engagement with SEL and mindfulness practices. Establishing this groundwork helped build trust and situate the research within the teachers' lived realities. The following section presents anonymized portraitures that bring each participant's story into focus.

Portraitures

Ahmad

Ahmad's journey in education reflects resilience, self-motivation, and an evolving perspective on teaching. Born and raised in Farooqabad, he completed his early schooling there before focusing on memorizing the Quran, a milestone that instilled in him discipline and perseverance. After becoming a Hafiz-e-Quran, he resumed formal education, completing matriculation and later pursuing FSc. from Sheikhupura. His academic path eventually led him to Lahore, where he earned a Master's in IT and now serves as Head of the Computer Science Department.

From the outset, Ahmad viewed teaching as a meaningful and respectable profession that aligned with his values. His early teaching years were rewarding, characterized by strong relationships with students and a sense of purpose. Over time, however, he has faced growing challenges, including shifting student attitudes, disciplinary issues, and changing classroom dynamics that test his patience and engagement. Workplace tensions among colleagues and administrative pressures have further complicated his professional experience, though he acknowledges the administration's efforts to address communication gaps.

Without formal teacher training due to financial constraints, Ahmad initially struggled with both professional and personal stress. Despite this, he has made efforts to integrate mindfulness into his practice. He encourages simple breathing exercises before tests to help students relax and focus, though his busy schedule limits regular mindfulness activities.

In terms of well-being, Ahmad describes both progress and ongoing strain. Physically, his health fluctuates; emotionally, he has become more understanding and empathetic toward others. Once introverted, he now engages more socially, though financial insecurity remains a persistent concern.

Ahmad believes education systems should prioritize stronger teacher-student relationships and provide teachers with greater authority to manage classrooms effectively. He views the current emphasis on academic results as demotivating and disconnected from the broader purpose of education. His story reflects the dedication and fatigue shared by many educators who remain committed despite systemic challenges, highlighting the need for sustained teacher support, mindfulness practices, and balanced educational reform.

Amal

Amal is one of the younger and more recently hired teachers at the school. She completed both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Computer Science from institutions in the surrounding region, and she now teaches the subject to her students. Her decision to enter teaching was shaped by practical considerations. She viewed it as a safer and more socially acceptable profession for women in her area, one that would allow her to support herself and gain independence. Over time, the profession has become something she genuinely enjoys, particularly the energy and engagement that come from interacting with students.

Amal finds excitement in teaching, especially when she can share new ideas with her students and listen to their responses. The main challenges she faces involve balancing academic responsibilities with extracurricular classes, which often demand additional time and attention. Despite these pressures, her naturally energetic personality helps her manage her workload effectively.

Before joining this year-long research project, Amal had no prior experience with social and emotional learning or mindfulness. Her interest in the program stems from a desire to learn how movement and mindful practices can support her personally and professionally. She hopes to incorporate more movement into her own routine as well as into her lessons, believing it could help her students feel more engaged and balanced.

Amal describes her physical well-being as excellent. She is active, health-conscious, and attentive to her diet. She enjoys spending time with her family and finds joy in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Emotionally, she stays focused on her work, and although teaching can become tiring, she still finds it refreshing and motivating. Socially, she identifies as an introvert. She is quieter and prefers smaller circles, but she enjoys spending time with friends and learning from their experiences. Financially, Amal feels more secure now that she is working and supporting herself. Her income provides stability and independence, reducing the need to rely on others. When asked about recommendations for the school, she expressed appreciation for the existing support from administration and peers. She believes the school is already doing as much as it can, and she emphasizes that teachers also hold responsibility for their own well-being. For her, this research project represents a valuable opportunity to learn how to take better care of herself while growing as an educator.

Amal's portrait reflects the journey of a young teacher developing her professional identity, navigating early career responsibilities, and seeking tools to enhance both her personal well-being and her classroom practice. Her openness to learning and her commitment to self-improvement position her well for the growth she hopes to achieve through this project.

Fatima

Fatima's journey in education reflects determination, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous self-improvement. Raised in a close-knit family, she credits her father, an Islamiyat teacher, and her mother, a homemaker, for instilling the values of education and perseverance. With a brother studying at GCU and a sister working as a nurse, learning and service have long been part of her family ethos.

Academically, Fatima has a strong background in the sciences. She completed her matriculation at Chand Bagh Day School in 2016, pursued pre-medical studies at Government College, Muridke, and later earned a BSc. in Biology followed by a Master's in Chemistry. Despite her specialization, she currently teaches Social Studies, viewing teaching as a noble profession that demands dedication regardless of subject area.

Her teaching experience has been both rewarding and challenging. Fatima enjoys nurturing students and maintaining a positive classroom environment but finds staff gossip and competition discouraging. As a relatively new teacher, she has faced difficulties adapting to technology, particularly during the shift to online learning. Nonetheless, she takes pride in her perseverance and growth.

Though she has no formal training, Fatima sees her participation in this research as an opportunity to learn about movement-based and mindfulness practices. She has integrated brief mindfulness activities in her classroom, which students enjoy, though heavy workloads often

limit their frequency. She also discusses these practices with her siblings, finding shared motivation in their benefits for stress management.

Within her school, Fatima feels supported by the administration and generally encouraged by colleagues, though she wishes for greater collaboration and fewer negative staff dynamics. She suggests fostering a school culture that promotes social connection and discourages the marginalization of new teachers.

Regarding her well-being, Fatima reports being physically well, though she continues to recover from nasal surgery that once affected her teaching. She strives to maintain a healthy lifestyle and finds emotional balance through Quranic recitation, namaz, music, and movement. Classroom engagement and parental appreciation have boosted her confidence and communication skills, contributing to personal and professional growth.

Fatima's story highlights the resilience and optimism of early-career teachers navigating systemic challenges. Her adaptability, reflective mindset, and openness to learning underscore her potential as an educator committed to growth and well-being.

Hira

Hira's journey into teaching was unplanned yet transformative. The second of five siblings, she grew up in a close-knit family with a mother working as a nurse and a father in construction. After completing her FSc. from a government college, she pursued a bachelor's degree in mathematics, initially aspiring to join the Air Force. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted those plans, leading her to take a teaching position—a role that, over three years, has become both challenging and rewarding. She now teaches Mathematics to grades 1–3.

The early months of teaching were overwhelming, as Hira adjusted to the workload of lesson planning, extracurricular duties, and parent communication. Within weeks, she developed

strategies to manage her time effectively, demonstrating adaptability and commitment. While she had no prior training in SEL, she was familiar with mindfulness and joined the SEL training to learn activities that could benefit both her students and family. She often transforms mindfulness exercises into interactive games, such as "Accountabili-buddies," to foster connection. In the classroom, she incorporates breathing exercises to help students relax and refocus, which parents have noted their children practicing at home.

Hira describes her workplace as supportive, with encouraging colleagues and open-minded administrators. However, she sometimes struggles to transition students back to academic tasks after mindfulness activities. Physically, she experiences exhaustion from long hours of teaching and frequent voice strain, occasionally resulting in migraines. To restore balance, she practices yoga, goes for walks, or takes short breaks from work.

Teaching has also transformed Hira's social and emotional life. Once introverted, she has grown more confident through daily interactions and the demands of her role, though her social life outside of school has become limited. Financially, she values her independence and takes pride in supporting her younger sister, though she admits to overspending on conveniences like food delivery.

Hira envisions stronger professional communities among teachers and suggests monthly seminars that include mindfulness activities to enhance well-being. Her story reflects adaptability, self-awareness, and a growing sense of purpose as she continues to navigate the evolving demands of teaching while striving to care for herself and her students.

Iman

Iman entered the teaching profession out of necessity rather than personal choice. When her father became unwell, she took on the responsibility of supporting her family financially.

Over time, however, teaching became a meaningful part of her life. She now lives with her husband, who works in the service industry, and their four children on the school campus, visiting her extended family on weekends. She previously lived in a joint family system, and this shift to campus life has helped her manage both home and work more easily. Academically, she holds a Bachelor's degree and a Master's in Islamiyat, and although her formal training is not in Urdu, she teaches the subject as needed at her school.

Iman has been teaching for seventeen years. She describes her work environment as positive, with supportive colleagues and administration, which is one of the main reasons she stayed in the profession. She does not find teaching overly challenging because she enjoys learning new things. The most difficult period for her was during the COVID-19 pandemic, when classes moved online. Even then, she viewed the situation as a new learning experience and felt supported by her peers. Her students come from different backgrounds, and while parents bring varied concerns, she handles them with calmness and growing confidence.

Before this project, Iman had no experience with social and emotional learning or mindfulness. She decided to join the year-long research to learn something new and break away from her routine. She also wanted tools to help manage her own reactions, as she sometimes gets angry with students or feels overwhelmed by her workload. She hopes that learning about SEL and mindfulness will benefit both her and her students, giving her new ways to support their emotional growth.

Physically, Iman sometimes feels tired due to age and workload, but she generally remains active and energetic. Emotionally, she has become calmer and more solution-oriented over the years. She attributes this growth to her daily interactions with students and colleagues, which have taught her patience and professionalism. Socially, she has built strong relationships

with her staff and feels confident when interacting with parents. Financially, Iman is responsible for supporting her family, especially because her children are still studying. Living on campus helps ease some of this burden by reducing travel and living expenses. She believes the school administration already provides strong support, and she sees this workshop as another opportunity to continue learning and improving her well-being.

Iman's portrait reflects the journey of a teacher who has grown into her role through necessity, resilience, and continuous learning. She remains open to new ideas and committed to improving both her own well-being and the experiences of her students.

Kiran

Kiran's pathway into teaching has been shaped by a combination of personal circumstances, family responsibilities, and evolving professional interests. She lives with her siblings – two brothers and a sister —after the passing of both her parents. She remains unmarried and describes her home environment as stable and supportive. Academically, Kiran completed her bachelor's in economics with additional interests in Punjabi and Persian, followed by a Master's degree in Urdu. At school, she teaches Urdu to multiple primary grades.

When she graduated in 2003, Kiran initially wanted to pursue fashion design. However, she felt that teaching offered a more socially accepted and stable career path for women in her context. Her career took on greater urgency when her father became unwell, and his death in 2020 during COVID marked a significant emotional turning point in her life. Since then, teaching has provided both structure and a sense of purpose. She describes her relationship with the profession as mixed—some days she enjoys the work, and on other days she finds it challenging—but she remains committed and approaches her responsibilities with consistency.

Kiran is particularly intrigued by recent innovations in education, such as AI and online learning. These advancements excite her and give her a sense of progress within the field. At the same time, she finds AI implementation in Urdu classrooms difficult, especially given that many of her students' parents are not educated, which complicates communication and support at home. Despite these challenges, she continues to teach with passion and perseverance.

Her decision to join this year-long SEL and mindfulness training stemmed from a desire to learn new approaches, especially since she feels Urdu does not receive the same innovation and development as English. She believes SEL and mindfulness will be beneficial for her students, helping them manage academic stress, regulate emotions, and build stronger relationships. She also sees value in using these practices to strengthen her own connection with students. Kiran notes that her students are diverse, and she observes differences between girls and boys: the girls tend to be eager and quick learners, while the boys often make fun of new practices before eventually adapting to them.

Overall, she describes the school administration as supportive and believes they will help her implement SEL strategies in the future. Physically, she feels generally fit, though her energy fluctuates depending on workload, especially during exam periods. Emotionally, the loss of her parents has contributed to periods of low mood and an increased need for rest. Even so, she notes that work keeps her occupied and provides a sense of stability. Socially, she feels confident and independent—she drives herself to work, maintains her own routine, and appreciates the support she receives from her siblings. Financially, she feels secure since she is not responsible for providing for a family.

Kiran recommends more opportunities for discussion and academic guidance, particularly around integrating AI into Urdu instruction. She also notes that an increase in salary would be a

meaningful form of motivation. Her portrait reflects the journey of a teacher navigating personal loss, professional change, and the desire to expand her practice through continuous learning. Through this research project, she hopes to bring fresh strategies into her classroom while strengthening her own well-being and teaching identity.

Laila

Laila's journey into teaching was shaped more by circumstance than choice, yet it has become a fulfilling experience for her. Born and raised in Muridke, she lives with her parents and four siblings in a nuclear family. With a background in pre-medical studies, a Bachelor's in Education, and a Master's in Urdu, she initially envisioned a different academic path. However, she now teaches Social Studies—a decision made by her principal. Though the subject is outside her expertise, she has embraced the challenge, finding excitement in discovering new topics and engaging with her students daily.

Teaching, she acknowledges, is not as simple as it seems. While she always liked the idea of it, stepping into the role has shown her the weight of responsibility that comes with the profession. The daily task of capturing students' interest and making the subject meaningful requires dedication. Even though Social Studies is not her area of expertise, she has approached it with enthusiasm and an open mind.

Laila had no prior training in SEL but was eager to participate in this research project to learn something new. Her primary motivation was to cultivate a sense of relaxation, allowing her to enjoy both her personal and professional life more fully. The support from her peers, especially within her department, has been a key source of encouragement. She frequently discusses new lessons and teaching strategies with colleagues, benefiting from their insights and

camaraderie. While she believes the school administration would be equally supportive, she has not yet reached out for their feedback or assistance.

In terms of well-being, Laila faces some physical health challenges. She has a blood pressure condition and often experiences fatigue, particularly towards the end of the academic year when extracurricular activities intensify. Despite this, she remains emotionally at ease, managing to maintain a sense of balance. Socially, her confidence has grown significantly since she began teaching. The profession has refined her communication skills and self-presentation, leading to improved self-esteem and stronger interactions with others. Financially, Laila is stable. While her school salary provides a foundation, she supplements her income by offering home tuitions. With minimal financial responsibilities at the moment, she enjoys a sense of independence.

Looking ahead, she suggests the introduction of physical and mental wellness workshops, particularly during February and March—periods she identifies as the most stressful months of the academic year. Such initiatives, she believes, would help educators manage stress effectively and maintain their well-being.

Laila's story reflects the journey of a dedicated and evolving educator. She is navigating the complexities of teaching with resilience, embracing new challenges while striving for a balance between professional responsibilities and personal fulfillment. With her commitment to growth and well-being, she continues to shape both her own path and the learning experiences of her students.

Noor

Noor's journey into teaching was not one driven by passion but by circumstance. Having spent her early years in Saudi Arabia, where she completed twelve years of education, she later

pursued her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English in Pakistan. Marriage took her back to Saudi Arabia, where she lived in a joint family. Seven years ago, she returned to Pakistan, now settled in a nuclear family with her school-going daughter while her husband visits bi-monthly.

Teaching was not her first choice—her aspirations initially lay in preparing for the CSS exams. However, after moving back to her former school, she was invited to join as a teacher. Wanting to engage in meaningful work, she accepted the opportunity. Over time, she grew to enjoy working with young children, finding fulfillment in the nurturing and "motherly" nature of the profession. She takes great pride in the idea that even if just one or two students in a class of thirty absorb the lessons—whether academic or moral—her efforts are worthwhile. The positive responses from parents reinforce her sense of purpose, making her work satisfying despite the challenges.

Noor has had no prior training in SEL, yet she strongly believes in its necessity. For her, SEL is not only beneficial for students but also for teachers, offering a space for emotional growth and catharsis. She actively incorporates mindfulness tools like breathwork and visualization in her teaching, practices that she finds personally uplifting. She appreciates that her students often take these techniques home and share them with their parents, who, in turn, express gratitude for these valuable skills. However, during exam periods, the increased workload often limits her ability to integrate these practices.

Her relationship with peers has evolved—she once felt more connected with them, but over time, those bonds have loosened. Nonetheless, she still appreciates her colleagues and finds the administration supportive. While teachers are expected to take the lead in most tasks and conversations, she values the flexibility and guidance the administration provides. She believes

that having a stronger voice among peers to discuss concerns would further enhance the teaching experience.

When it comes to well-being, Noor describes herself as physically healthy and emotionally content. With school ending early in the afternoon, she has ample time to rest and recharge. Having fewer domestic responsibilities now that her child is grown, she experiences minimal stress. Socially, however, her work commitments leave little time for extended family interactions. Nonetheless, teaching has significantly boosted her confidence, particularly in her interactions with parents and colleagues. Financial independence is not a necessity for her, as she does not rely on her job for monetary stability. Instead, she teaches to stay engaged and productive. This intrinsic motivation, coupled with her naturally positive outlook, allows her to navigate challenges with resilience.

Noor's recommendations for a better teaching environment include fostering spaces where teachers can openly voice their concerns, particularly among peers. She emphasizes kindness, recognizing that everyone is battling personal struggles. At her core, she is an optimist—someone who believes in the power of positivity to transform not just her own life but also the lives of those she teaches.

Educational and cultural backgrounds

Understanding the educational and cultural background of participants is important for situating their perspectives on SEL and mindfulness. All the participating teachers were Muslims. They came from semi-urban and urban areas surrounding the school, including Muridke and Sheikhupura, where most had also completed their own schooling. All teachers held a Master's degree, the standard qualification for teachers at CBDS, and taught across grades 1–5 in subjects such as English, Urdu, Mathematics, Computer Science, and Social Studies. Each

had at least three years of teaching experience at the school, and one senior teacher had also taught internationally. Beyond their academic degrees, professional development occurred primarily through school-led trainings. Urdu was the participants' first language and English their second, learned mainly through formal education. Although the terms SEL and mindfulness were unfamiliar to the participants, the underlying concepts aligned with their cultural and religious practices, with English providing new vocabulary to articulate ideas already familiar in their context. As Iman reflected, *"Ma'am Ramsha, the interesting thing is that our culture and religion already teach us all of this. Speaking with kindness. Listening with compassion. Being thankful for everything. It is just that with you, we are learning new words for it."*

Roles and responsibilities

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of participants is important for recognizing the different ways in which they might engage with SEL and mindfulness. The teachers held a mix of teaching and leadership positions within the school. Some were subject-specific teachers in areas such as Social Studies, Mathematics, English, and Urdu, while others also took on additional responsibilities. Two participants served as Heads of Department (HODs), and several worked as grade or junior coordinators alongside their teaching duties. This range of roles reflected both classroom-level and school-level responsibilities among the participants.

Motivation to join the profession

Understanding the participants' motivation to join the teaching profession is important for contextualizing their commitment and approach to new practices such as SEL and mindfulness. The reasons they shared varied: some were inspired by role models and a desire to give back, while others entered the profession because they felt they had limited alternatives. As Fatima reflected, *"I had such wonderful teachers growing up that I wanted to be just like*

them." In contrast, a few described teachings at the school as a temporary engagement rather than a long-term or intentional career pursuit. For example, Laila shared, *"I wasn't doing anything after my graduation, so I thought I'd start teaching. It's not so bad—the timings are manageable, and I feel good about being independent and earning on my own."* This range of motivations highlights the different starting points from which teachers engaged in the study.

Reasons for participating in the research

Understanding the reasons for participation is important for situating how teachers engaged with the study. Through the initial interviews and monthly coaching sessions, all participants expressed a willingness to learn, grow, and connect with a supportive professional community. This shared motivation reflected their openness to exploring new practices together.

One participant, Noor, demonstrated particular enthusiasm by reaching out directly via email to express her interest in joining the study and learning from an external trainer. In her email, she wrote:

"Dear Ramsha,

It was wonderful having you with us during the recent workshops. Your kind gestures, meaningful approach, and command over your skills are truly admirable (especially the yoga). I am looking forward to your kind approval to be part of your research. I am currently serving as _____for the last two years, and in the future, I would love to continue learning from you."

Noor's email captures the genuine curiosity, appreciation, and openness that many teachers brought to the study, highlighting their motivation to engage deeply with practices that supported both their personal and professional growth.

Familiarity with SEL and mindfulness

Establishing participants' familiarity with SEL, mindfulness, and movement was necessary for understanding the extent of change the training facilitated. Since the study aimed to explore how teachers could integrate these practices into their professional and personal contexts, gauging their baseline knowledge provided insight into their starting point for learning. Tracking shifts in familiarity across the four domains also highlighted which practices resonated most strongly, where the greatest growth occurred, and which areas required further support for deeper understanding and sustained application. This information was collected primarily through pre- and post-questionnaires with specific questions such as, *how familiar are you with SEL/Mindfulness/Yoga/Breathwork?* (See Appendix C). Individual interviews and monthly reflections added depth to these perceptions and captured how they evolved over the course of the year (see Appendix D, E and G).

Prior to the intervention, participants demonstrated limited familiarity with SEL, mindfulness, yoga, and breathwork. SEL had the lowest recognition, with most teachers rating themselves as *least familiar*. Mindfulness and breathwork had slightly higher awareness, with several participants reporting they were *somewhat familiar*. Yoga was somewhat better known than SEL, but most participants rated themselves as *least* or *somewhat familiar*, with only a few identifying as *most familiar*, reflecting a surface-level understanding rather than an integrated practice.

Following the intervention, there was a notable shift across all four domains. Mindfulness showed the most dramatic improvement, with nearly all participants rating themselves as *most familiar*. Breathwork also showed significant gains, moving from *least* or *somewhat familiar* to *moderately* and *most familiar* for the majority. SEL familiarity improved as well, shifting from

predominantly *least* to a more balanced distribution across *somewhat*, *moderately*, and *most*. Yoga familiarity progressed more gradually, with most participants remaining at *somewhat familiar* but a few advancing to *moderately* and *most familiar*. Overall, the findings show a clear increase in participants' familiarity with SEL, mindfulness, yoga, and breathwork over the course of the study.

Table 4.1 summarizes descriptive statistics derived from participants' self-reported familiarity with SEL, mindfulness, yoga, and breathwork before and after the intervention. Likert-type responses were converted to numerical values (*1 = Least familiar* to *5 = Most familiar*) to calculate mean scores and assess directional changes. Results indicate marked improvement in familiarity across all domains, with the greatest gains observed in mindfulness (+1.75) and SEL (+1.62), suggesting enhanced understanding and comfort with these practices following the training.

Table 4.1. Change in familiarity with SEL, mindfulness, yoga and breathwork

Familiarity with	Pre-questionnaire mean	Post-questionnaire mean	Change
SEL	1.38	3.00	+1.62
Mindfulness	2.63	4.38	+1.75
Yoga	2.13	3.13	+1.00
Breathwork	2.25	3.75	+1.50

The findings

This section presents the findings for each research question, integrating evidence from questionnaires, interviews, monthly reflections, and analytic memos. Instead of reporting each data source separately, the results are organized through shared codes, categories, and themes to show how the data converge, or at times diverge, to address the study's four guiding questions.

This structure highlights shifts in teachers' social and emotional competencies, the impact of the intervention on their well-being, how they applied these practices in their personal and professional lives, and the kinds of support they identified moving forward.

Organizing the findings by research question keeps the findings focused and prevents unrelated but interesting insights from diverting attention from the study's aims. This integrated approach provides a coherent and meaningful account of teachers' experiences while maintaining analytic clarity and relevance.

RQ1: Impact of SEL and mindfulness on teachers' perceived well-being

This question aimed to understand how teachers perceived their own well-being before and after a year-long intervention in SEL, mindfulness, and movement. Since the focus was on self-perception, it was important to explore both how teachers understood well-being and how they evaluated their own. To address this question, data was collected through pre- and post-training questionnaires, initial and closing interviews, and monthly reflections. These multiple sources allowed for a comprehensive look at teachers' well-being in both personal and professional domains.

In the questionnaires, teachers were asked about their familiarity with SEL, mindfulness, yoga, and breathwork as well as their perceptions of well-being and their self-care practices. Specific areas included emotional regulation, workload, mindfulness, and strategies for maintaining balance. In the initial interviews, participants were invited to define well-being, discuss its importance, and share how they cared for themselves. During the intervention, monthly reflections and coaching sessions offered further insight into how their understandings and practices evolved over time.

Findings from the early data, including initial interviews and monthly reflections, showed that most participants initially described their well-being in general or physical terms, often saying they were "*fine*" "*good*" or "*okay*" without offering much detail. Self-care was primarily understood in physical terms, focusing on areas such as healthy eating, weight management, and personal grooming, including skincare and haircare. Well-being was seen more as the absence of illness rather than as a holistic balance.

As the intervention progressed, teachers were introduced to different dimensions of well-being through guided activities, reflective exercises, and group discussions. Among these, the *Wheel of Life* emerged as one of the most engaging and transformative tools. This activity invited teachers to visually assess their sense of balance across various domains, such as emotional health, relationships, career, spirituality, physical well-being, and personal growth. By rating their satisfaction in each area, teachers gained a clearer understanding of how different aspects of their lives were interconnected and where greater attention was needed. The exercise sparked meaningful conversations among peers and family members. Several participants reported discussing their reflections with spouses, parents, children, and friends. This collective engagement not only deepened their self-awareness but also fostered empathy and mutual understanding within their social circles. Many teachers noted that knowing themselves at a deeper level helped them set more realistic goals and hold themselves accountable to their own growth. In their closing interviews, all participants mentioned using this tool describing it as particularly meaningful and practical. Iman captured this shared sentiment during her final interview, reflecting, "*We already knew all of this about ourselves on the surface, but never got to sit and think about it like this. Now we've come to know so much about ourselves more deeply, and perhaps, we might begin to understand others too.*"

Alongside these reflective tools, participants were introduced to practical strategies for strengthening their social and emotional competencies and enhancing well-being. These included breathwork, mindfulness meditation, and non-violent communication techniques, all designed to help them regulate emotions, manage stress, and communicate more compassionately. In the early phases, participants often struggled to integrate these practices into their daily routines as they were still becoming familiar with the concepts and resources. However, over time and with ongoing coaching, modeling, and peer dialogue, they began to adapt the practices to fit their personal and professional contexts. Some drew inspiration from each other's reflections, while others modified activities to make them more feasible in busy school schedules or home environments. By the later stages of the intervention, participants spoke more openly about the stresses they faced, such as exam pressures, heavy workloads, conflicts with their peers, or broader social and political uncertainties, and described how they were using mindfulness and breathing techniques to navigate them. For many, these practices evolved from occasional exercises into consistent tools for emotional grounding, both in their classrooms and in their personal lives.

By the time of the post-questionnaires and closing interviews, participants' understanding of well-being had become noticeably more nuanced and multidimensional. Rather than viewing it solely in physical terms, many began to define well-being as a balance of physical, mental, emotional, financial, spiritual, and relational health. Their emotional vocabulary also expanded, allowing for more precise expression of inner states. Teachers used a broader range of descriptors to articulate both uplifting and challenging emotions, including "stressed," "relaxed," "frustrated," "energized," "pressured," "motivated," and "positive." This linguistic shift reflected a deepening emotional awareness and greater ease in naming and communicating their feelings.

Several participants also reported tangible improvements in stress management, energy levels, and emotional regulation. They described feeling more confident in their teaching, more connected to their students, and more purposeful in their professional roles—signs of a growing internalization of social and emotional learning principles.

The coding of questionnaires, interviews, and reflections on NVivo data generated key themes across four areas summarized in the table below:

Table 4.2. Codes, categories and themes for RQ1

RQ1: In what ways, if any, does training in SEL, mindfulness, and movement impact teachers' self-perception of their wellbeing?		
Initial codes	Categories	Themes
Descriptive vocabulary;	Emotional literacy	Personal well-being
Diverse feelings; emotional; physical	Self-awareness	
Breathing to manage; pause before responding	Emotional regulation	
Energy for tasks at home and work; motivation; punctual; finishing tasks on time	Energy and motivation	
Confidence	Self-efficacy	Professional well-being
Calm, focused, academic achievement	Classroom environment	
Overworked; time management; affirmations	Work management	

Overall, two major findings emerged for this research question:

1. Teachers' perceived personal well-being improved through sustained coaching and reflection that supported greater self-awareness and self-management.

2. Teachers' perceived professional well-being strengthened, as they felt more competent, confident, and purposeful in their roles as educators.

While the degree of change varied among individuals, the overall impact of the SEL and mindfulness training was positive, with most participants reporting new strategies for managing stress, improved emotional awareness, and a stronger sense of balance in their lives.

RQ2a. Incorporation in personal life

This two-part question explored how teachers integrated SEL and mindfulness practices into their personal lives, and the challenges they faced when they did not. Data was collected through monthly reflections, closing interviews, and the closing questionnaire, which together provided a comprehensive view of teachers' efforts to apply strategies at home. In the monthly reflections, teachers were asked directly about how they were using SEL in their personal lives, what worked, what did not work, and what challenges they faced. These reflections were often expanded during monthly coaching meetings, where participants shared experiences and drew inspiration from one another, while receiving modifications or suggestions to adapt practices more effectively. Closing interviews and questionnaires offered further opportunities to reflect on their journey over the year and describe any changes in their home lives.

In the early stages, implementation at home was limited. Teachers frequently responded with "*don't know how*" or "*don't have the time*," indicating that lack of understanding and time constraints were barriers to practice. However, as their familiarity with SEL and mindfulness grew over the months, teachers began incorporating specific strategies into their daily lives, particularly at home. Among these, breathing exercises emerged as the most popular practice. Teachers described using techniques such as taking "three mindful breaths," "breathing out a color," or "breathing like a flower," often shared with friends or children in lighthearted

moments. As Amal reflected, *"These seem silly, but they're so accessible and instantly make me feel lighter."* Others mentioned practicing before bedtime, during commutes, or alongside evening tea and positive affirmations, describing these moments as grounding and fulfilling.

In addition to breathwork, several participants began integrating simple movement practices and reflective journaling into their routines. One teacher noted, *"I don't think about moving consciously very often, but when I practice a few stretches like you showed in our session, I always feel refreshed."* Laila shared that doing a brief body scan before bedtime helped her feel calm and more grounded at the end of the day. Others used journaling to manage stress, set intentions, and clarify personal values, describing it as a way to "get to know themselves better." Together, these small but consistent practices reflected a gradual internalization of mindfulness and emotional regulation strategies in teachers' personal lives.

Beyond individual growth, teachers also shared how these practices extended into their family and social lives. Several reported practicing breathing exercises with their children to help calm them during moments of stress, while others engaged siblings or cousins in reflective conversations. These shared practices created opportunities for open communication, strengthened relationships, and helped integrate mindfulness into everyday family interactions. The analysis of data in NVivo highlighted following major themes and codes:

Table 4.3. Codes, categories and themes for RQ2a

RQ2a): In what ways, if any, do elementary Pakistani teachers incorporate the SEL based professional development in their personal life?		
Codes	Categories	Themes
Breathing, journaling, gratitude	Mindfulness practices	Practical strategies
Wheel of life, NVC, goal setting	Use of tools	

Sabr (patience), shukr (gratitude), tawakkul (trust in God)	Cultural and religious values	Meaningful alignment
Relating English SEL terms to Urdu concepts	Urdu language	
Revisiting notes, reaching out of curiousity	Notes and new research	Ongoing engagement

The overall trajectory revealed a clear shift from initial uncertainty and hesitation to a meaningful personal and relational integration of SEL and mindfulness practices. Two major outcomes emerged from the findings:

1. Teachers integrated simple SEL and mindfulness practices into daily life, aligning them with cultural and religious values.
2. Teachers stayed engaged by revisiting notes, practicing regularly, and sharing activities with others, leading to greater self-awareness, emotional balance, and compassion.

RQ3a. Incorporation in classrooms

This two-part question examined how teachers applied the practical strategies learned during the SEL and mindfulness training within their classrooms and, when they did not, the reasons they provided. The goal was to understand how teachers implemented these practices at a professional level and how, in their perception, this influenced the classroom environment. To answer this question, data was collected through monthly reflections, closing interviews, and the closing questionnaire, providing multiple data sources for triangulation. In the monthly reflections, teachers were asked directly: *"In what ways are you implementing SEL in your classroom?"*, *"What worked?"*, *"What did not work?"*, and *"What impact are you noticing on yourself or your students?"*. Follow-up discussions during monthly meetings provided

opportunities for deeper exploration of responses, allowing participants to share challenges, inspire one another, and collectively decide how to take the practices forward.

During the closing interviews, participants reflected on their year-long journey and described their transformation, or lack thereof. They were asked questions such as *"Do you understand SEL?"*, *"Was this training useful?"*, *"How did you practice SEL in your classroom?"*, and *"Did you notice any changes in yourself or your students?"*. These discussions helped illuminate teachers' evolving understanding of SEL and its perceived value in teaching and learning. The closing questionnaire supplemented these insights by capturing additional perspectives, both through closed- and open-ended questions, on the impact of SEL and mindfulness in the classroom context.

The findings revealed a gradual but meaningful implementation process. Similar to their experiences at home, teachers initially expressed uncertainty, noting that they *"didn't know how"* or *"didn't have the time"* to incorporate SEL and mindfulness into their teaching. As teachers' understanding deepened, they began intentionally integrating SEL and mindfulness strategies into their classrooms. The most common practices included breathing exercises, emotional check-ins, and short grounding or movement activities used as energizers or brain breaks. These quickly became student favorites—described as "exciting" and "fun." Kiran shared, *"Sometimes we forget because of the workload, and the students remind us to do them."* Similarly, Hira noted, *"Even if you're rushing, taking a few seconds to breathe together changes the class energy completely. It immediately becomes calmer and more focused."* Teachers also adapted tools from the training, creating age-appropriate SEL activities such as gratitude challenges and emotion-sharing circles. *"Even the quieter students speak up sometimes, which feels so good,"* said Amal.

These practices became valued additions to teachers' toolkits by providing simple, adaptable techniques for maintaining focus and emotional balance. Some began lessons with mindfulness, while others used the activities during transitions or substitute periods to manage energy. Noor shared, *"I love taking students outside for the grounding five senses exercise. It's lovely to hear the different things they notice—you'd be surprised what they come up with."* Overall, this classroom integration reflected a deeper shift: teachers were not only applying SEL strategies but embodying them, modeling calmness, awareness, and empathy in their daily teaching.

Teachers reported several positive outcomes from these implementations. Many noted that they themselves felt calmer and more centered, which in turn influenced classroom dynamics. Students appeared more attentive, energetic, and cooperative, often completing tasks quickly in anticipation of participating in mindfulness or movement activities. Several teachers described noticing a shift in classroom energy and stronger student-teacher relationships, as SEL and mindfulness created space for empathy, reflection, and connection.

Beyond the classroom, these practices began to ripple outward. Teachers shared that the parents had noticed changes in their children's behavior at home and often expressed appreciation during parent-teacher meetings. Some parents even sought advice on handling behavioral issues at home. Teachers felt confident offering practical strategies such as emotional check-ins, breathing exercises, or simple movement activities from the tools they had personally practiced and observed in action. Hira reflected, *"I felt so good about myself as a teacher that I had all these tools and resources to share with parents, and I could talk about them confidently because I had experienced the benefits myself."* Noor also shared, *"I could confidently share these tools with parents because I had seen the shifts in my classroom environment and student*

behavior after applying them." Another parent reportedly reached out to Noor, expressing appreciation for the new activities her son had shared and encouraged her to try them at home. The teacher reflected, *"That made me feel so proud—that I'm teaching them something meaningful beyond academics."*

The analysis of data in NVivo revealed the following major themes and codes:

Table 4.4. Codes, categories and themes for RQ3a

RQ3a): In what ways, if any, do elementary Pakistani teachers incorporate the SEL based professional development in their classroom?		
Codes	Categories	Themes
Breathing, emotional check-ins, gratitude, 5 grounding senses, Body Scan	Mindfulness and SEL	Practical strategies
Start of lesson, mid-lesson, substitute periods; once a week; daily	Routine and consistency	
Increased attention; focus; creativity; participation; confidence	Student engagement	Impact on classroom
Calm; redirected energy; cooperative	Emotional regulation	
Empathy; trust; communication	Teacher-student relationship	
Sharing tools; parents appreciating	Parental Engagement	Beyond classroom
Essential; practical; beyond academics; experiential	Understanding and value	Perceptions

Overall, the key finding for this question indicated that:

1. Teachers integrated simple, accessible SEL and mindfulness strategies into their classroom routines to enhancing classroom management, strengthening relationships, and fostering calmer, more focused learning environments.

RQ 2b and 3b Challenges

The second part of research questions 2 and 3 examined the challenges teachers encountered when incorporating SEL, mindfulness, or movement-based strategies into their personal or classroom practice. The purpose was to identify barriers to implementation and to address these through ongoing support during monthly coaching sessions.

The most common challenges reported were lack of understanding, lack of time, and lack of physical space. In the initial months, many teachers admitted that although they conceptually understood SEL and mindfulness from the training, they struggled to translate that understanding into practical application. Some described uncertainty about when or how to use the activities effectively within their existing lesson plans. Others mentioned the difficulty of balancing academic responsibilities with the integration of new practices, explaining that they felt pressured to complete the syllabus and could not afford to "*add something extra*." Several teachers also noted that limited classroom space made it difficult to facilitate movement-based activities, particularly in larger or more crowded classes.

During the monthly coaching sessions, each of these challenges was addressed through collaborative problem-solving. Demonstrations, modeling, and peer sharing provided teachers with concrete strategies for adaptation. For example, using seated stretches when space was limited or integrating short breathing pauses between academic tasks. Over time, the data reflected a gradual reduction in these barriers, as teachers gained confidence and flexibility in modifying practices to suit their classroom contexts.

Gender differences and student dynamics also influenced implementation comfort. One male teacher, Ahmad, explained that while he understood the concepts and saw their value, he hesitated to model mindfulness or movement exercises in front of his male students out of fear they might make fun of him or that he might lose authority. Despite ongoing encouragement and discussion, he struggled to overcome this hesitation, highlighting how gender dynamics and perceived classroom control shaped teachers' willingness to engage in embodied practices. Teachers also observed differences across grade levels and between boys and girls. As Hire shared, "Initially it was hard to bring them on board and help them understand what this is for." Fatima noted that "boys are more hyper," while Laila added, "some classes are very active and hard to keep engaged, but once you do this with them, they're 100% focused." Teachers agreed that girls generally followed instructions more readily, though students across all classes varied in expressiveness. Over time, however, many teachers reflected that students' openness and responses helped them learn "how to manage ourselves and others" more effectively.

Teachers also faced external challenges beyond their control, including political unrest, extreme weather, and school closures, which disrupted the consistency of classroom practice. During these periods, teachers had to shift to online teaching, where they found it difficult to maintain engagement or include SEL and mindfulness activities. Some teachers also expressed uncertainty about how to adapt mindfulness and movement activities to a virtual environment, as this was their first experience teaching online. They also reported low student attendance and limited time to cover academic material, leaving little space for non-academic practices. Iman expressed her concern, noting, "*After all, academics are more important than SEL. The parents and administration ultimately want to see grades and results at the end of the day*."

The following table summarizes the codes and themes generated for these questions.

Table 4.5. Codes, categories and themes for RQ 2b and 3b

RQ 2b) and 3) If not, what challenges are they facing?		
Codes	Categories	Themes
Hesitation; personality type; confidence	Self-efficacy	Teacher-related
Male vs. female teacher; authority	Gender-related discomfort	
Boys vs. girls compliance	Student gender	Student-related
Grades; energy levels; understanding	Receptivity	
Grades, Exams, homework, parents and admin pressure	Academic priorities	Institutional constraints
Hectic schedules; limited class time	Workload and time	
Space constraints	Logistical limitations	Context and environment
Political instability; smog; school closures; holidays	External disruptions	

The major finding that emerged for these research questions is:

1) Teachers' engagement with SEL and mindfulness varied due to personal hesitation, gender norms, academic pressures, time constraints, and external challenges

RQ4. Support for sustainability

To address this question, data was collected primarily through closing interviews and post-training questionnaires. Insights from ongoing monthly coaching sessions and reflection meetings also informed the findings, as these spaces allowed teachers to share their evolving needs, challenges, and suggestions in real time. These discussions not only guided the direction

of the coaching sessions but also provided valuable input for understanding how teachers envisioned sustaining SEL and mindfulness in their professional practice.

The responses highlighted a strong sense of appreciation for the existing support system at the school. All participants expressed satisfaction with the school administration, describing them as "approachable" and consistently willing to provide help when needed. Several teachers mentioned that the administration was "always on board" and "ready to support if asked," reflecting a culture of openness and encouragement within the school.

Looking ahead, teachers emphasized the importance of continued support to deepen and sustain SEL and mindfulness practices. Many requested an ongoing version of the program, suggesting that future coaching sessions could be held less frequently, perhaps monthly or bi-monthly, but continue to provide "spaces to express themselves" and engage in "guided conversations beyond their staffroom and work." Teachers also expressed a desire for subject-specific integration, asking for practical models of how to embed SEL and mindfulness directly into lesson plans so that these approaches would feel like an organic part of teaching rather than an additional task.

In addition to personal and instructional support, participants identified the need for school-wide engagement to ensure sustainability. They suggested involving all stakeholders, including administrators, staff, students, and parents, in developing a shared understanding and consistent language of SEL across the school community. Such a whole-school approach, they believed, would strengthen the collective culture of well-being and make SEL and mindfulness more embedded in daily routines.

The codes and themes that emerged for this question included are as follows.

Table 4.6. Codes, categories and themes for RQ4

RQ 4: In the teachers' perception, what support do they need to incorporate and sustain SEL/mindfulness in their classroom?		
Codes	Categories	Themes
WhatsApp group; sharing resources; activities; check-ins	Continued coaching	Ongoing professional development
WhatsApp group; sharing; reflections	Peer community of practice	
Activity guides; SEL tools; digital resources	Resources	
Adapting to existing subjects and curriculum	Subject-specific integration	
Consistent language and tools; scaffolding Include administration	School wide implementation	Whole-school and community engagement
Sessions for students and parents	Involvement of students and parent	

Overall, two key findings emerged:

1. Teachers emphasized the need for sustained professional support, including coaching, peer learning, and access to practical SEL resources tailored to classroom contexts
2. Teachers highlighted the importance of a school-wide approach that engages administrators, students, and parents to establish a shared SEL language and ensure long-term sustainability.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings and analysis from a year-long intervention case study exploring how SEL, mindfulness, and movement influenced teachers' self-perception of well-being, personal practices, and classroom implementation, as well as their perspectives on future support for sustaining these practices. Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, individual semi-structured interviews and monthly reflections, allowing for a rich triangulation of qualitative insights.

Across the four research questions, the findings demonstrated a gradual yet meaningful shift in teachers' understanding and application of SEL and mindfulness, both personally and professionally. The initial training, followed by sustained monthly coaching and reflection sessions, positively influenced teachers' self-perception of well-being. At both personal and professional levels, initial implementation was limited; however, consistent support and growing familiarity led to the gradual adoption of practices such as breathing, movement, and journaling. These strategies helped teachers set personal goals, manage emotions, and build healthier habits. Over time, many also shared these practices with family and friends, strengthening interpersonal relationships and extending the impact of SEL beyond the school environment.

In the classroom, teachers integrated techniques such as breathing exercises, emotional check-ins, and grounding or movement activities to improve focus, manage classroom energy, and support student engagement. These practices contributed to calmer, more positive classroom environments and stronger teacher–student relationships. Teachers also reported feeling more confident in modeling mindfulness and sharing strategies with parents.

Across both personal and professional contexts, teachers faced several challenges in implementation. These included personal hesitation, time constraints and difficulty sustaining

regular practice. Practical and contextual challenges, such as limited classroom space and competing academic demands, were common. In some cases, cultural and gender-based hesitations, as well as external disruptions like school closures, further affected the consistency of implementation.

Finally, while participants unanimously expressed appreciation for administrative support, they emphasized the need for continued professional learning opportunities and subject-specific models for integrating SEL and mindfulness. Teachers also highlighted the importance of a whole-school approach that includes administrators, staff, students, and parents in developing a shared SEL language and culture to ensure long-term sustainability.

Chapter 5 will conclude this dissertation by discussing these findings in relation to existing literature and by presenting the implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5 - Discussions, conclusions and recommendations

Recap

The purpose of this qualitative intervention case study research was to examine the impact of SEL and mindfulness training on the perceived well-being of elementary school teachers in Pakistan over the course of an academic year. It also sought to explore how such training influenced teachers both personally and professionally, and what support would they need in the future to sustain the practice. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways, if any, does training in SEL, mindfulness, and movement impact teachers' self-perception of their wellbeing?
2. a) In what ways, if any, do elementary Pakistani teachers incorporate the SEL based professional development in their personal life?

   b) If not, what challenges are they facing?
3. a) In what ways, if any, do elementary Pakistani teachers incorporate the SEL based professional development in their classroom?

   b) If not, what challenges are they facing?
4. In the teachers' perception, what support do they need incorporate and sustain SEL and mindfulness in their classroom?

The research was conducted in two phases: an initial two-day training intervention followed by eight monthly coaching sessions, accompanied by ongoing data collection through multiple methods, including pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, individual interviews (initial and closing), and monthly reflections. This methodological design enabled a

comprehensive understanding of participants' lived experiences across an academic year and ensured that their voices were meaningfully represented in addressing the research questions.

The data collected through various sources was analyzed using NVivo. Findings from the questionnaires were used to collect information about each participant's understanding of SEL and mindfulness and how well they were equipped to incorporate it into their personal lives and classrooms. The interviews and monthly reflections were analyzed on NVivo to extract codes and themes to answer the research questions. The major finding from this research included:

1. Teachers' perceived personal well-being improved through sustained coaching and reflection that supported greater self-awareness and self-management.
2. Teachers' perceived professional well-being strengthened, as they felt more competent, confident, and purposeful in their roles as educators.
3. Teachers integrated simple SEL and mindfulness practices into daily life, aligning them with cultural and religious values to set personal goals and develop healthier habits.
4. Teachers stayed engaged by revisiting notes, practicing regularly, and sharing activities with others, leading to greater self-awareness, emotional balance, and compassion.
5. Teachers integrated simple, accessible SEL and mindfulness strategies into their classroom routines to enhancing classroom management, strengthening relationships, and fostering calmer, more focused learning environments.
6. Teachers' engagement with SEL and mindfulness varied due to personal hesitation, gender norms, academic pressures, time constraints, and external challenges.
7. Teachers emphasized the need for sustained professional support, including coaching, peer learning, and access to practical SEL resources tailored to classroom contexts

8. Teachers highlighted the importance of a school-wide approach that engages administrators, students, and parents to establish a shared SEL language and ensure long-term sustainability.

This chapter will conclude the study by providing discussions, conclusions and recommendations. It will begin by presenting the research questions and discussing their subsequent findings, followed by a discussion on how these findings relate to previous and upcoming literature. The next section will discuss the limitations experienced within the study, followed by recommendations for the school and further research, and a final reflection.

Research findings and discussion

RQ 1) Impact of SEL and mindfulness on teachers' perceived well-being

The first research question aimed to understand the impact of training in SEL, mindfulness, and movement on the perceived well-being of the participating teachers. For this research question, two findings emerged from the dataset:

Finding 1: Teachers' perceived personal well-being improved through sustained coaching and reflection that supported greater self-awareness and self-management.

This finding indicates that teachers' perceptions of well-being improved most significantly through the ongoing monthly coaching sessions rather than the initial two-day training. Although initial questionnaires and early interviews suggested that teachers understood the basic concepts of SEL and mindfulness, their subsequent reflections revealed gaps in both comprehension and application. It was through continuous practice, structured reflection, and peer dialogue during monthly coaching sessions that teachers developed a deeper understanding of wellbeing and the CASEL framework. This process enabled them to integrate SEL and mindfulness tools and strategies for their personal growth. Sustained coaching allowed them to

pause, reflect, and intentionally apply self-regulation techniques which are core components of emotional intelligence and well-being (Goleman, 1995; CASEL, 2020). These developments also align with the Six Seconds' Emotional Intelligence Framework - *Know Yourself, Choose Yourself, Give Yourself* – which emphasized self-awareness, intentional action and purposeful contribution (Six Seconds, n.d.).

This process reflects principles from adult learning theories, particularly Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* (1984) and Mezirow's *Transformative Learning Theory* (1997). Through ongoing coaching, teachers moved through Kolb's cycle of learning: experiencing SEL tools in practice, reflecting on their effects, conceptualizing key ideas, and experimenting with new applications. This iterative process made learning embodied and practical rather than theoretical. Mezirow's lens further explains how critical reflection on emotional experiences prompted teachers to question assumptions, develop self-awareness, and cultivate empathy marking a genuine transformation in mindset and behavior rather than surface-level understanding.

This process also echoes Schon's notion of the reflective practitioner (1983), highlighting how reflection within a supportive environment enables teachers to make sense of emotional experiences and transform them into personal and professional growth. The combination of coaching and reflection provided both accountability and psychological safety, creating a relational space where teachers could explore challenges openly and develop constructive strategies for emotional management. This is consistent with literature that identifies coaching and collaborative reflection as catalysts for adult learning and self-awareness (Roeser, et al., 2013). Research by Jennings et al. (2017) and Flook et al. (2013) similarly demonstrates that mindfulness-based professional development helps teachers recognize emotional triggers, reduce

stress, and cultivate resilience, outcomes that were mirrored in the experiences of participants in this study.

An important insight here is that while short-term workshops can raise awareness, they rarely build lasting competencies. Without extended opportunities for reflection and application, teachers may treat SEL as an "add-on" or "afterthought," easily overshadowed by the pressures of academic performance and workload. Sustained engagement, on the other hand, enables deeper self-inquiry and the internalization of SEL principles. This finding supports the argument that professional learning in SEL is most effective when delivered as an ongoing, iterative process rather than a one-time event (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Continued coaching provided participants with the space to experiment, adapt, and clarify their understanding which is an essential condition for translating abstract SEL concepts into meaningful behavioral and emotional change.

The conclusion that emerges from this finding is that teachers require ongoing, structured support to develop their own SEL competencies before they can sustain improvements in personal well-being or effectively model these skills in the classroom. Standalone interventions are insufficient because they fail to address the complexities of adult learning and the contextual barriers teachers face, such as stress, time constraints, and limited emotional support structures. For schools, this suggests that professional development in SEL must be conceptualized as a continuous, embedded process that is integrated into school culture and supported by coaching, collaboration, and reflection, rather than as an isolated or short-term initiative.

Finding 2: Teachers' perceived professional well-being strengthened, as they felt more competent, confident, and purposeful in their roles as educators.

The second finding indicated that the SEL and mindfulness training contributed not only to teachers' personal well-being but also to their professional well-being. As teachers developed greater emotional awareness and regulation, they reported an enhanced sense of competence, confidence, and purpose in their professional roles. This reinforces the interconnection between personal and professional well-being, suggesting that when teachers feel emotionally balanced and supported, they are better able to engage meaningfully in their work. These outcomes reflect the ecological model of teacher well-being, which positions well-being as a dynamic interaction between personal and relational factors (Jennings et. Al, 2009). As teachers cultivated internal resources through SEL and mindfulness, they were better able to navigate external demands, contributing to healthier professional identities and classroom relationships.

During the initial interviews, teachers described their motivation for joining the profession as rooted in care for children and service to society. Over time, however, this intrinsic motivation had weakened under academic pressures, administrative burdens, and limited professional agency. Participation in the SEL and mindfulness training, particularly the sustained monthly coaching, offered a space for professional renewal, helping teachers reconnect with their sense of purpose. Reflective dialogue and collaborative learning fostered emotional restoration and rekindled joy in teaching, consistent with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) notion of moral purpose as the heart of teacher professionalism.

The training also enhanced teachers' self-efficacy, defined by Bandura (1997) as the belief in one's capacity to influence outcomes. Through mastery experiences, peer modeling, and affirming feedback embedded in the coaching process, teachers reported feeling more confident in managing classrooms, engaging with parents, and supporting colleagues. This ripple effect aligns with the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), which posits that

teachers' social-emotional competence positively influences classroom climate, student engagement, and overall school culture.

Together, these findings highlight that teacher well-being operates within nested ecological systems where internal emotional regulation, supportive relationships, and institutional culture interact to shape professional fulfillment. Strengthening any one layer, such as through SEL and mindfulness training, can initiate positive feedback loops across others. In this study, the coaching model functioned as a mediating structure that bridged individual growth with collective change.

In conclusion, this finding suggests that cultivating teachers' professional well-being requires systemic investment in their emotional and relational capacities. When educators align their inner well-being with their professional purpose, they experience renewed motivation, competence, and connectedness. Consistent with the ecological and Prosocial Classroom frameworks, this underscores that teacher development must move beyond skill training to foster emotionally intelligent, reflective, and relationally grounded educators who sustain both their own and their students' well-being.

RQ 2a) Incorporation of SEL and mindfulness in personal life

The second question aimed to understand how the teachers were practicing movement and mindfulness in their personal lives. For this research question, two findings emerged from the data set:

Finding 3: Teachers integrated simple SEL and mindfulness practices into daily life, aligning them with cultural and religious values to set personal goals and develop healthier habits.

This finding demonstrates how teachers meaningfully adapted SEL and mindfulness practices within their personal and cultural contexts. While initially introduced as professional development tools, many teachers began using strategies such as breathing exercises, journaling, gratitude reflections, and body scans in their daily routines at home. These practices were described as small yet impactful ways to regulate emotions, reduce stress, and enhance self-awareness. Importantly, rather than viewing SEL and mindfulness as foreign or external constructs, teachers contextualized them within familiar cultural and religious frameworks by drawing parallels to *sabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), and *tawakkul* (trust in God). This process of reinterpretation not only increased acceptance and accessibility but also reflected the teachers' agency in making SEL meaningful within their lived realities.

The integration of SEL and mindfulness into daily life aligns with *transformative learning theory* (Mezirow, 1997), which emphasizes reflection and reinterpretation of experiences as catalysts for personal growth. Through continued engagement and self-reflection, teachers began to internalize these practices as part of their self-understanding rather than temporary interventions. This mirrors the *experiential learning cycle* (Kolb, 1984), where learning moves from experience to reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. The participants' ability to modify and personalize mindfulness practices, such as adapting breathwork to prayer times or using gratitude journaling after evening tea, illustrates a form of cultural translation in learning (Merryfield, 2000), where global frameworks are localized through values and language.

This adaptation also reinforces the ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), which views personal well-being as embedded within cultural, relational, and environmental systems. Teachers' reinterpretation of SEL concepts within Islamic

and local cultural idioms demonstrates how ecological alignment supports sustainability. When learning resonates with one's belief system and social context, it is more likely to be maintained and transmitted across social circles. Indeed, several participants described sharing practices with family members, spouses, children, parents, and friends, suggesting that personal transformation can generate ripple effects in broader social ecosystems.

These findings echo existing literature showing that culturally relevant adaptations of SEL enhance engagement and impact. For instance, Inam, Tariq, and Zaman's (2015) cultural adaptation of the PATHS curriculum for Pakistani children emphasized that emotional literacy must be introduced through familiar language and social norms to ensure resonance. Similarly, Barlas et al. (2021) and UNESCO's Happiness Project (2024) highlight the growing recognition that SEL in the Global South must be grounded in local expressions of emotion, spirituality, and collectivist relationships. The teachers in this study embodied this process, bridging Western-origin frameworks with indigenous values of care, gratitude, and self-reflection.

This finding underscores that SEL and mindfulness are not culturally bound concepts but universal human capacities expressed through different traditions. When educators are empowered to translate these ideas through their own languages, faiths, and daily rituals, they become both participants and co-creators of emotionally intelligent education. In the context of Pakistan, this demonstrates a pathway toward decolonizing SEL by moving from replication of global models to meaningful contextualization.

In summary, this finding illustrates how teachers' personal adoption of SEL and mindfulness was both adaptive and transformative. By integrating these practices with cultural and spiritual values, teachers fostered sustainable well-being habits and extended the reach of emotional learning beyond the classroom. This integration highlights the importance of culturally

grounded approaches to teacher development that honor existing wisdom traditions while introducing new frameworks for self-awareness and compassion.

Finding 4: Teachers stayed engaged by revisiting notes, practicing regularly, and sharing activities with others, leading to greater self-awareness, emotional balance, and compassion.

This finding highlights how teachers extended their learning from the SEL and mindfulness program into both their personal and relational worlds through sustained engagement and reflection. Teachers described revisiting notes, maintaining consistent mindfulness routines, and sharing practices such as breathing exercises, gratitude reflections, and journaling with family members and peers. Once they experienced the benefits of mindfulness and emotional regulation themselves, they began introducing these practices at home with their parents, children, and spouses. These shared activities nurtured empathy, patience, and mutual understanding resulting in strengthened communication and relationships within their social circles.

This outcome aligns with existing research showing that SEL and mindfulness foster relational awareness and empathy, skills that naturally enhance interpersonal relationships (Jennings et al., 2017; Roeser et al., 2013). Mindfulness cultivates presence and compassion, enabling individuals to listen and respond with greater sensitivity (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), while SEL frameworks emphasize *relationship skills* as a core competency that extends beyond professional contexts (CASEL, 2020). In this study, as teachers deepened their own self-awareness, they became more emotionally attuned to others, contributing to a sense of connection and belonging both inside and outside the classroom.

From a theoretical standpoint, teachers' ongoing engagement reflects *Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory*, where repeated cycles of experience, reflection, and experimentation lead to internalized, embodied learning. By consistently revisiting practices and reflecting on their effects, teachers transformed abstract SEL principles into lived habits that shaped their emotional and relational behaviors. Similarly, *Mezirow's (1997) Transformative Learning Theory* provides insight into how such reflection can lead to perspective transformation where teachers began to view emotional awareness and compassion not as add-ons but as integral to their identity and relationships.

Viewed through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2006), this finding demonstrates how growth in one system, such as the professional learning environment, can influence others, including family and community microsystems. As teachers cultivated mindfulness and emotional regulation at work, these competencies naturally extended into their homes, creating ripple effects that enhanced relational well-being across contexts. This interconnection also resonates with the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), which posits that educators' social-emotional competence not only improves classroom climate but also shapes the emotional tone of their broader environments.

Overall, this finding underscores that sustained engagement with SEL and mindfulness supports both personal and relational transformation. When teachers continue reflecting, practicing, and sharing beyond formal training, learning becomes self-reinforcing and relationally generative. By embodying emotional balance and compassion in everyday life, educators contribute to a more caring and emotionally intelligent ecosystem that extends beyond the classroom into families, communities, and the broader social fabric.

RQ 3a) Incorporation of SEL and mindfulness in classrooms

Finding 5: Teachers integrated simple, accessible SEL and mindfulness strategies into their classroom routines to enhancing classroom management, strengthening relationships, and fostering calmer, more focused learning environments.

This finding illustrates how teachers applied SEL and mindfulness principles in tangible ways within their classrooms, incorporating brief breathing exercises, emotional check-ins, gratitude reflections, and movement-based activities into daily routines. These strategies served as low-effort yet effective tools to help students regulate emotions, transition between lessons, and maintain focus. Teachers reported that such practices improved classroom climate, reduced disruptive behavior, and promoted mutual respect and empathy among students.

These outcomes align closely with the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), which posits that teachers' social and emotional competence directly shapes classroom climate and student outcomes. When educators model calmness, empathy, and self-regulation, they create emotionally supportive environments that enhance learning and cooperation. The teachers in this study demonstrated this dynamic: as they practiced mindfulness and emotional awareness themselves, they modeled these behaviors for students, resulting in more harmonious and productive classrooms.

From a learning theory perspective, these practices reflect experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), as teachers actively experimented with SEL tools, reflected on outcomes, and adapted strategies to fit their unique classroom contexts. This process of trial, reflection, and adjustment transformed SEL from abstract theory into embodied practice. It also echoes Mezirow's (1997) Transformative Learning Theory, as teachers' experiences led them to question traditional

notions of discipline and control, replacing them with relational and emotionally intelligent approaches to classroom management.

These findings are consistent with prior research showing that mindfulness-based SEL interventions can enhance teachers' emotional regulation, reduce stress, and improve classroom functioning (Flook et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017). Similarly, Schonert-Reichl (2017) notes that when SEL is embedded into daily routines rather than taught as a standalone activity, its impact on both teacher and student well-being is more sustainable and meaningful.

Overall, this finding underscores that integrating simple, culturally adaptable SEL and mindfulness practices can transform classroom dynamics. Even brief, consistent routines create space for emotional regulation, connection, and shared presence—conditions essential for effective teaching and learning. For teachers in resource-constrained contexts, these practices offer accessible, low-cost pathways to fostering both academic focus and emotional well-being in their classrooms.

RQ 2b) and 3b) Challenges

Finding 6: Teachers' engagement with SEL and mindfulness varied due to personal hesitation, gender norms, academic pressures, time constraints, and external challenges.

This finding reflects the range of challenges teachers faced while implementing SEL and mindfulness practices at both personal and professional levels. Although teachers expressed an understanding of SEL and recognized its importance, their early reflections and monthly coaching conversations revealed difficulties in applying it consistently. These challenges included lack of time and space, uncertainty about how to implement specific practices, hesitation to practice openly with students, and broader external disruptions such as repeated school closures due to political unrest and climate-related issues like smog. These factors

collectively affected teachers' ability to integrate SEL and mindfulness into their daily routines in sustainable ways.

At the personal level, several teachers acknowledged that they initially did not know how to begin. They needed clearer guidance and concrete examples of how to apply SEL in daily life. With coaching support, they began experimenting with short practices, such as mindful breathing, brief reflection pauses, or simple stretching. As they started noticing positive shifts in their emotional awareness, calmness, and self-regulation, these practices became more consistent. This gradual improvement reflects the role of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997): teachers who experienced early success with small, manageable practices became more confident in sustaining them. This process also aligns with Roeser et al. (2013) and Jennings et al. (2017), who found that consistent, small-scale mindfulness practice can strengthen emotional balance and well-being over time.

In the classroom, teachers cited heavy academic and administrative demands as the primary barrier to implementing SEL. Frequent assessments, notebook checks, and extracurricular obligations left little space for reflective or relational practices. These challenges were further compounded by unplanned school closures caused by political unrest and climate conditions, which forced teachers to shift abruptly to online instruction. The transition was described as disorienting, marked by low student attendance and pressure to make up lost content. Physical space limitations also constrained movement-based or group activities, particularly in classrooms of over 25 students. Some teachers adapted creatively by using chair-based stretches or brief breathing pauses, yet implementation remained inconsistent. One male teacher expressed hesitation to model mindfulness in front of male students, fearing loss of

authority or being perceived as "soft," reflecting how gender norms and social expectations shape teachers' comfort with embodied and emotional practices (Emerson et al., 2017).

These experiences reveal how ecological and contextual factors influence teachers' engagement with SEL. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2006), teachers' ability to sustain SEL and mindfulness depended not only on their individual motivation and emotional readiness (microsystem) but also on institutional norms, cultural perceptions, and environmental disruptions (meso- and exosystems). When supportive conditions, such as time, administrative understanding, and psychological safety, were lacking, uptake remained limited despite teachers' intrinsic motivation. Conversely, teachers who felt supported by peers or administrators demonstrated stronger agency and persistence, highlighting the relational and systemic nature of teacher well-being.

Overall, this finding underscores that variability in teacher engagement with SEL and mindfulness arises not from disinterest but from a complex interplay of personal, cultural, and structural barriers. While sustained coaching helped some teachers overcome initial uncertainty and build confidence, others continued to struggle with contextual and institutional constraints. These findings emphasize that SEL and mindfulness interventions must evolve alongside teachers' lived realities offering ongoing support, contextual flexibility, and validation through peer and administrative encouragement. Strengthening teachers' self-efficacy and sense of agency, while addressing systemic constraints, is essential to embedding SEL and mindfulness as sustainable components of educational practice.

RQ 4) Support for sustainability

Finding 7: Teachers emphasized the need for sustained professional support, including coaching, peer learning, and access to practical SEL resources tailored to classroom contexts.

This finding emerged from teachers' reflections after participating in the year-long SEL and mindfulness training with sustained monthly coaching. Through this experience, teachers recognized the importance of ongoing professional support for maintaining both personal well-being and classroom integration. They described the coaching sessions as safe, restorative spaces which provided them with opportunities to reflect, share experiences, and build meaningful peer connections. These dialogues helped teachers process emotions, sustain motivation, and gain practical insights into how SEL and mindfulness could be adapted to their professional realities. Several participants also suggested that slightly less frequent sessions might allow more time for independent practice and reflection between meetings, highlighting the need for balance between structure and autonomy.

Beyond continued support, teachers emphasized the need for subject-specific SEL integration, noting that embedding SEL within core subjects rather than treating it as an "add-on" would make implementation more authentic and sustainable. They proposed linking emotional literacy to storytelling in language classes, gratitude reflections to moral education, and mindfulness to observation in science lessons. Such integration aligns with CASEL's (2020) model of systemic SEL, which promotes embedding emotional learning across curricula and school culture, and with Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who argue that professional learning is most impactful when teachers see a direct connection between training and daily practice.

The teachers' reflections resonate strongly with findings from established international programs such as CARE (Jennings, et al., 2017) and SMART (Roeser, et al., 2013), which show that sustained coaching, mindfulness practice, and peer reflection improve teacher well-being, emotional regulation, and classroom climate. Like these models, teachers in this study expressed

that consistent mentorship and collaborative spaces fostered accountability, self-efficacy, and psychological safety which are key conditions for adult learning and sustained change.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding aligns closely with the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), which underscores that teachers' social and emotional competence thrives within supportive organizational climates that value collaboration and relational trust. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2006) offers a lens for understanding how sustained professional support functions across multiple layers - the microsystem of teacher interactions, the mesosystem of school culture, and the exosystem of institutional policy - to reinforce emotional learning and well-being.

Overall, this finding demonstrates that teachers view SEL and mindfulness not merely as instructional techniques but as pathways for renewal and purpose. Sustained professional learning that combines personal reflection, pedagogical integration, and peer collaboration can enhance teacher motivation, self-efficacy, and belonging. To sustain these benefits, schools must prioritize continuous, embedded professional development that nurtures emotional growth alongside instructional capacity ensuring that teacher well-being becomes a collective, systemic priority rather than an individual endeavor.

Finding 8: Teachers highlighted the importance of a school-wide approach that engages administrators, students, and parents to establish a shared SEL language and ensure long-term sustainability.

This finding revealed that teachers viewed the sustainability of SEL and mindfulness initiatives as dependent on collective engagement at the school level rather than on isolated individual efforts. After participating in the year-long training and coaching sessions, teachers recognized that while personal practice was transformative, lasting change required alignment

among teachers, administrators, students, and parents. They emphasized the importance of developing a shared SEL language across the school community such that it normalizes emotional expression, fosters mutual understanding, and allows everyone to communicate using common terms and strategies. Teachers felt that such collective efforts would create a more cohesive culture of care and strengthen the sense of belonging within the school environment.

Several participants noted that although they had begun applying SEL practices in their own classrooms, these efforts often felt fragmented without broader institutional support. They believed that when SEL principles are embedded into the school's routines, assemblies, staff meetings, and policies, it reinforces the message that emotional well-being is a shared responsibility. This aligns with CASEL's (2020) framework for *systemic SEL*, which advocates for school-wide integration involving all stakeholders, as well as with Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) Prosocial Classroom Model, which highlights how teachers' emotional competence interacts with the broader school climate to influence student outcomes.

Viewed through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2006), this finding highlights the mesosystemic interactions between teachers, administrators, students, and families that influence the sustainability of SEL implementation. Teachers recognized that their ability to maintain mindful and emotionally intelligent practices was interconnected with the attitudes, values, and structures within their school environment.

In conclusion, these finding underscores that sustainable SEL and mindfulness integration requires more than individual enthusiasm. It demands a coordinated, school-wide approach supported by shared language, leadership, and community involvement. When schools function as collective ecosystems of emotional learning, they not only enhance teacher and

student well-being but also cultivate a culture of empathy, collaboration, and purpose that extends beyond the classroom walls.

Limitations of the study

Limitations to any research are natural and therefore should be discussed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The limitations of this study primarily relate to the research design, the population being studied, and the mitigating circumstances that affected implementation and data collection. While these limitations do not undermine the significance of the findings, they help contextualize the scope of the study and offer direction for future research seeking to scale, contextualize, and evaluate such interventions across diverse educational settings.

Firstly, the research design was qualitative in nature. While this approach allowed for in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences and provided rich, nuanced insights into their personal and professional growth, the findings cannot be generalized to other populations or geographical contexts. The study was limited to one school, Chand Bagh Day School, and included only eight elementary-level teachers. It did not directly involve broader educational stakeholders such as parents, administrators, or teachers from other institutions. The study also took place in a unique socio-cultural and institutional context within Pakistan, where school values, language, and structures differ significantly from public schools or other socio-economic settings. Therefore, the integration and perception of SEL and mindfulness may vary in other contexts with differing resources, priorities, or cultural norms.

Secondly, the study focused on teachers' self-reported perceptions and reflections rather than direct classroom observations or measurable student outcomes. As a result, the findings primarily represent perceived shifts in teaching practice and classroom climate rather than empirically verified student impacts. Additionally, the study spanned a single academic year.

While this timeframe provided valuable insights into short- and medium-term changes, it did not allow for examination of the long-term sustainability of SEL and mindfulness practices or their enduring effects on teacher well-being. Future longitudinal research could explore how these practices evolve over multiple years to better understand their sustained influence.

Additionally, researcher positionality must be acknowledged. Having previously worked with the teachers who participated in the study, there is a possibility that prior relationships may have influenced participants' responses. Despite efforts to maintain reflexivity and transparency throughout the research process, some degree of bias may have occurred particularly in participants' tendency to present their experiences positively. Much of the data was self-reported through interviews, reflections, and questionnaires, which depend on participants' honesty and self-awareness. This reliance introduces the potential for social desirability bias, where participants may have emphasized success and minimized challenges to align with perceived expectations.

Furthermore, in qualitative inquiry, the researcher plays an interpretive role in analyzing and constructing meaning from the data. Although measures such as triangulation, member checking, and reflexive journaling were employed to enhance trustworthiness, complete neutrality is impossible. It is therefore possible that the researcher's perspectives subtly influenced how themes were framed or emphasized.

Lastly, several mitigating circumstances shaped the research process. External factors such as smog-related school closures, political unrest, and unexpected shifts to online learning disrupted the regular rhythm of the intervention. During remote learning periods, teachers faced technological limitations, including unreliable internet connectivity, reduced student engagement, and limited familiarity with online teaching platforms. These challenges

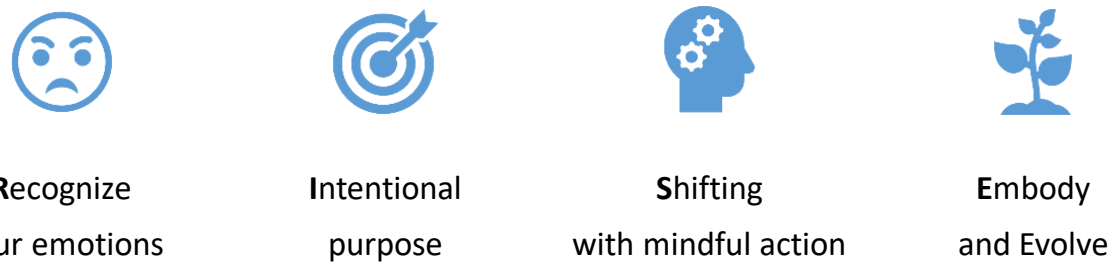
affected both the quality of implementation and the consistency of data collection. Nonetheless, they also highlighted the adaptability and resilience of teachers as they modified mindfulness and SEL practices to fit evolving circumstances.

The RISE of a program

Emerging from the findings of this year-long intervention is a program titled *Root to Rise*, designed to cultivate teacher well-being and professional growth through SEL, mindfulness, and movement-based practices. The phrase *Root to Rise*, inspired by the philosophy of yoga, signifies the need to establish stability, balance, and presence before expanding or lifting upward. In physical practice, rooting involves connecting with the ground to cultivate steadiness and strength; only from that foundation can one rise with integrity and grace. Applied metaphorically, it reflects the journey teachers experienced in this study: by grounding themselves in self-awareness and emotional regulation, they developed the capacity to grow, adapt, and lead with compassion and purpose.

Building on this philosophy, the study introduces the *RISE Framework* as a model for teacher well-being and growth that captures both the inward and outward dimensions of development. Teachers must first be rooted in awareness before they can **rise** as compassionate, purposeful educators who positively influence their classrooms and broader communities. The four components of the RISE framework - Recognize, Intend, Shift, and Embody - represent this cyclical process of grounding and growth, reflecting how personal transformation leads to collective flourishing.

Figure 5.1. The RISE framework



Recognize **your emotions**

The first stage, *Recognize*, centers on developing self-awareness, the foundation of emotional intelligence and well-being. The study revealed that teachers' transformation began when they learned to pause, notice, and name their emotional states—both within and outside the classroom. Practices such as journaling, body scans, and mindful breathing supported teachers in becoming attuned to their inner landscape.

This recognition echoes the "Know Yourself" component of the Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Model (2017) and the *mindful awareness* found in programs like CARE (Jennings et al., 2017). When teachers became aware of their emotions, they could identify triggers, patterns, and needs more clearly, enabling greater calm and presence. This rooting in awareness was not just personal but foundational—allowing teachers to anchor their work in emotional clarity rather than reactivity.

Intentional **purpose**

Once teachers recognized their emotional states, the next step was to cultivate intentionality**,** that is making conscious choices aligned with their values and goals. In the study, teachers who reflected regularly through coaching discussions, journaling, or gratitude

practices—described a renewed sense of direction and purpose. They began to see their work not merely as a duty but as a meaningful contribution to their students and communities.

Intend with Purpose represents the deliberate alignment between internal awareness and outward action. It connects to the *Choose Yourself* dimension of the Six Seconds model (n.d) and to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, where reflection transforms experience into insight. Teachers' intentional goal setting (for instance, integrating SEL into subject lessons or family life) also mirrors the notion of purpose-driven teaching, where professional well-being arises from reconnecting with one's moral and emotional purpose.

Shifting **with mindful action**

The *Shift* phase embodies mindful action, translating awareness and intention into adaptive, grounded practice. Findings showed that teachers gradually integrated simple SEL and mindfulness strategies, such as breathing pauses, gratitude reflections, or emotional check-ins, into classroom routines and home life. These practices, though small, had ripple effects: calmer classrooms, improved relationships, and more empathetic communication with students and families.

This stage reflects the movement from knowing to doing, what Schön (1983) describes as the *reflective practitioner* in action. It also aligns with Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy whereby teachers gained confidence through experiential success, reinforcing their belief in their ability to influence emotional climates. Importantly, teachers' mindful actions often transcended individual benefit, fostering collective calm, focus, and compassion within their learning environments.

Embody and Evolve

The final stage, *Embody and Evolve*, captures the deepening of practice into embodied compassion and collective impact. As teachers internalized SEL and mindfulness, they began sharing these tools with students, colleagues, and family members—modeling emotional awareness and empathy in daily interactions. This expansion mirrors Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2006), illustrating how individual growth radiates outward through relationships and communities.

Teachers' reflections showed that embodiment transformed SEL from a professional skill to a way of being by integrating emotional presence, patience, and compassion into their personal and professional identities. Over time, this led to a sense of evolution of teachers rising as compassionate leaders who not only manage classrooms but nurture human flourishing. This corresponds with the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), where teacher well-being and emotional competence foster positive classroom climates, which in turn enhance student and community well-being.

Recommendations

Throughout this study, it was evident that the school administration and staff played a crucial role in supporting one another through ongoing encouragement and shared opportunities for growth. This collective engagement contributed to the smooth implementation of the SEL and mindfulness intervention and the positive outcomes that followed. The recommendations outlined in this section are intended to help CBDS sustain and expand these practices, making them more meaningful and integrated for both teachers and students.

Recommendation 1

The first recommendation is for CBDS to establish an ongoing professional learning structure that includes regular coaching, peer dialogue, and reflection. Sustained engagement will enable teachers to internalize SEL and mindfulness practices, strengthen emotional resilience, and adapt strategies to their specific classroom contexts. This structure should also support the development of a shared repository of lesson ideas, mindfulness scripts, and reflective tools to enhance confidence, creativity, and collective ownership. In addition, peer mentoring systems can help newer teachers integrate SEL strategies effectively while fostering collaboration and continuous professional growth among staff. Embedding these supports within the school's professional culture will help sustain teacher well-being and ensure the long-term impact of SEL and mindfulness initiatives. This can easily be achieved by adopting the *Root to Rise* program.

Recommendation 2

The second recommendation is for CBDS to integrate SEL and mindfulness practices within existing subjects rather than treating them as separate or additional activities. Embedding SEL competencies, such as self-awareness, empathy, and responsible decision-making, into daily lessons will help teachers make these concepts relevant and accessible to students. For example, reflective writing in language classes, discussions on emotions in social studies, or mindful observation in science can naturally reinforce emotional learning. This integration will also reduce the perception of SEL as an "add-on," allowing teachers to meet academic goals while nurturing students' holistic development. Providing subject-specific examples and lesson templates can further support teachers in aligning SEL with curricular objectives, ensuring that emotional and academic learning evolve hand in hand.

Recommendation 3

The third recommendation is for CBDS to cultivate a school-wide culture that reflects and reinforces SEL and mindfulness values across all levels of the institution. Building a shared SEL language among teachers, students, and administrators will create consistency and collective ownership of these practices. School-wide initiatives such as morning mindfulness moments, well-being assemblies, or collaborative service projects can help embed SEL into the daily rhythm of school life. Leadership commitment is central to this process; when administrators model emotional intelligence, empathy, and reflective practices, they set the tone for the entire community. Cultivating such a culture will ensure that SEL and mindfulness are not limited to isolated classrooms but become integral to the school's identity, fostering a more compassionate, connected, and resilient learning environment. Once again, this can be easily achieved by adopting the *Root to Rise* program.

Recommendation 4

The fourth recommendation is for CBDS to actively involve parents and families as partners in sustaining SEL and mindfulness practices beyond the classroom. Engaging families through workshops, informational sessions, and take-home mindfulness activities can help extend emotional learning into the home environment, reinforcing consistency between school and family life. Encouraging open communication and shared reflection between teachers and parents can also strengthen mutual understanding and collaboration in supporting students' well-being. When parents model mindfulness and emotional awareness at home, it deepens the impact of what students learn at school. By fostering this partnership, CBDS can nurture a holistic ecosystem of care that supports students' emotional growth and strengthens the overall school community.

Recommendation 5

The fifth recommendation is for CBDS to embed SEL and mindfulness objectives directly into lesson planning and evaluation processes. When teachers intentionally include SEL goals alongside academic outcomes, they are more likely to allocate time and attention to emotional learning despite syllabus pressures. Incorporating SEL prompts, reflection questions, or brief mindfulness moments within lesson plans can help integrate these practices naturally into daily instruction. Additionally, recognizing SEL efforts during teacher evaluations or reflections can further legitimize and sustain these practices as essential components of quality teaching. Embedding SEL into planning and assessment will not only strengthen teachers' commitment but also ensure that emotional and academic learning remain interconnected and mutually reinforcing within the school's educational framework.

Recommendations for future research

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of SEL and mindfulness on teacher well-being and classroom practice, several areas merit further exploration to deepen understanding and broaden applicability. Future research should build on this study by expanding methodological approaches, deepening cultural understanding, and exploring systemic factors that influence the sustainability of SEL and mindfulness in schools.

First, future studies should include student-centered and observational data to complement teachers' self-reported experiences. Classroom observations, student interviews, and emotional climate assessments would provide deeper insight into how teachers' SEL and mindfulness practices influence student engagement, emotional regulation, and overall classroom dynamics. Capturing students' voices can offer a more balanced understanding of the broader impact of teacher well-being.

Second, researchers are encouraged to adopt longitudinal designs to examine the long-term sustainability of SEL and mindfulness practices. Since this study spanned only one academic year, extended research would help determine whether improvements in teacher well-being and classroom climate persist over time and how teachers continue to adapt these practices as part of their evolving professional identity.

Third, future inquiry should explore teacher identity and cultural adaptation to ensure SEL and mindfulness frameworks are contextually relevant. Investigating how teachers' cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and lived experiences shape their engagement with these practices will help develop models tailored to Pakistan and other Global South contexts. Expanding research across diverse educational settings, such as public and rural schools, and involving administrators, parents, and students can further illuminate how contextual factors influence implementation and outcomes.

Finally, researchers should examine the role of leadership and organizational culture in sustaining SEL and mindfulness initiatives. Understanding how leadership commitment, school policies, and staff collaboration support or hinder implementation can provide valuable insights for creating systemic, long-term integration of SEL and mindfulness within schools.

Final reflection

This research was grounded in the understanding that educators play a pivotal role in nurturing students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Teachers not only teach and model SEL through their lessons but also shape the emotional tone of the classroom through their daily interactions with students and colleagues. For educators to effectively model and integrate SEL into their practice, they must

first be supported in cultivating their own social and emotional competencies within a caring and reflective school culture.

This study addressed that need through a year-long intervention that combined SEL-focused professional learning with mindfulness and movement-based practices. Teachers engaged in an initial two-day training followed by monthly coaching sessions and reflections that created a safe, collaborative space for exploration and growth. Within these spaces, they learned to pause, reflect, and reconnect with their own well-being, translating personal insights into classroom practices that fostered empathy, calm, and connection. The intervention invited teachers to embody the very principles they sought to nurture in their students before they taught them.

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions and understanding of SEL as conceptualized by the CASEL framework and to explore how these ideas were enacted in both personal and professional contexts. Using a qualitative design, the research sought to honor the authentic voices and lived experiences of teachers as they navigated the challenges and transformations of implementing SEL and mindfulness in their daily routines. The key findings reveal that:

1. Teachers' personal well-being improved through sustained coaching and reflection that enhanced self-awareness and self-management.
2. Teachers' professional well-being strengthened as they felt more competent, confident, and purposeful as educators.
3. Teachers applied SEL and mindfulness strategies to set personal goals and develop healthier habits.

4. Teachers strengthened connections with family and friends by sharing and practicing SEL activities.
5. Teachers applied SEL strategies to improve classroom management and relationships with students and peers, which in turn created ripple effects on classroom climate and fostered more positive interactions.
6. Teachers' uptake and engagement with SEL and mindfulness varied, influenced by challenges such as time constraints, limited understanding, inadequate space, and hesitation to practice openly with students.
7. Teachers identified the need for continued coaching, access to resources, and subject-specific models to effectively integrate SEL and mindfulness into their classrooms.
8. Teachers emphasized the importance of school-wide interventions and a shared SEL language among staff, students, and parents to foster sustainability and collective ownership of these practices.

The recommendations from this study emphasize the importance of sustaining and embedding SEL and mindfulness within the school's professional culture. CBDS should establish an ongoing professional learning structure that includes regular coaching, peer dialogue, and reflection to support teachers' continuous growth and emotional resilience. SEL and mindfulness should also be integrated within existing subjects rather than treated as "add-on"s, supported by subject-specific models and resources. A whole-school culture grounded in SEL values should be cultivated, with leadership modeling emotional intelligence and fostering consistent practices across classrooms. Partnerships with parents and families should be strengthened to extend SEL and mindfulness into home environments, ensuring continuity between school and family life. SEL objectives should be embedded into lesson planning and

evaluation processes to promote alignment between academic and emotional learning goals. Finally, future research should expand to include student perspectives, longitudinal designs, and culturally contextualized approaches that explore leadership, identity, and systemic factors shaping the sustainability of SEL and mindfulness practices in schools.

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Appendix A - Initial email

Subject: Request for Proposal to Conduct Teacher Training & Research at Chand Bagh Day School

Dear Ms. Qureshi,

I hope this email finds you well.

My name is Ramsha Usman Khan, and I am a PhD candidate in Curriculum & Instruction at Kansas State University. My research focuses on educator well-being and classroom practice through Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), mindfulness, and movement strategies tailored for teachers in Pakistan.

I am writing to request a formal proposal from Chand Bagh Day School to host a short training-and-research program with your teaching staff. The aim of this collaboration is to:

1. Build teachers' SEL competencies and practical classroom routines for stress reduction, and
2. Study how such training influences teacher well-being and day-to-day instructional practices.

Below is a concise overview to support proposal development:

Training Format: Initial 2-day training in August 2024, followed by monthly coaching sessions (1 hour each).

Proposed timeline: August 2024-May 2025 (flexible)

Research Components: Trainings + data collection(with consent) via pre/post questionnaires, individual interviews, short reflections, and optional sharing of teacher artifacts (such as lesson plans).

I would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you (virtually or in person) to discuss fit, logistics, and next steps.

Thank you for considering this request. I deeply appreciate your leadership and the chance to collaborate in support of teacher well-being and student success at Chand Bagh Day School.

Warm regards,
Ramsha Usman Khan
PhD Candidate, Curriculum & Instruction
Kansas State University, USA

Appendix B - Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE:

Building social emotional competencies in teachers through movement and mindfulness: A case study from Pakistan

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE:		**PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE:**		**LENGTH OF STUDY:**	1 year

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Suzanne Porath

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Ramsha Usman Khan

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: ramshaukhan@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PROJECT SPONSOR:

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

This research aims to explore the effectiveness of integrating yoga and mindfulness training for teachers in Pakistan to enhance their social-emotional competencies (SEL). The study involves two phases: first, teachers will undergo mindfulness and yoga training to develop SEL. Second, data will be gathered through interviews, focus groups, journals, and documents to assess the impact on teachers' understanding of SEL, their well-being, and teachers' perception of classroom dynamics.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

The research will take place in two phases. In the first phase, you will participate in a mindfulness-based training in September 2024, spanning three days, with each session lasting one hour. Before and after the training, you will complete a 20-minute questionnaire to assess your understanding of social-emotional learning and your readiness to implement it in your classroom.

In the second phase, we will collect data from you monthly until the end of the academic year in May 2025. This will include journal responses, one-on-one interviews, and focused group discussions during monthly coaching sessions. You are also welcome to share documents, such as images of your lesson plans, if you choose. Audio and visual data will be recorded during this phase solely for transcription and analysis.

You can fill out your journal responses in the training manual provided during the initial training and share images via email or WhatsApp. The one-on-one interviews will last one hour each, and the monthly coaching sessions, which will take place either in person or online, will be conducted for up to one and a half hours. If you wish to share documents such as lesson plans, you can do so by sending images via email or WhatsApp.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

Potential risks for the research include time inconvenience, teachers leaving the classroom, and loss of interest.

BENEFITS ANTICPATED:

While there are no direct benefits to you, you may find that participating in this research enhances your skills by deepening your understanding of social-emotional learning (SEL). Additionally, you might experience improved well-being and increased motivation through the practices of movement and mindfulness, which can also benefit your students and, ultimately, society.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

All collected data will be stored on a password-protected computer, accessible only to the research team, including the researcher (myself) and the principal investigator (PI). To ensure your anonymity, all identifying information will be altered or removed, and pseudonyms will be used in any resulting publications. Audio and visual data will be collected solely for transcription and analysis purposes and will not be used for any other reasons. The data will be retained for three years and then securely destroyed. These measures are in place to protect your privacy and maintain the confidentiality of your participation throughout the study.

The information or biospecimens collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is

voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant).

PARTICIPANT NAME:			
PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:		**DATE:**	
WITNESS TO SIGNATURE: (PROJECT STAFF)		**DATE:**	

Appendix C - Pre- and post-questionnaire

Demographics

1. Name
2. Email address
3. Phone number
4. Age
5. Gender
6. Highest level of education

Work Information

1. Which school do you teach at?
2. What is your current role at the school?
3. What grade level(s) do you teach?
4. Which subject(s) do you teach?
5. How many years have you taught at this school?

Familiarity and Perception of Well-being

1. Rate your familiarity with the following (1 = lowest; 5 = highest)
    a) CASEL framework
    b) Mindfulness
    c) Yoga
    d) Breathwork
2. Rate the following (1 = excellent; 5 = poor)
    a) Overall health
    b) Quality of life
    c) Physical health
    d) Mental health
    e) Social activities and relationships
    f) Ability to carry out usual roles and activities (at home and at work)

Emotional regulation

1. The questions in this section ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last school year. In each case, indicate by clicking how often you felt or thought a certain way: Always; Often; Sometimes; Few times; Never
    a) How often were you bothered by emotional problems?
    b) How often did you feel fatigued?
    c) How often did you find yourself redirecting student behavior?
    d) How often did the students significantly interfere with your teaching?
    e) How often did the student behavior lead to you feeling frustrated and/or overwhelmed in your role as a teacher?
    f) How often did you respond negatively to student behavior?
    g) How often did you feel equipped to redirect off-task behavior and re-engage students in instruction?

Workload

1. The following questions are regarding your workload.
    a) How many hours per week do you typically spend on work-related tasks outside of regular school hours?
    b) Do you feel adequately trained and prepared to handle the workload demands of your position?
    c) Are there specific aspects of your workload that you find particularly challenging or stressful? If so, please describe.
    d) How often do you feel overwhelmed by the demands of your workload?
    e) Do you feel that your workload negatively impacts your ability to effectively support your students' learning and well-being?

Organizational and peer support

1. Answer the following questions about organizational and peer support.
    a) How satisfied are you with the organizational culture and climate of your school?
    b) Are there any specific organizational practices or policies that positively impact your well-being as a teacher? [Open-ended response]
    c) How effective do you find the communication channels within your school?
    d) To what extent do you feel valued and appreciated by school leadership?
    e) How transparent do you perceive decision-making processes within your school?

f) How would you rate the availability of resources and support systems for addressing teacher well-being within your school?
g) Are there any organizational changes or improvements you believe could positively impact teacher well-being in your school? [Open-ended response]
h) How effectively does your school address diversity, equity, and inclusion issues?

Self-care and self-compassion

1. Answer the following question regarding your self-care, self-compassion and movement practices.
    a) How often do you practice yoga?
    b) How often do you practice breathwork?
    c) How often do you meditate?
    d) How often do you engage in activities that promote relaxation and stress relief outside of work hours (e.g., meditation, hobbies, leisure activities)?
    e) How well do you prioritize your own needs and well-being amidst your professional responsibilities?
    f) How often do you respond to yourself with kindness and understanding when you make mistakes or encounter difficulties?
    g) How do you typically react to setbacks or failures in your professional life?
    h) How important do you believe self-compassion is for maintaining overall well-being in your role as a teacher?
    i) How do you feel before engaging in physical activities such as yoga or exercise?
    j) What barriers, if any, do you encounter in maintaining a regular movement or yoga practice? [Open-ended response]
    k) How do you feel after engaging in physical activities such as yoga or exercise?
    l) Do you find that engaging in movement or yoga practices improves your mood and overall sense of well-being?
    m) Have you ever incorporated movement-based activities or exercises into your classroom instruction?
    n) If yes, what types of movement activities have you incorporated? (e.g., stretching, brain breaks, kinesthetic learning) [Open-ended response]

o) In your experience, what benefits have you observed from incorporating movement activities into classroom instruction? [Open-ended response]
p) How do you believe movement-based activities contribute to student engagement and learning outcomes? [Open-ended response]
q) Have you noticed any improvements in student behavior or classroom atmosphere when implementing movement activities?
r) Do you feel that incorporating movement activities positively impacts students' physical health and well-being?

2. Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5, indicating how often you behave in the stated manner. (1= Never; 5 = Always)
    a) I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
    b) I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
    c) I try to see my failures as part of the human condition.
    d) When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling the same way I do.
    e) When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.

Mindfulness

1. Answer the following questions regarding your perceived levels of mindfulness. Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5, indicating how often each statement applies to you. (1 = rarely; 5 = Always)
    a) I am aware of my thoughts and feelings without getting lost in them.
    b) I can take a step back and observe my thoughts and feelings without being judgmental.
    c) I find it easy to stay focused on what I am doing, even when I am under stress.
    d) I am good at recognizing when I am feeling anxious or distressed.
    e) I can let go of negative thoughts and emotions without dwelling on them.
    f) I approach each task with a curious and open-minded attitude.
    g) I am able to stay present and engaged in the moment, even during challenging situations.
    h) I notice sensations in my body (such as tension or relaxation) as they arise.

i) I am able to accept things as they are, without feeling the need to control or change them.
j) I am aware of the connection between my thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations.
k) I practice mindfulness or meditation regularly as a way to cultivate awareness and presence.
l) I am able to respond to difficult situations with clarity and calmness rather than react impulsively.
m) I find joy and appreciation in everyday experiences, no matter how small.
n) I am mindful of my breathing patterns and use them as an anchor to stay grounded in the present moment.
o) I am able to view challenging experiences as opportunities for growth and learning.

Barriers and support

1. Answer the following questions about the barriers and supports for your learning and growth:
    a) Do you feel comfortable seeking support from colleagues, friends, or mental health professionals when needed?
    b) B) Are there any barriers or challenges you face in practicing self-care regularly? If so, please describe. [Open-ended response]
    c) C) What barriers or challenges do you face in incorporating movement activities into your classroom instruction? [Open-ended response]
    d) D) Are there any logistical constraints (e.g., classroom space, time limitations) that hinder your ability to include movement activities?
    e) E) Do you encounter any resistance from students, colleagues, or school administration when attempting to incorporate movement activities into the classroom?

Readiness to integrate SEL in classrooms

1. Thinking about each competency below, how confident are you that you can support your students' growth and development?
    a) Self-Awareness

b) Self-Management
c) Relationship Skills
d) Social Awareness
e) Responsible Decision Making
f) Growth mindset

Closing reflections (post-questionnaire)

1. How would you describe well-being?
2. How do you take care of yourself at home?
3. How do you take care of yourself at work?
4. Has taking part in this training on SEL and mindfulness along with monthly coaching impacted your well-being positively?
5. What outcomes have you experienced by being a part of this study?
6. Would you be interested in participating in similar programs in the future to support your well-being?

Appendix D - Initial individual interviews

Before term begins

August 2024

Here's a set of semi-structured interview questions to gain insights into teachers' perceptions of social-emotional learning (SEL) and its incorporation in the classroom through yoga and mindfulness, as well as the support they feel they have from various stakeholders:

1. Introduction and Background:

- Tell me about yourself
    - Schooling
    - Family background.
- Why did you come into teaching?
- Can you tell me about your experience as a teacher so far?
    - What excites you?
    - What challenges you?
    - What makes you proud?

2. Training Experience:

- Have you received any training or professional development related to SEL, yoga, or mindfulness prior to this program?
- What were your expectations coming into the training on building social-emotional competencies through movement and mindfulness?
- Can you share some key takeaways or insights you gained from the training sessions?
- How do you envision incorporating the strategies learned in the training into your classroom practice?

3. Perceptions of SEL, Yoga, and Mindfulness:

- If any, what's your background in incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) into your teaching practices?
- In what ways do you think incorporating yoga and mindfulness into the classroom can benefit students' overall well-being and academic success?

4. Implementation Challenges and Successes:

- Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in integrating SEL, yoga, or mindfulness practices into your classroom routines?
- Can you share any success stories or positive experiences you've had with implementing SEL, yoga, or mindfulness activities in your classroom?

5. Support Systems:

- How do you perceive the support you receive from your colleagues in integrating SEL, yoga, or mindfulness practices into your teaching?
- What support, if any, do you feel you receive from school administrators in implementing SEL initiatives or incorporating yoga and mindfulness in the classroom?
- How do you involve parents or guardians in supporting SEL, yoga, or mindfulness practices at home or in the school community?

6. Reflections and Future Plans:

- Moving forward, how do you plan on implementing SEL, yoga or mindfulness in your personal and professional life?
- Anything else you would like to share?

Appendix E - Closing interviews

End of academic year

May 2025

- How are you feeling after completing the academic year?
- Tell me what you learnt during this year:
    - about yourself
    - about your students
    - about your teaching?
    - about your community?
- What was your emotional well-being like throughout the term?
    - What did you do to take care of yourself? What did you NOT do?
    - How did this impact your teaching?
- How has your teaching changed since the start of the term?
- How has it impacted your students?
- How has it impacted the wider community? Peers and parents?
- What was the greatest challenge for you (and/or your students)?
- What was your experience like being a part of this community?
- How has this reflective journey impacted you personally/your teaching/your community?
- What came out of your participation in this community that you least expected?
- What implication do you think this year-long long community practice will have on your
    - Teaching
    - Personal growth
- Looking back on your experiences with SEL, movement, and mindfulness, what would you say has been the most rewarding aspect for you as a teacher?
- How do you plan to continue incorporating SEL, movement, or mindfulness practices into your teaching in the future?
- How else would you like your school admin or peers to support you?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your journey with SEL, movement and mindfulness in the classroom?

Appendix F - Summary of the intervention

Month	Task	Details	Medium
September 2024	Training	Feedback on integration + Suggested changes	In-person
October 2024	Individual interviews + monthly check-in	Feedback on integration + Suggested changes	In-person + online via Zoom
November 2024	Monthly check-in	Gratitude challenge + Feedback on integration	In-person
December 2024	Monthly check-in	Feedback on integration	In-person
January 2025	Monthly check-in	New year intention setting + Feedback on integration	In-person
February 2025	Monthly check-in	Feedback on integration	In-person
March 2025	Monthly check-in	Mindfulness through the month of Ramzan +feedback on integration	Online via Zoom
April 2025	Monthly check-in	New session; new connections + Feedback on integration	Online via Zoom
May 2025	Monthly check-in + closing interviews	Closing practice and reflections	Online via Zoom

Appendix G - Guiding monthly reflection questions

Here are brief reflective prompts for gathering reflections from teachers regarding their SEL, mindfulness and movement practices in their personal and professional lives over the next nine months:

September 2024 (1st month of teaching)

1. How are you feeling after the month of teaching?
2. Have you applied any SEL strategies in your personal life? Which? Why not? How does that make you feel?
3. Have you applied any SEL strategies in your classroom thus far? Which? Why not? How was that experience? How do the students respond?
4. Any stories that stood out to you?
5. Intentions moving forward…

October 2024 (2nd month of teaching)

1. Share any 'aha moments' you may have experienced so far.
2. Reflect on a recent success applying SEL principles in your life. What contributed to it?
3. Share the biggest challenge you may have experienced so far. How did you handle it? What did you learn?
4. How do you perceive well-being since the start of this training? Are you more conscious taking care of yourself now than before?
5. Any stories that stood out to you?
6. Intentions moving forwards …

November 2024 (3rd month of teaching)

1. How are you feeling in terms of your emotional well-being as a teacher?
2. How are you (or not) taking care of your well-being?
3. How is it impacting your teaching?
4. How are your students doing emotionally?

5. What strategies are you using to promote your health and well-being? Which strategies are you finding most effective?
6. How is your community supporting you (or not)? How would you like them to support you?
7. How are you supporting your community (or not)? How do you cultivate a supportive environment in your interactions with colleagues and students?
8. Any stories that stood out to you?
9. Intentions moving forward …

December 2024 (4th month of teaching)

1. How are you feeling in terms of your emotional well-being as a teacher?
3. How are you (or not) taking care of your well-being?
4. How is it impacting your teaching?
5. How are your students doing emotionally?
6. What strategies are you using to promote your health and well-being? Which strategies are you finding most effective?
7. How is your community supporting you (or not)? How would you like them to support you?
8. How are you supporting your community (or not)? How do you cultivate a supportive environment in your interactions with colleagues and students?
9. Any stories that stood out to you?
10. Intentions moving forward …

January 2025 (5th month of teaching)

1. What are your intentions for the new year?
2. How did you practice self-care during your break?
3. How did you practice mindfulness?
4. What are you looking forward to?

February 2025 (6th month of teaching)

1. Share any 'aha moments' you may have experienced so far.

2. Reflect on a recent success applying SEL principles in your life. What contributed to it?
3. Share the biggest challenge you may have experienced so far. How did you handle it? What did you learn?
4. How do you perceive well-being since the start of this training? Are you more conscious taking care of yourself now than before?
5. Any stories that stood out to you?
6. Intentions moving forwards …

March 2025 (7th month of teaching)

1. How are feeling?
2. What are your intentions for Ramzan?
3. How will you practice mindfulness during this month?
4. How will you practice it in your classrooms?

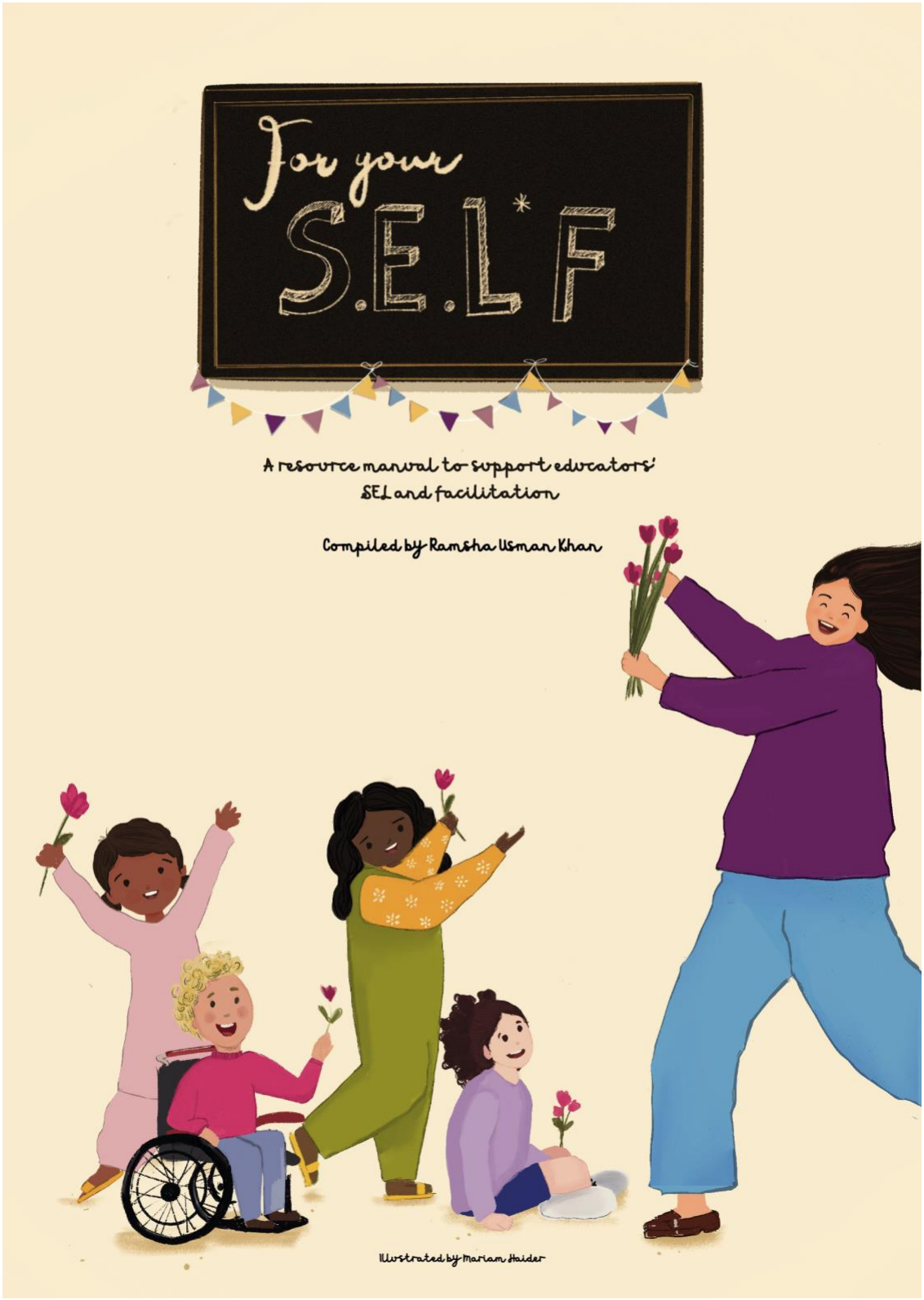
April 2025 (8th month of teaching)

1. How did month of Ramzan go for you?
2. How did you practice mindfulness?
3. How did you deal with exam related stress?
4. How did you support your students?

May 2025 (9th month of teaching)

1. How are you feeling?
2. How did you practice mindfulness in your class?
3. Were you able to bring movement in your classroom?
2. How did it make you feel?
3. How did the students feel?
4. Closing thoughts

Appendix H - Training manual



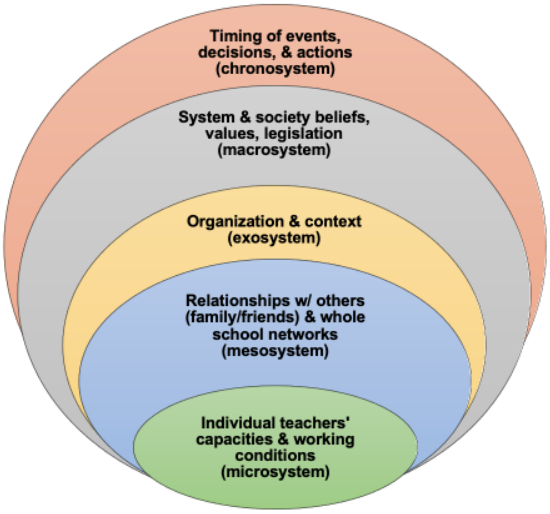
What is well-being?

Well-being is a holistic concept that encompasses thriving in different aspects of life, such as work, health, relationships, learning, beliefs, emotions, and financial stability. It involves achieving a sense of balance, fulfillment, and purpose in each of these areas, contributing to our overall sense of satisfaction and resilience.

Importantly, well-being is not static; it is diverse and ever-changing, shaped by each individual's beliefs, values, experiences, culture, and circumstances. What contributes to one person's well-being may look different for another. For example, feeling connected to a supportive community may be essential for some, while others may prioritize personal growth or emotional expression. Recognizing this diversity is crucial for teachers as it fosters an understanding of students' unique experiences and encourages the creation of an inclusive and supportive classroom environment.

In the context of education, well-being is not just a goal but an ongoing process. For teachers, understanding the multifaceted nature of well-being allows them to support their own well-being as well as that of their students. By prioritizing well-being, teachers can create nurturing environments where students feel valued, respected, and motivated to learn. This, in turn, positively impacts the classroom culture, promotes positive relationships, and enhances learning outcomes.

Ultimately, well-being is about empowering individuals to flourish, adapt to challenges, and build meaningful connections within their communities. By fostering this understanding, educators can contribute to a healthier and more resilient school environment.



Self-care

Self-care is the intentional practice of taking care of your mental, emotional, and physical health. It involves activities that recharge your energy, promote relaxation, and help you maintain balance in life. From setting healthy boundaries and seeking support to practicing mindfulness and engaging in physical activities, self-care equips you to handle challenges effectively.

Self-care is not an indulgence or an optional extra—it is essential to preventing stress, burnout, and exhaustion. It allows individuals, families, and communities to promote health and manage well-being with or without external support. For teachers, prioritizing self-care helps maintain professional effectiveness and resilience, enabling them to better support their students and foster a positive, caring classroom environment.

By embracing self-care, educators can create healthier, more balanced lives and contribute to a supportive culture in their schools.

Well-being in schools

The well-being of school staff, especially teachers, is essential for creating a healthy and supportive learning environment. However, maintaining well-being in the education sector has become increasingly challenging, especially since the disruptions caused by COVID-19. The pandemic blurred the lines between work and personal lives, leading to heightened responsibilities, limited resources, and increasing levels of burnout. Teachers and other education professionals are finding it harder to balance their work and home lives, a challenge faced even more acutely by women, people of color, and other marginalized groups.

While there is significant focus on student well-being, it is crucial to recognize that the well-being of educators also requires attention. A thriving school environment depends on both students and staff feeling supported, valued, and capable of managing their responsibilities. Supporting well-being in schools is a shared responsibility between individuals and institutions. Teachers can practice self-care strategies to manage stress and enhance their resilience, but schools also need to create structures that prioritize staff well-being. This could include providing adequate resources, fostering open communication, promoting professional development, and implementing policies that encourage a better work-life balance.

When well-being is nurtured at both individual and institutional levels, it not only benefits teachers but also creates a positive ripple effect in the classroom, enhancing students' learning experiences. Schools that prioritize the well-being of their educators foster a culture of care and sustainability, where everyone is empowered to thrive.

SEL and mindfulness are powerful tools that promote emotional intelligence and well-being

What is SEL?

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is an educational framework designed to develop key social and emotional skills in individuals, such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These skills are crucial for navigating emotions, building positive relationships, and making thoughtful decisions in daily life.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a leading nonprofit in the field, has been at the forefront of advancing SEL in schools and communities. CASEL promotes the integration of SEL by offering research, resources, and training for educators, policymakers, and practitioners to create supportive environments that foster growth and well-being.

By incorporating SEL, educational institutions not only focus on academic achievement but also emphasize holistic development. This comprehensive approach enhances emotional well-being, improves communication and collaboration, and fosters empathy and resilience in individuals. When schools, families, and communities work together to promote SEL, they contribute to healthier, more inclusive, and productive environments for everyone.

Core CASEL competencies

The five core competencies of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) are:

1. **Self-Awareness**

   The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values, and how they influence behavior. This includes recognizing strengths and limitations, developing a sense of confidence, and having a realistic understanding of oneself.

2. **Self-Management**

   The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This involves managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and working towards personal and academic goals.

3. **Social Awareness**

   The ability to understand and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It involves recognizing social norms, understanding ethical responsibilities, and appreciating the perspectives of others.

4. **Relationship Skills**

   The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships. This includes effective communication, active listening, cooperation, conflict resolution, and seeking or offering help when needed.

5. **Responsible Decision-Making**

   The ability to make thoughtful and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions. This involves considering the well-being of oneself and others, understanding the consequences of actions, and reflecting on the ethical impact of decisions.

These five competencies form the foundation of SEL and are essential for personal development, fostering positive relationships, and creating supportive learning environments.

Benefits of SEL

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) offers a wide range of benefits that extend beyond academic success, contributing to the holistic development of individuals. By fostering essential skills in self-awareness, relationship-building, and responsible decision-making, SEL equips students and educators alike with the tools to thrive in both personal and professional settings. The integration of SEL into educational practices not only enhances the learning environment but also promotes positive behaviors and overall well-being. Below are some key benefits of implementing SEL in schools and communities:

1. **Improved Academic Performance**
   SEL contributes to enhanced focus, attention, and motivation to learn, which can lead to better academic outcomes and overall student success.
2. **Enhanced Social Skills**
   Students develop better teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution abilities, leading to healthier interactions and relationships with peers and adults.
3. **Reduced Behavioral Issues**
   Implementation of SEL programs has been associated with lower incidences of bullying, violence, and substance abuse, fostering a safer and more supportive school environment.
4. **Increased Well-being**
   SEL promotes reduced stress and anxiety while improving overall mental health, enabling individuals to manage their emotions and cope with challenges more effectively.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is about being fully present and aware of what is happening in the moment, without getting caught up in judgments or distractions. As described by Jon Kabat-Zinn, a pioneer in mindfulness practices, it involves paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and accepting things as they are.

The Two Modes of the Mind

The mind usually works in two ways:

1. **Thinking/Conceptualizing Mode**: This is when our mind is busy planning, analyzing, or solving problems. We are often reflecting on past events or thinking about the future, which can sometimes lead to worry or stress.
2. **Sensing/Perceiving Mode**: In this mode, we are directly aware of what we are experiencing through our senses. For example, feeling the warmth of the sun, noticing our breath, or sensing emotions without trying to change them.

The Purpose of Mindfulness

The goal of mindfulness is to shift from the thinking mode to the sensing mode, where we can notice and accept our thoughts and feelings without getting overwhelmed by them. It helps us recognize our internal experiences and respond to them intentionally, rather than reacting automatically.

Mindfulness teaches us to:

- **Acknowledge and Accept**: Notice thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations as they come and go, without labeling them as good or bad.
- **Respond with Intention**: Create a pause between what happens and how we react, allowing us to make thoughtful choices.

By practicing mindfulness, teachers and students can become more aware, calm, and better able to manage stress and emotions.

How mindfulness & SEL work together for the wellbeing of educators

Mindfulness and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) are powerful tools that work together to support the overall wellbeing of educators. They both focus on developing essential skills that help teachers lead more balanced and fulfilling lives, both in and out of the classroom.

Mindfulness Cultivates Key Skills:

- **Attention:** Mindfulness teaches us to focus on the present moment, allowing educators to stay more attentive and grounded during their busy days.
- **Self-Awareness:** By regularly practicing mindfulness, teachers can become more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and how their bodies feel, helping them better understand and manage their responses.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Mindfulness helps educators observe and accept their emotions without getting overwhelmed, making it easier to stay calm and composed in challenging situations.

SEL Cultivates Core Competencies:

- **Self-Awareness:** Just like mindfulness, SEL encourages teachers to recognize and understand their emotions and thoughts.
- **Self-Management:** SEL helps teachers set goals and manage their time, emotions, and behaviors effectively.
- **Social Awareness:** SEL develops the ability to empathize with others, which is key for building strong connections with students and colleagues.
- **Relationship Skills:** With SEL, educators can learn to communicate more effectively and resolve conflicts peacefully, enhancing teamwork and cooperation.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** SEL equips educators with the skills to make thoughtful and responsible choices in both personal and professional contexts.

Benefits of Combining Mindfulness & SEL:

When mindfulness and SEL skills are practiced together, educators can experience greater success and fulfillment in various areas of life:

- **Occupational Fulfillment:** Mindfulness and SEL can help teachers find more joy and satisfaction in their work by reducing stress and improving their classroom interactions.
- **Physical Health:** By managing stress and emotions, educators can support their physical health, leading to improved well-being.
- **Social Relationships:** These practices can enhance communication and empathy, building stronger connections with colleagues, students, and others.
- **Intellectual Pursuits:** A clear and focused mind helps educators engage more deeply in their professional growth and learning.
- **Spiritual Engagement:** Mindfulness fosters a deeper connection with oneself, promoting spiritual growth and reflection.
- **Emotional Awareness:** Practicing mindfulness and SEL helps educators understand and manage their emotions better, leading to greater emotional balance.
- **Financial Stability:** With improved decision-making skills, educators can also make more responsible financial choices.

By combining mindfulness and SEL, educators can cultivate a holistic sense of well-being, leading to a more balanced, purposeful, and fulfilling life.

Integrating SEL and mindfulness

To integrate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and mindfulness into your daily life, consider the following simple steps. These practices can help you build a routine that supports both your personal well-being and your professional growth.

1. Settle in with Breath

Begin by taking a few moments to settle in and center yourself with deep, mindful breathing. This step helps calm the mind and bring your focus to the present moment. You can try taking three deep breaths, inhaling slowly through your nose and exhaling gently through your mouth. This practice allows you to release any tension and prepare yourself for the day or activity ahead.

2. Check-In

Take a moment to pause and reflect on how you are feeling physically, mentally, and emotionally. Ask yourself: *How am I feeling right now? What thoughts are on my mind? What emotions am I experiencing?* This step builds self-awareness, which is key in both mindfulness and SEL.

3. Community Connection

Connect with others in your community, whether it's your colleagues, students, or family members. Practice empathy by actively listening to their experiences and sharing your own in an open, supportive way. This connection strengthens social awareness and builds healthy relationships.

4. Mindful Movement

Engage in a brief mindful movement practice, such as simple stretches, chair yoga, or a gentle walk. Mindful movement connects the body and mind, helping you release tension and increase awareness of your physical state. It can also be a wonderful way to recharge your energy.

5. Reflection

Take time to reflect on what you've experienced, learned, or noticed during the day. This can be done through journaling, quiet thinking, or discussing with a trusted colleague or friend.

Reflection helps you make sense of your emotions, actions, and interactions, fostering responsible decision-making and continuous growth.

6. Closing

Conclude your practice by expressing gratitude for your efforts and progress. End the day or session with a calming breath and a kind thought for yourself. This closing step reinforces self-acceptance and positive reinforcement, essential elements in mindfulness and SEL.

Practical Strategies for Cultivating Mindfulness and Building SEL Skills

Following are simple, practical strategies you can use for each component to help develop mindfulness and build social-emotional competencies:

SETTLE IN WITH BREATH

This practice focuses on using intentional breathing to help you become more aware of your body, emotions, and thoughts. By paying attention to your breath and bodily sensations, you can better recognize and release tension, cultivating acceptance and clarity.

Intentional Observation of Body Tension

- **Guidelines**: Start by sitting comfortably, with your feet flat on the ground. Close your eyes or soften your gaze. Take a deep breath and slowly exhale. As you continue breathing, shift your attention to different parts of your body—your forehead, shoulders, chest, stomach, hands, and legs. Notice where you are holding tension.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - *Where do I feel tightness or heaviness in my body?*
    - *What emotions might be linked to this tension?*
    - *Can I accept these feelings, or am I ready to release them?*
- **Purpose**: This exercise helps recognize and accept emotions that may be causing physical discomfort. It can also guide you towards releasing what no longer serves you, both physically and emotionally.

Breathe In, Breathe Out (3 Collective Breaths)

- **Guidelines**: Take three slow, deep breaths. Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four, hold for a count of two, and then exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of six. Repeat this three times. Pay attention to the air moving in and out and any changes in your mood or body.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - *How does my body feel as I breathe deeply?*
    - *What changes do I notice in my mind and emotions?*

- **Purpose**: This practice calms your nervous system, shifts your attention to the present moment, and helps clear your mind. It serves as a quick reset for teachers during busy days.

Flower Breathing

- **Guidelines**: Sit comfortably and place your hands at your heart center. Imagine your hands opening like a flower blooming. Visualize your flower and consider its color and scent. As you inhale, raise your hands slightly as if the flower is opening. As you exhale, gently close your hands. Repeat this process, focusing on the beauty and peacefulness of your imaginary flower.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - *What does my flower look like?*
    - *How do I feel as I imagine its color and scent?*
    - *What emotions or thoughts am I letting go of as I exhale?*
- **Purpose**: This exercise uses visualization and breath to encourage relaxation and creativity, helping release stress and promoting a sense of calm.

Body Scan

- **Guidelines**: Sit or lie down comfortably in a quiet place. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to settle in. Begin by focusing on either your head or your feet. Slowly guide your attention through each part of your body, moving section by section. As you bring awareness to each area, notice if there's any tension, discomfort, or relaxation. When you encounter tightness, "breathe into it" by visualizing your breath flowing into that spot and softening the tension. If your mind drifts, gently redirect your focus back to the body part you were scanning. Continue this process, taking as much or as little time as you need.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - Where am I holding tension in my body?
    - How does it feel to release this tension with my breath?
    - What thoughts or emotions come up as I focus on each part of my body?
- **Purpose**: The Body Scan is designed to increase sensory awareness and reduce physical tension. By mindfully focusing on each body part, you become more in tune with your physical and emotional state, helping to relieve stress and promote relaxation.

CHECK-IN

"Check-In" is a practice to help you understand and acknowledge your emotions and state of mind. This quick self-assessment builds self-awareness and emotional regulation, creating a foundation for mindful action.

Two-Word Check-In

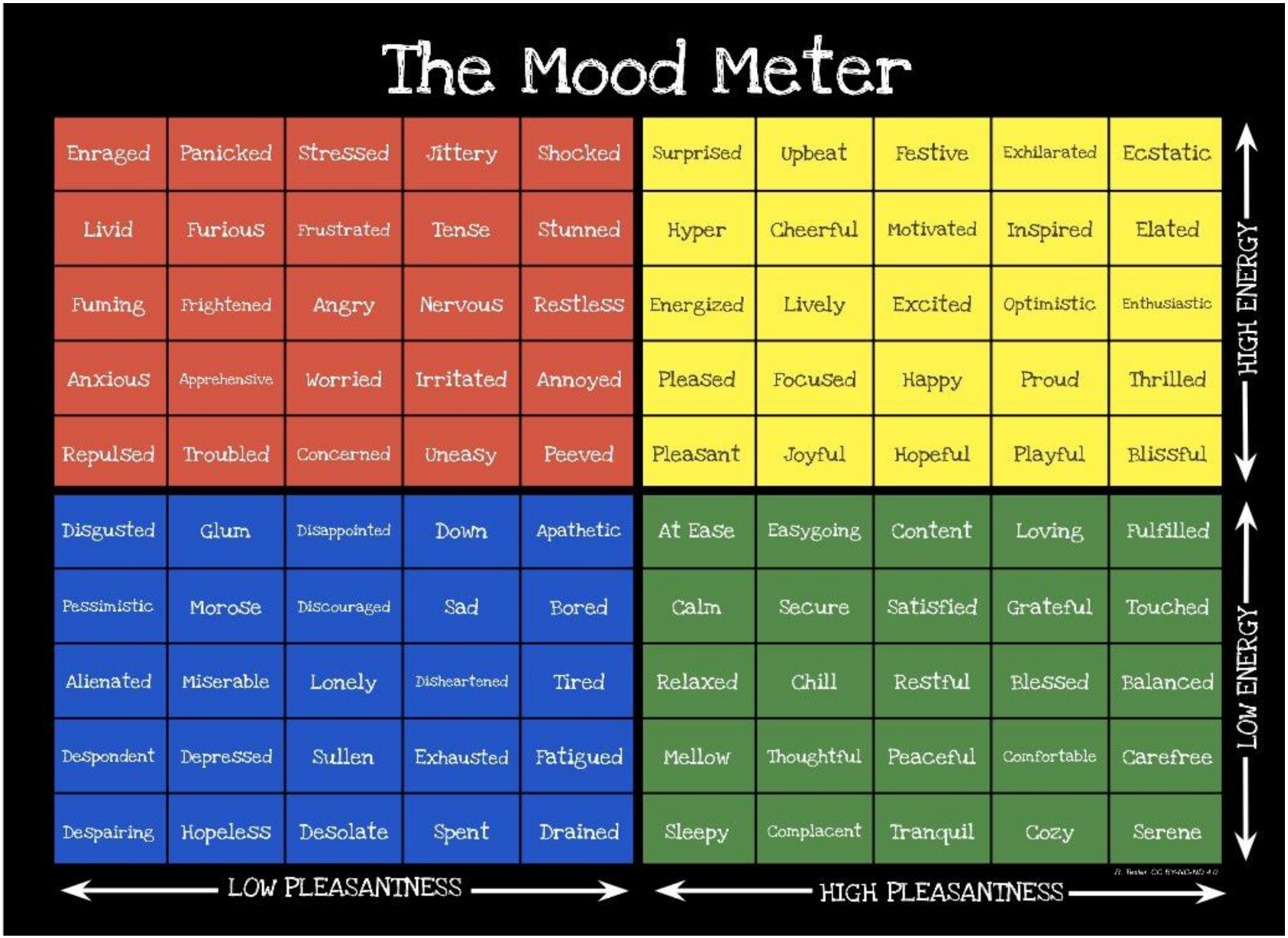
- **Guidelines**: Pause for a moment and think about your current mood. Choose two words that best describe how you're feeling. For example, you might say, *"Tired and hopeful"* or *"Stressed but focused."* You can write down these words or share them with a colleague or class.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - *Why did I choose these words?*
    - *What do these words tell me about my emotions and thoughts today?*
- **Purpose**: This practice encourages you to express and reflect on your emotions in a simple, non-judgmental way, fostering emotional awareness and self-expression.

Color Check-In

- **Guidelines**: Close your eyes and think about how you're feeling. Now imagine a color that represents your mood or emotions. For instance, blue could signify calmness, red might represent frustration, and yellow could mean happiness. Take a moment to reflect on why you chose that color.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - *Why did I choose this color?*
    - *How does this color make me feel?*
    - *What can I do to embrace or change this emotion?*
- **Purpose**: Visualizing emotions through colors helps create a deeper connection between your feelings and mental imagery, making it easier to express and understand them.

Mood Meter Check-In

- **Guidelines**: Use a mood meter chart (on the following page) to identify your emotions. Look at the chart and pick the emotion that resonates with you, such as “calm,” “excited,” or “anxious.” Recognizing emotions helps you better understand your state of mind.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - *Where do I feel this emotion in my body?*
    - *What thoughts or events might have triggered this feeling?*
- **Purpose**: A mood meter helps identify and name emotions, which is an essential part of SEL. It supports recognizing and managing emotions effectively.


The Mood Meter
Enraged
Panicked
Stressed
Jittery
Shocked
Surprised
Upbeat
Festive
Exhilarated
Ecstatic
Livid
Furious
Frustrated
Tense
Stunned
Hyper
Cheerful
Motivated
Inspired
Elated
Fuming
Frightened
Angry
Nervous
Restless
Energized
Lively
Excited
Optimistic
Enthusiastic
Anxious
Apprehensive
Worried
Irritated
Annoyed
Pleased
Focused
Happy
Proud
Thrilled
Repulsed
Troubled
Concerned
Uneasy
Peeved
Pleasant
Joyful
Hopeful
Playful
Blissful
Disgusted
Glum
Disappointed
Down
Apathetic
At Ease
Easygoing
Content
Loving
Fulfilled
Pessimistic
Morose
Discouraged
Sad
Bored
Calm
Secure
Satisfied
Grateful
Touched
Alienated
Miserable
Lonely
Disheartened
Tired
Relaxed
Chill
Restful
Blessed
Balanced
Despondent
Depressed
Sullen
Exhausted
Fatigued
Mellow
Thoughtful
Peaceful
Comfortable
Carefree
Despairing
Hopeless
Desolate
Spent
Drained
Sleepy
Complacent
Tranquil
Cozy
Serene
HIGH ENERGY
LOW ENERGY
LOW PLEASANTNESS
HIGH PLEASANTNESS

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Identities

- **Who are you?**
  - Take a moment to reflect on your roles at school and in your personal life.
- **Who are you beyond your institution and role?**
  - Think about the different facets of your identity that exist outside your professional life.

- **Activity**: Write down **six nouns** that describe you outside of your role as an educator.
  - **Guidelines**: Consider aspects like hobbies, family roles, cultural identities, or passions.
  - **Reflective Questions**:
    - How do these identities shape your interactions with students and colleagues?
    - What strengths do these identities bring to your work?
- **Purpose**: Understanding and embracing the different facets of your identity can help you connect more authentically with your community, offering new perspectives and strengths in your role as an educator.

Values

- **Understanding Values**:
  - Values are the principles that guide our beliefs, attitudes, and actions.
  - They influence our character and the decisions we make.

- **Activity**: List at least three of your core values.
  - **Guidelines**: Think about values such as integrity, respect, empathy, or innovation.
  - **Reflective Questions**:
    - How do your values guide your actions in the classroom?
    - Can you recall a time when your values influenced a decision you made?

- **Purpose**: Identifying and understanding your core values allows you to align your actions with what truly matters, making you a more intentional and effective educator.

Equitable Sharing Protocol

Guidelines: Create a space where all voices are heard equally. Encourage each participant to share openly while others listen attentively. Ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to speak. This can be achieved by setting a specific time limit for each person to share and a rule that others listen without interrupting.

Reflective Questions:

- How does equitable sharing help strengthen the sense of community?
- What strategies can you use to make sure everyone feels comfortable and valued while sharing?

Purpose: Establishing an environment of equitable sharing fosters a stronger sense of community, building trust and openness among participants.

Mindful Listening

Instructions:

- **Prompt**: Ask, "How have you been taking care of yourself during the summer?"
- **Activity**:
    - Person 1 speaks for 1.5 minutes about their self-care practices while Person 2 listens attentively.
    - After Person 1 finishes, Person 2 takes 1 minute to reflect on what was said without interrupting or taking notes.
    - Swap roles and repeat.

Guidelines: The focus is on active listening, avoiding interruptions, and not thinking about your response while the other person is speaking.

Reflective Questions:

- How did it feel to be truly listened to without interruption?
- What new insights or understanding did you gain from listening to your partner?

Purpose: Mindful listening encourages empathy and deepens connections, helping create a supportive and caring community.

Life Evaluation

- **Instructions**:
  - Take **4 minutes** to evaluate the health of eight key areas of your life using a rating scale from **1 (poor)** to **10 (great)**.
  - Use the provided chart to assess areas like Work, Relationships, Social Life, Physical Health, Mental Health, Spiritual Health, Financial Health, and Recreation.
  - **Guidelines**: Be honest in your evaluations and consider both strengths and areas for improvement.
  - **Reflective Questions**:
    - What areas are you most satisfied with, and why?
    - Which areas need more attention or improvement?

Life Evaluation Form

Work									
😔1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10😁
Comments									
Focal Relationships (significant other, spouse, roommate, family)									
😔1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10😁
Comments									
Social (friends, community)									
😔1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10😁
Comments									
Physical Health									
😔1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10😁
Comments									
Mental Health (self-development/improvement; general mood; engagement in life)									
😔1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10😁
Comments									
Spiritual Health (connection to a higher power or purpose)									
😔1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10😁
Comments									
Financial Health									
😔1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10😁
Comments									
Recreation or Creative Activities									
😔1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10😁
Comments									

Visualization of Wellbeing

- **Guidelines**: Start by settling in and placing one hand on your heart and the other on your belly. Close your eyes if it feels comfortable. Take a few deep breaths to center yourself.
    - **State Your Goal**: Silently state to yourself what you want to accomplish in your wellness journey, using "I want to do/be/feel…"
    - **Identify Your Motivation**: Reflect on why this goal is important. Say to yourself, "I want to do/be/feel… because…"
    - **Visualize the Steps**: Imagine yourself actively working towards this goal, engaging all five senses to create a vivid mental picture of each action step.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - How does visualizing your goal help clarify your purpose?
    - What feelings or emotions arise when you picture yourself achieving this goal?
- **Purpose**: Visualization strengthens your commitment to your goals by connecting actions to a deeper sense of purpose. It encourages focus and clarity, helping you to imagine your success and the journey toward it.

Accountabili-buddies

- **Instructions**:
    - Pair up with an accountabili-buddy. Take turns sharing your wellness goal, your reason for setting it, and the specific steps you plan to take.
    - **Time to Share**: Each person gets 2 minutes to present their goal, purpose, and plan.
    - **Establish Check-ins**: Decide on a method of communication (text, email, meetings) and agree on how often you'll check in with each other to review progress.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - How can your accountabili-buddy support you in staying committed to your goals?
    - What specific check-in strategies will help both of you stay accountable?
- **Purpose**: Having an accountabili-buddy provides mutual support and encouragement. Regular check-ins foster a sense of responsibility and help maintain motivation, making it easier to stay on track with your wellness goals.

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Gentle Stretch and Release

- **Guidelines**: Stand or sit comfortably with your feet grounded. Start with a gentle neck roll, releasing tension. Slowly move to shoulder rolls, then stretch your arms overhead. Take deep breaths as you move.
    - **Inhale**: As you stretch upward, feel the space in your body expand.
    - **Exhale**: Release any tightness, imagining the tension leaving your body.
    - **Focus on Sensations**: Pay attention to the stretch and sensations in each part of your body as you move.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - What areas of your body feel tight or tense?
    - How does it feel to release that tension as you exhale?
- **Purpose**: This gentle stretching helps release physical tension and promotes a deeper connection with your body, encouraging a sense of calm and relaxation.

Walking Meditation

- **Guidelines**: Find a clear space to walk slowly. Begin by taking a few deep breaths. As you walk, focus on each step, noticing how your feet feel as they touch the ground.
    - **Breathe Naturally**: Match your breathing to your steps, creating a steady rhythm.
    - **Awareness of Each Step**: Pay attention to how your foot lifts, moves forward, and returns to the ground.
    - **Engage Your Senses**: Notice the sights, sounds, and smells around you without judgment or analysis.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Technique

- **Guidelines**: Take a few deep breaths and settle into your space. This grounding exercise helps reconnect with the present moment by using your senses.
    - **5 Things You See**: Look around and name five things you can see. They can be objects, colors, or shapes.
    - **4 Things You Feel**: Notice and describe four sensations on your body, such as the texture of your clothes or the chair beneath you.
    - **3 Things You Hear**: Focus on three distinct sounds around you, whether loud or soft.
    - **2 Things You Smell**: Identify two scents in the air, or recall familiar ones if none are present.
    - **1 Thing You Taste**: Be aware of any lingering taste in your mouth or take a sip of water and savor it.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - How does this exercise help shift your focus away from stress?
    - What senses were most and least noticeable to you?
- **Purpose**: This technique helps anchor you to the present moment, reducing anxiety and promoting mindfulness through heightened sensory awareness.

Seated Sun Salutation

- **Guidelines**: Sit comfortably with feet flat on the ground. Move slowly through each posture, linking movement to breath.
    - **Seated Mountain**: Sit tall, hands resting on your thighs, and take a deep breath.
    - **Extended Mountain (Inhale)**: Raise your arms overhead, lengthening through your spine.
    - **Forward Fold (Exhale)**: Hinge at your hips and fold forward, letting your head and neck relax.
    - **Halfway Lift (Inhale)**: Lift halfway up, keeping a straight back and hands on your knees.
    - **Forward Fold (Exhale)**: Fold forward again, letting go of tension.
    - **Right Knee Up (Inhale)**: Lift your right knee, clasping your hands around it, and hold your breath.
    - **Release (Exhale)**: Gently lower your leg.
    - **Left Knee Up (Inhale)**: Lift your left knee, clasping your hands around it, and hold your breath.
    - **Forward Fold (Exhale)**: Fold forward once more, releasing any tightness.
    - **Extended Mountain (Inhale)**: Raise your arms overhead, feeling your body expand.
    - **Twist Right (Exhale)**: Gently twist to the right, bringing one hand behind you and the other on your opposite knee.
    - **Extended Mountain (Inhale)**: Return to center with arms raised.
    - **Twist Left (Exhale)**: Twist to the left, bringing one hand behind you and the other on your opposite knee.
    - **Hands to Heart Center**: Bring your hands together in front of your chest, taking a moment to breathe deeply.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - How does this movement flow help you release tension?
    - What changes do you notice in your breath and body throughout the sequence?

- **Purpose**: The Seated Sun Salutation sequence offers a gentle flow of movements that promote relaxation, flexibility, and mindful breathing, making it accessible for all levels.

5-Minute Chair Yoga Practice

This fun and engaging chair yoga practice promotes movement, relaxation, and focus, making it a great way to refresh your mind and body during a busy school day.

Chair Yoga Flow

Guidelines

1. **Seated Mountain Pose**: Sit up tall in your chair with your feet flat on the ground. Place your hands on your thighs and take a deep breath in, reaching your arms overhead like a mountain.
2. **Forward Fold**: Exhale as you bend forward, reaching towards your toes or resting your hands on your legs. Let your head hang heavy. Take a few deep breaths here.
3. **Halfway Lift**: Inhale, lifting your torso halfway while keeping your back straight. Your hands can rest on your thighs.
4. **Seated Twist**: Exhale and gently twist to the right, placing your left hand on your right knee and your right hand on the back of your chair. Hold for a few breaths, then switch sides.

5. **Shoulder Rolls**: Sit up straight, inhale as you lift your shoulders to your ears, and exhale as you roll them back and down. Repeat this 3-5 times.
6. **Reach for the Sky**: Inhale, raising both arms overhead with palms together. Exhale, and gently lower your arms back down. Repeat 2-3 times.
7. **Close with a Smile**: Place your hands over your heart, take a deep breath, and smile! Feel the energy in your body.

Reflective Questions

- How does your body feel after this chair yoga practice?
- What was your favorite pose, and why?
- How can you use chair yoga to help you focus or relax during the school day?

Purpose

This chair yoga practice encourages physical movement and mindfulness, helping to reduce stress and improve concentration. It can be easily integrated into the classroom routine, providing a fun and interactive way for teachers and students to reconnect and rejuvenate. By taking just five minutes, participants can enhance their mood, boost energy levels, and create a positive classroom environment.

REFLECTIONS

Reflections are a powerful tool for fostering personal development, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking. By regularly reflecting, we gain insight into our choices and actions, learn from experiences, and set the stage for intentional growth and well-being.

Why Reflect?

- **Self-Awareness**: Understanding ourselves and recognizing our emotions and reactions.
- **Learning and Growth**: Turning experiences into lessons for personal development.
- **Improved Decision-Making**: Gaining clarity on choices by examining past outcomes.
- **Goal Setting**: Using reflections to set clear, achievable goals.
- **Emotional Regulation**: Managing and understanding emotions through mindful reflection.
- **Enhanced Problem-Solving**: Developing new perspectives and strategies for challenges.
- **Empathy and Understanding**: Building connections by reflecting on interactions and considering others' perspectives.
- **Accountability**: Reflecting helps us take ownership of our actions and commitments.

Journaling and Quiet Thinking

Journaling and quiet thinking are reflective practices that allow us to process thoughts, emotions, and experiences with clarity. They provide a space to express feelings, document insights, and engage in self-discovery.

Journaling Practice

- **Guidelines**:
  - **Set a Time**: Choose a quiet time each day or week to write without distractions.
  - **Start with a Prompt**: Begin with a simple question, such as "How am I feeling right now?" or "What am I grateful for today?".
  - **Free Write**: Let your thoughts flow without worrying about grammar, structure, or correctness.
  - **Reflect on Key Experiences**: Write about specific moments and what you learned from them.
  - **Keep It Private**: Remember that journaling is for your eyes only unless you choose to share.
- **Reflective Questions**:
  - What thoughts keep coming up in your journal?
  - How have your feelings evolved over time?
  - What new insights have you gained about yourself?

Quiet Thinking

- **Guidelines**:
  - **Create a Calm Space**: Find a quiet place where you can sit comfortably without interruptions.
  - **Breathe and Focus**: Take a few deep breaths and allow your mind to settle.
  - **Pose a Gentle Question**: Consider a reflective question like, "What is most important to me right now?" or "What am I avoiding, and why?"
  - **Sit with Your Thoughts**: Let your mind explore the question without forcing answers. Simply observe what comes up.

    - **Note Key Takeaways**: Afterward, jot down any significant thoughts or realizations.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - What recurring patterns or themes do you notice in your quiet thinking?
    - How do these moments of stillness influence your decisions or behavior?
- **Purpose**

The purpose of journaling and quiet thinking is to encourage introspection, self-awareness, and growth. They provide an opportunity to slow down, connect with ourselves, and gain insight into our emotions and actions. By incorporating these practices, we can cultivate mindfulness, enhance our emotional intelligence, and make more intentional choices.

Thankful Thoughts

Gratitude is a powerful practice that promotes positivity, empathy, and connection within a community. In the Appreciation Circle, teachers and students come together to acknowledge and express gratitude, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and kindness.

Appreciation Circle Practice

- **Guidelines**:
    - **Choose a Partner or Group**: Decide whether to share in pairs or with the entire circle, based on the size and time available.
    - **Start with One Thing**: Each person shares one thing or one person they are grateful for. Be specific - mention why you're grateful and how it impacted you.
    - **Take Turns Listening**: While one person speaks, others listen attentively without interrupting.
    - **Express Authenticity**: Speak genuinely from the heart. Acknowledge small acts of kindness or big moments of support.
    - **Encourage Reflection**: Allow time for participants to reflect on the shared gratitude and the feelings it evokes.
- **Reflective Questions**:
    - What made this moment or person special to you?
    - How did expressing or receiving gratitude make you feel?

    - What difference does practicing gratitude make in your relationships or classroom environment?
- **Purpose:** The purpose of sharing thankful thoughts is to cultivate an attitude of gratitude, build a supportive community, and enhance well-being. When we appreciate others, it not only uplifts them but also strengthens our own sense of connection and contentment.

CLOSING

The closing section serves as a way to help participants transition smoothly from a mindful experience back into their daily routine. Sealing the connection through a body scan allows for relaxation and grounding, enabling participants to leave feeling centered and at peace.

Body Scan Practice

Guidelines

- **Start at the Head or Feet**: Choose a starting point—either the top of your head or the soles of your feet.
- **Move Section by Section**: Gradually bring awareness to each part of your body, moving systematically. Notice the sensations, tightness, or relaxation in each area.
- **Breathe into Tension**: If you notice tension or tightness, visualize your breath moving into that area. Imagine the breath softening and releasing any tight muscles.
- **Refocus When the Mind Wanders**: It's natural for the mind to drift. When it happens, gently bring your attention back to your breath and continue scanning your body.
- **Take Your Time**: This practice can be as short as a minute or as long as an hour. The goal is to remain present, aware of your body, and connected to your sensations.

Reflective Questions

- What sensations did you notice in your body during the scan?
- How did breathing into areas of tension affect your experience?
- How can you use this practice to relax or relieve stress in your daily routine?

Purpose

The Body Scan helps seal the session, providing closure and a mindful reconnection with oneself. This technique encourages relaxation, increases body awareness, and serves as a useful tool for stress management. By practicing regularly, participants can improve their capacity to be present and respond to stress in healthier ways.

The closing exercise is essential to integrate the day's learnings and transition from the mindfulness practice to everyday life with a renewed sense of calm and connection.

RECAP

This section provides an overview of the tools and practices presented throughout this training manual, highlighting the specific SEL competencies each is designed to support.

Self-Awareness

Intentional Observation of Body Tension**;** Breathe In, Breathe Out (3 Collective Breaths)

Flower Breathing**;** Body Scan**;** Identities**;** Values

Color Check-In**;** Mood Meter Check-In

Self-Management

Breathe In, Breathe Out (3 Collective Breaths)

Flower Breathing**;** Body Scan**;** Motivate Me

Gentle Stretch and Release**;** Walking Meditation

5-Minute Chair Yoga Practice

Social Awareness

Equitable Sharing Protocol**;** Mindful Listening**;** Thankful Thoughts

Relationship Skills

Equitable Sharing Protocol**;** Mindful Listening

Two-Word Check-In**;** Color Check-In**;** Mood Meter Check-In

Responsible Decision-Making

Life Evaluation**;** Motivate Me**;** Journaling and Quiet Thinking

Reflective Practice

Journaling**;** Quiet Thinking**;** Seal the Connection