



Investigating the effects of a mindful journaling intervention on Iranian EFL teachers' well-being and resilience

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Abstract

The psychological well-being of language teachers has increasingly been recognized as a critical factor influencing both instructional quality and professional sustainability. However, limited attention has been given to empirically grounded interventions tailored to the specific needs of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. This study examined the effects of an eight-week mindful journaling and reflection program on the well-being and resilience of Iranian EFL teachers using a randomized controlled trial design. Forty teachers were assigned to either an intervention or wait-list control group, with outcomes measured at baseline, post-intervention, and four weeks later. Psychological well-being was assessed using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), and resilience was measured using the 25-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). Mixed-design ANOVAs revealed statistically significant improvements in well-being ($F(1, 38) = 13.89, p = .001, \eta^2 = .268$) and resilience ($F(1, 38) = 20.99, p < .001, \eta^2 = .356$) in the intervention group, with gains maintained at follow-up. Thematic analysis of participants' journal entries and open-ended responses revealed three key domains of change: emotional self-regulation and inner calm, reconnection with professional purpose, and awareness of personal growth and strength. These findings suggest that structured mindful journaling can serve as a feasible, low-cost intervention to enhance psychological resilience and well-being among language teachers. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on language teachers' well-being by providing context-specific evidence for the use of reflective writing as a vehicle for teacher mental health support.

Keywords: Mindful journaling; teacher well-being; resilience; mindfulness-based intervention; EFL teachers; reflective practice

Introduction

In recent years, the mental well-being of teachers has become a growing concern within educational research, reflecting a wider recognition of its critical role in shaping teaching efficacy, classroom climate, and student outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Kiyangfar et al., 2025; Mercer, 2021; Roffey, 2012; Taati Jeliseh et al., 2025; Xodabande & Karimpour, 2025). While teachers across disciplines encounter psychological stressors, language teachers often face unique professional challenges, including managing linguistic diversity, cultural mediation, and pedagogical expectations linked to high-stakes language learning (Ashegh Navaie et al., 2024; Chamani et al., 2023; Lotfi Gaskaree et al., 2025; Nazari & Xodabande, 2022; Sadraei et al., 2024; Salmani Ghasemzadegan et al., 2025; Zohrabi & Xodabande, 2024). Within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching context, these demands are compounded by socio-cultural expectations and the rapidly changing landscape of language education (Arefsadr et al., 2022; Babaii, 2022; Dabbagh et al., 2022).

Against this backdrop, Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) have gained increasing attention as evidence-based approaches for promoting teacher well-being, emotional regulation, and resilience (Hidajat et al., 2023; Hwang et al., 2017; Shakib Kotamjani et al., 2025; Taati Jeliseh et al., 2025). However, despite the growing global evidence base, the application of MBIs among EFL teachers remains under-researched and insufficiently contextualized. This is especially problematic given the intensified emotional labor and performance pressures that often characterize language teaching (Benesch, 2018; King & Ng, 2018; Nazari et al., 2023). Recent reviews suggest that tailored mindfulness programs can improve teacher well-being, emotional resilience, and professional engagement (Hidajat et al., 2023; Roeser et al., 2012), yet few studies have addressed how specific practices—such as mindful journaling—may facilitate these outcomes. In light of these considerations, there is a need for MBI interventions for EFL teachers that are both evidence-based and contextually grounded. This study responds to that need by investigating the effects of an eight-week mindful journaling (and reflection) program on Iranian EFL teachers' well-being and resilience. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on teacher well-being by offering empirical evidence for the effectiveness of reflective mindfulness practices. In doing so, the study highlights the applicability of MBIs for teachers and provides practical insights into integrating mindfulness into professional development and teacher support systems within language education.

Literature Review

Theoretical Underpinning

Mindfulness, as theorized by Kabat-Zinn (2005), involves cultivating a particular quality of attention that is purposeful, present-focused, and non-judgmental. This conceptualization, originating from the secular adaptation of Buddhist contemplative traditions, laid the groundwork for the development of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), a widely used intervention model in clinical and educational settings. This work has been foundational in bringing mindfulness into mainstream psychological practice, highlighting its capacity to alleviate stress, enhance emotional well-being, and improve cognitive functioning (Dobkin, 2008; Young, 2016). Central to this theoretical approach is the idea that mindfulness disrupts habitual, automatic reactivity by fostering a conscious awareness of moment-to-moment experience (Hwang, Goldstein, et al., 2019). Through this mechanism, individuals can disengage from ruminative cycles and anxious projections, thereby improving their ability to regulate emotions and reduce psychological distress (Khoury et al., 2015). For teachers, who often operate in emotionally charged and cognitively demanding environments, such mechanisms offer a pathway toward enhanced professional efficacy and psychological resilience.

From a cognitive psychology perspective, mindfulness is theorized to increase meta-cognitive awareness and attentional control, allowing individuals to disengage from automatic thought patterns and respond more adaptively to their environment (Kang et al., 2012; Zelazo & Lyons, 2012). Mindfulness has been shown to enhance executive functions such as working memory, cognitive flexibility, and sustained attention—skills that are essential for teachers who must continuously manage dynamic classroom situations, make instructional decisions, and respond to diverse student needs (Chiesa et al., 2011; Im et al., 2021). Moreover, mindfulness cultivates attentional regulation, enabling individuals to focus on relevant stimuli while ignoring distractions, a skill especially valuable in the high-stimulation context of teaching (Verplanken & Fisher, 2014). Teachers with enhanced attentional control are more likely to maintain a calm, present-centered approach in their classrooms, which supports better classroom management and more effective pedagogical engagement (Skinner & Beers, 2016). These cognitive benefits are not isolated outcomes but are integrally connected to broader professional competencies, such as the capacity for reflection, adaptability, and sustained motivation.

A second core psychological mechanism underpinning mindfulness is emotion regulation. This refers to individuals' ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional reactions in ways that promote adaptive functioning (Lawlor, 2016). Mindfulness supports emotional regulation by increasing non-reactive awareness of emotional stimuli, which allows individuals to create psychological distance between stimulus and response (Young, 2016). In the context of teaching, this space can be transformative. Teachers often face emotionally challenging situations—ranging from student misbehavior to institutional demands and parental expectations—and the ability to regulate emotional responses is critical to sustaining effective teaching practices and personal well-being (Shapiro et al., 2016; Soloway, 2016). Research has shown that teachers who cultivate mindfulness are better able to remain calm under pressure, recover more quickly from emotional setbacks, and develop more empathetic relationships with students (Roeser et al., 2012).

The theoretical relevance of mindfulness can also be understood through the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2003, 2013). This theory posits that positive emotional states expand individuals' momentary thought-action repertoires, enabling more creative, flexible, and inclusive thinking. Over time, such broadened cognition builds enduring personal and social resources—including resilience, social connectedness, and problem-solving capacity—that support psychological and professional growth (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). When integrated into teaching, mindfulness fosters positive affective states such as gratitude, calm, and empathy, which can enhance teachers' ability to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics and reframe stressors as opportunities for growth (Rusu & Colomeischi, 2020). The repeated experience of positive emotions through mindfulness practices initiates upward spirals of well-being, countering the downward spirals typically associated with stress and burnout (Fredrickson, 2013). In this way, the Broaden-and-Build Theory provides a compelling framework for understanding how mindfulness may not only mitigate negative emotional experiences but also cultivate the internal resources necessary for sustainable professional engagement (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Talbot & Mercer, 2018). As such, mindfulness represents a dual-process mechanism—reducing risk while simultaneously building capacity which is particularly relevant in high-stakes, emotionally demanding professions such as teaching.

Empirical Findings: Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Teachers

This subsection synthesizes empirical evidence on mindfulness-based interventions for teachers with a focus on three interconnected strands that are directly relevant to the present study. First, it summarizes intervention outcomes reported across experimental and quasi-experimental

research, with particular attention to changes in teacher stress, burnout-related indicators, well-being, and resilience. Second, it highlights the core psychological processes that have been proposed to explain these effects in teacher populations, especially emotion regulation, mindfulness, and self-compassion, while noting where findings are consistent versus mixed across studies and contexts. Third, it reviews practical features that shape feasibility and effectiveness in school settings, including intervention duration and format, implementation conditions, and the extent of institutional support. This organizing structure is intended to clarify how the existing evidence base informs the rationale for examining mindful journaling as a context-sensitive, low-cost mindfulness practice for EFL teachers.

The mounting stress levels and burnout rates among teachers have drawn considerable scholarly attention, particularly as these psychological challenges significantly compromise both instructional quality and overall teacher well-being (Lotfi Gaskaree et al., 2025; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Sadraei et al., 2024). Within this context, mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) have gained prominence as empirically grounded strategies for alleviating occupational stress and emotional exhaustion among educators. A consistent finding across the literature is that MBIs, when tailored to the specific needs of teachers, can foster enhanced emotional regulation, reduce psychological distress, and promote overall mental resilience (Hwang et al., 2017; Khoury et al., 2015). The mechanisms underlying these outcomes are often attributed to the cultivation of present-moment awareness, non-reactivity, and self-compassion—core tenets of mindfulness, which collectively disrupt maladaptive cognitive patterns such as rumination and anticipatory anxiety (Carmody et al., 2009). Importantly, these interventions do not merely aim to reduce symptoms but also strive to build enduring psychological resources that can buffer teachers against the cumulative toll of educational stressors (Shapiro et al., 2016).

Recent empirical studies have shown that MBIs can yield substantial improvements in reducing emotional exhaustion, which is a core component of burnout. For instance, Taylor et al. (2021) implemented a brief MBI (bMBI) over four sessions totaling six hours, specifically targeting high-performing secondary school faculty in the United States. Despite the brevity of the program, results showed significant reductions in teacher stress, burnout, and depression, as measured by both self-report instruments and physiological indices such as cortisol awakening response. Participants in the intervention group reported notable reductions in time-related stress, professional distress, and fatigue, accompanied by increased emotional balance. Although physiological changes were not statistically significant, qualitative trends suggested improved stress regulation. This study not only confirmed the efficacy of a short-form MBI but also demonstrated its feasibility in high-demand teaching environments. Likewise, Ancona and Mendelson (2014) explored the effects of a yoga-integrated mindfulness program in urban public schools and found marginally significant reductions in stress and emotional exhaustion, which were further supported by positive qualitative feedback. These studies point to the viability of condensed mindfulness programs that maintain fidelity to core mindfulness principles while accommodating teachers' limited time availability.

MBIs have also been found to enhance teachers' capacity for emotional self-regulation and improve classroom interactions, which are critical for reducing burnout and sustaining professional engagement. Hwang, Goldstein, et al. (2019) in a large-scale randomized controlled trial with 185 educators in Australia, reported significant improvements in perceived stress, mindfulness, and self-compassion following an eight-week intervention. Importantly, these improvements extended to cognitive reappraisal, a crucial element of emotion regulation, and were maintained at follow-up, indicating sustained psychological benefits. Teachers in the intervention group were better able to navigate classroom stressors with reduced reactivity

and greater composure, attributes that likely contributed to a more stable classroom environment. Complementing this, Hwang, Noh, et al. (2019) showed that participants in a mindfulness intervention exhibited increased use of person-centered teaching strategies and reported reduced stress and heightened self-compassion. These changes were supported by systematic classroom observations and interviews, highlighting the multifaceted impact of MBIs that goes beyond self-reported improvements to influence teaching behavior and pedagogy.

Gender-specific and personality-based outcomes of mindfulness training have also been addressed in recent research. Fabbro et al. (2020), focusing on female teachers in Italy, demonstrated that an eight-week mindfulness training program not only reduced stress and emotional exhaustion but also led to shifts in personality traits—specifically, reduced neuroticism and increased conscientiousness. This finding adds a novel dimension to the mindfulness literature by suggesting that MBIs may also catalyze deeper psychological transformations that influence teachers' broader dispositions toward their work. Similarly, Cheng et al. (2022) investigated kindergarten teachers in China and found that mindfulness training significantly increased emotional intelligence and mindfulness while reducing burnout and depressive symptoms. Although changes in stress and anxiety were not statistically significant, qualitative data highlighted increased moment-to-moment awareness and emotional resilience. These findings underscore the importance of emotional self-awareness and cognitive flexibility as intermediate outcomes of MBIs that eventually contribute to reduced burnout.

The efficacy of MBIs across different educational contexts and teaching levels has been validated through diverse methodological approaches, including both randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental designs. Beshai et al. (2016) examined the .b Foundations Course, an MBSR/MBCT adaptation for educators, and found significant improvements in stress, mindfulness, and self-compassion among secondary school teachers. Teachers not only reported reduced stress but also demonstrated increased capacities for self-kindness and emotional regulation, which are particularly relevant for managing the affective challenges of teaching. Likewise, Song et al. (2020) implemented a four-day intensive MBSR-based program in Eastern China, reporting improved mindfulness and reduced negative affect. Although positive affect did not significantly increase, the program was perceived as highly feasible and impactful, suggesting that even short-term interventions can yield measurable psychological benefits.

Several studies have addressed the long-term sustainability of MBI outcomes. Rupprecht et al. (2017) conducted a five-week MBSR training with follow-up after three months and found that improvements in mindfulness and stress regulation were not only maintained but in some cases enhanced over time. Teachers demonstrated more sustainable work engagement practices, characterized by increased awareness of resource limitations and more deliberate classroom management strategies. This finding aligns with Schussler et al. (2016), who, through qualitative data, illustrated how the CARE program enhanced teachers' somatic awareness and emotional self-regulation. Participants reported improved capacity to identify early signs of stress and employ mindfulness techniques to maintain psychological equilibrium. These qualitative insights complement quantitative findings and reinforce the multidimensional efficacy of MBIs in promoting teacher well-being.

Despite the overall positive outcomes, some studies have reported mixed or limited effects on stress reduction. For instance, Gouda et al. (2016) found that while students significantly benefited from the MBSR program in terms of self-regulation and emotional competencies, teachers only exhibited significant gains in interpersonal domains and mindfulness, without statistically meaningful reductions in perceived stress. Similarly, Luong et al. (2019) reported that teachers improved in self-reported mindfulness but not in anxiety, depression, or stress measures. These discrepancies may stem from contextual variables, such as intervention timing,

teacher workload, and institutional support, which can influence how MBIs are received and practiced. Moreover, the heterogeneity in mindfulness training protocols, duration, and facilitator expertise likely contributes to variability in outcomes across studies (Kyriacou, 2001; C. Taylor et al., 2016). Moreover, Feasibility studies such as Harris et al. (2016) further highlight logistical considerations in implementing MBIs in schools. The CALM program, delivered over 16 weeks in brief daily sessions, showed significant gains in mindfulness and physical stress indicators, including blood pressure and cortisol levels. However, no significant improvements were observed in perceived stress or sleep quality. These findings suggest that while physiological markers may improve, subjective experiences of stress might require more intensive or personalized interventions. The logistical feasibility of such programs is also contingent upon administrative support, as reflected in participant feedback calling for better integration into existing professional development structures (Frank et al., 2015).

In exploring the broader scope of teacher resilience, Kangas-Dick and O'Shaughnessy (2020) emphasized the importance of combining individual-focused interventions like mindfulness with systemic changes to school environments. Their review of experimental studies identified that MBIs are most effective when embedded within a culture of support and autonomy. This ecological perspective is echoed in studies such as de Carvalho et al. (2021), which demonstrated that mindfulness programs can improve not only teachers' emotional regulation and classroom behavior but also students' perceptions of classroom climate. Importantly, the research showed that changes in teacher behavior had measurable effects on student well-being, highlighting the cascading benefits of teacher-focused mindfulness interventions. Lastly, in the context of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, MBIs have shown promise as tools for psychological resilience. Zadok-Gurman et al. (2021) evaluated an Inquiry-Based Stress Reduction (IBSR) program and found that it led to significant improvements in teachers' psychological well-being, resilience, and mindfulness. The intervention group also showed a marked reduction in emotional exhaustion, suggesting that MBIs can serve as crucial coping resources during periods of heightened stress. However, the absence of long-term follow-up and the small, demographically skewed sample limit the generalizability of these findings. Nevertheless, the study contributes to the expanding recognition of MBIs as adaptive, context-sensitive interventions for teacher wellbeing during times of crisis.

Taken together, the theoretical and empirical literature indicates that mindfulness-based interventions can support teacher psychological functioning through mechanisms that are highly relevant to day-to-day teaching, particularly emotion regulation, attentional control, and the cultivation of positive affective resources. At the same time, the existing evidence base is uneven in two ways. First, much of the intervention research has focused on general teacher populations, leaving language teachers, and especially EFL teachers working in high-pressure foreign language contexts, comparatively underrepresented. Second, MBIs have typically foregrounded meditation or yoga-based practices, whereas structured reflective writing as a mindfulness practice has received far less focused empirical attention, despite its conceptual alignment with mindful awareness and teacher reflective development. These gaps suggest the need for context-sensitive, feasible interventions that can be implemented within teachers' professional routines while producing measurable gains in well-being and resilience.

Current Study

Despite increasing scholarly recognition of the challenges faced by language teachers (Boroughani et al., 2025; Karimpour & Xodabande, 2025; Xodabande, 2026; Xodabande, Basarati, et al., 2026; Xodabande, Karimpour, et al., 2026), and the promising role of MBIs in addressing teacher stress and burnout, few studies have investigated the effectiveness of

MBIs specifically tailored for EFL teachers. Furthermore, although mindfulness practices such as meditation and breath awareness have been widely examined, the role of structured reflective writing—as a mindfulness-based approach—remains underexplored in empirical research. Existing literature also suggests that journaling may support emotional regulation and teacher identity development, yet little is known about its standalone effects on psychological outcomes such as well-being and resilience. This study addresses these gaps by evaluating an eight-week mindful journaling and reflection program designed specifically for Iranian EFL teachers. It adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine both the measurable outcomes of the intervention and the lived experiences of participants. The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. To what extent does participation in an eight-week mindful journaling program affect the psychological well-being and resilience of Iranian EFL teachers?
2. How do participants perceive the impact of mindful journaling on their mental health?

Method

Study Design

This study employed a randomized controlled trial design. Specifically, the focus was on whether regular engagement in structured mindful journaling influences teachers' levels of well-being and resilience. Participants were randomly assigned to either the intervention group, which engaged in an eight-week mindful journaling program, or a wait-list control group that did not receive any treatment during the same period. The use of a randomized design helped control for selection bias and allowed for clearer inferences regarding causality. Data were collected at three points in time: baseline (pre-intervention), immediately after the intervention, and four weeks later as a follow-up. Both groups completed the same battery of measures, allowing for between-group comparisons.

Participants

Participants in this study included 40 Iranian EFL teachers working in private language institutes in Shiraz, Iran. They were selected using purposive sampling based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. To be eligible for the study, participants needed to have a minimum of three years of teaching experience in the EFL context and to be currently employed in a private institute at the time of recruitment. Additionally, participants were excluded if they had received any form of psychological treatment or mindfulness-related training within the previous five years or had experienced a significant personal crisis in the three years prior to the study. The five-year exclusion window was used as a conservative criterion to reduce the likelihood that prior therapeutic engagement or prior mindfulness exposure would influence baseline levels of well-being and resilience and thereby confound the interpretation of intervention-related change. These criteria were implemented to control for potential confounding variables that might influence outcomes independently of the intervention. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 45 years, with a mean age of 33.8 years ($SD = 6.2$). Teaching experience ranged from 8 to 20 years ($M = 12.4$, $SD = 3.9$), indicating a moderately experienced sample. In terms of educational qualifications, 15 percent held doctoral degrees, 60 percent had completed MA degrees, and the remaining 25 percent had earned BA degrees in fields related to Applied Linguistics or TEFL. The sample consisted of both male and female teachers (60% females and 40% males). The demographic information of the participants is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants (*N* = 40)

Variable	Category/range	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Age (in years)	22–45	–	–	33.8	6.2
Gender	Female	24	60	–	–
	Male	16	40	–	–
Teaching experience	8–20 years	–	–	12.4	3.9
Educational qualification	PhD	6	15	–	–
	MA	24	60	–	–
	BA	10	25	–	–

Instruments

To assess the psychological outcomes of the mindfulness-based journaling intervention, two validated psychometric instruments were administered at three intervals: prior to the intervention (pre-test), immediately after its conclusion (post-test), and four weeks later (follow-up). These instruments were selected based on their established psychometric properties and their relevance to the constructs under investigation, namely mental well-being, resilience.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant et al., 2007) was used to assess participants' overall psychological well-being, encompassing both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of mental health. The scale consists of 14 positively worded items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time), yielding a total score between 14 and 70, with higher scores reflecting greater well-being. A sample item includes "I have been feeling optimistic about the future." In the present study, the WEMWBS demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, consistent with previous validation studies reporting alpha values between .88 and .91. The scale has shown sensitivity to interventions targeting psychological well-being and is appropriate for adult populations in non-clinical educational settings.

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC): To measure psychological resilience, the 25-item version of the CD-RISC (Connor & Davidson, 2003) was administered. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 0 (not true at all) to 4 (true nearly all of the time), resulting in a total score ranging from 0 to 100. Higher scores indicate greater perceived resilience. A sample item includes "I am able to adapt when changes occur." In this study, the CD-RISC yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .87, reflecting strong internal reliability. This scale has been extensively validated and is commonly used to evaluate resilience in response to psychological interventions, particularly those involving cognitive and emotional self-regulation.

Procedures

The intervention in this study was an eight-week mindful journaling and reflection program designed to enhance teachers' emotional awareness, stress regulation, and professional resilience through structured reflective writing. The program was implemented in a virtual format, with weekly sessions delivered via a video-conferencing platform. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes and included guided mindfulness prompts, reflective writing exercises, and interactive discussion. The aim was to foster greater self-awareness, emotional clarity, and cognitive flexibility through sustained reflective practice, with each session addressing a

specific theme relevant to the personal and professional lives of EFL teachers (Table 2). At the outset, participants were introduced to the rationale and principles underlying mindful journaling. They were asked to maintain a dedicated journal throughout the program, in which they recorded their thoughts, feelings, and experiences both during and between sessions. Each session was thematically structured and followed a consistent format: a brief introduction to the weekly theme, followed by a guided reflection or mindfulness activity, individual journaling time, and a closing discussion in which participants were encouraged (but not required) to share insights or challenges from their journaling process. Between sessions, participants were assigned reflective prompts and journaling tasks to complete independently. These tasks were not graded or assessed, but participants were encouraged to complete them regularly to maximize the intervention’s impact. The themes of the sessions progressed in a way that built emotional depth and reflective complexity over time. Early sessions focused on developing awareness and appreciation of one’s teaching journey, while mid-program activities emphasized identifying sources of stress, cultivating empathy, and processing difficult emotions. The later sessions guided participants toward burnout prevention, classroom innovation, and future visioning, helping them reflect on their identity and goals as teachers. The supportive, process-oriented structure created a psychologically safe space for participants to explore challenges, articulate growth, and develop more mindful perspectives on their work.

Table 2. *Overview of the mindful journaling and reflection program*

Session	Theme	Focus of reflection	Sample activities
1	Introduction to Mindful Journaling	Establishing the purpose and practice of journaling	Guided reflection; first entry: “ <i>My journey as an educator</i> ”
2	Journaling as Self-Reflection	Identifying personal strengths and areas of growth	Reflection prompts; optional peer discussion
3	Capturing Moments of Joy	Focusing on positive teaching experiences	Journaling about recent joyful teaching moments
4	Navigating Challenges	Processing classroom stressors through mindful writing	Reflective prompts on recent professional challenges
5	Deepening Empathy and Understanding	Adopting students’ perspectives through journaling	Writing from a student’s point of view
6	Journaling for Classroom Innovation	Exploring new ideas and pedagogical creativity	Reflection on lesson innovations and peer feedback
7	Overcoming Burnout through Reflection	Recognizing emotional fatigue and developing self-care strategies	Journaling about burnout and coping mechanisms
8	Vision and Future Commitment	Setting long-term professional intentions	Final entry: “ <i>Where I see myself in 5 years as an educator</i> ”

The design of the intervention was informed by established frameworks in both mindfulness education and reflective practice in teacher development. The program adapted principles from mindfulness-based teacher training (Jennings, 2015; Roeser et al., 2012) and incorporated reflective journaling practices rooted in teacher identity and self-study literature (Farrell, 2022; Zohrabi & Xodabande, 2024). Specific weekly themes were selected based on prior research indicating the relevance of emotional regulation, empathy, self-awareness, and burnout resilience in language teacher well-being (Hargreaves, 2000; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). For example, the focus on navigating classroom challenges through journaling (Session 4) drew on work suggesting that structured self-reflection enables teachers to process emotionally taxing experiences (Schön, 1987). The overall structure followed a developmental progression from personal awareness to relational insight and long-term professional vision, consistent with mindfulness-based professional learning models (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). These pedagogical and psychological foundations ensured that the program was not only experiential but also theoretically robust. Additionally, the entire program was facilitated by a licensed psychologist with specialized training in mindfulness-based interventions. The facilitator ensured consistency across sessions, provided emotional support where needed, and helped participants deepen their engagement with the material. To maintain accountability and support outside of weekly sessions, participants received weekly reminders and reflective prompts. These supplementary resources were designed to reinforce continuity in practice and promote the integration of mindfulness into daily professional routines.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using a repeated-measures design to assess changes in participants' psychological outcomes over the course of the eight-week mindful journaling and reflection program. Three data collection points were established: pre-intervention (Week 0), immediately following the intervention (Week 8), and at a four-week follow-up (Week 12). At each time point, participants completed the two psychometric scales through an online platform. All participants in both the intervention and wait-list control groups completed the same surveys at the same intervals, allowing for between-group and within-group comparisons over time. No participants withdrew after randomization, and all teachers completed the measures at all three time points; therefore, there were no missing quantitative outcome data requiring imputation or other missing-data procedures. In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative reflections were collected from the participants in the intervention group after the program. At the end of the program, participants in the intervention group were also invited to respond to open-ended questions. These questions asked participants to describe how the journaling process had affected their well-being, stress management, and resilience, thereby offering further insights into the mechanisms underlying the observed quantitative outcomes.

Data Analysis

To evaluate the effectiveness of the mindful journaling and reflection intervention, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed independently and subsequently interpreted in a complementary manner. The primary focus was on determining whether the intervention had a significant impact on participants' well-being and resilience, as measured by standardized instruments administered at three time points. Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 27). Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed for each of the two dependent variables at pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages for both the intervention and control groups. To confirm baseline equivalence between groups

prior to the intervention, independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted separately for well-being and resilience at pre-test. The primary inferential procedure employed was a mixed-design repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Pallant, 2016). Specifically, a mixed between-within subjects analysis was conducted with Time (pre-test, post-test, delayed post-test) as the within-subject factor and Group (intervention vs. control) as the between-subject factor. The two outcome variables (well-being and resilience) were examined using a multivariate approach first (Wilks' Lambda), followed by univariate tests for each dependent variable, consistent with the reporting structure of mixed MANOVA frameworks in SPSS. Accordingly, the "separate tests" reported in the Results section refer to: (a) baseline *t*-tests for each outcome, (b) multivariate tests for the combined outcomes across Time, Group, and Time $\times$ Group, and (c) univariate between-subjects effects for well-being and for resilience. Effect sizes were calculated using partial eta squared (η^2), with values of .01, .06, and .14 interpreted as small, medium, and large effects, respectively (Cohen, 1988). All statistical tests were conducted at the .05 level of significance. Because there was no attrition and no missing outcome data across the three measurement points, all analyses were conducted on the full sample ($N = 40$).

Results

Quantitative Findings

The descriptive statistics for the well-being and resilience scores across the three measurement points are presented in Table 3. At the pre-test stage, the participants in the MBI group reported a slightly higher level of well-being ($M = 47.35$, $SD = 8.92$) compared to the control group ($M = 43.85$, $SD = 7.68$), although the difference was modest. At post-test, the mean well-being score in the MBI group increased to 49.75 ($SD = 7.93$), while the control group showed a small decline ($M = 42.95$, $SD = 6.84$). This upward trend in the MBI group was followed by a slight reduction at the delayed post-test ($M = 47.95$, $SD = 7.96$), whereas the control group remained relatively stable ($M = 43.30$, $SD = 4.43$). These descriptive trends suggest a moderate and sustained improvement in psychological well-being among participants who underwent the mindful journaling intervention. As for resilience, similar trends were observed. At pre-test, the mean resilience scores were nearly identical between the MBI ($M = 43.45$, $SD = 6.07$) and control ($M = 43.50$, $SD = 5.28$) groups. However, by the post-test, the MBI group demonstrated a marked increase in resilience ($M = 49.60$, $SD = 5.19$), while the control group remained nearly unchanged ($M = 43.20$, $SD = 5.48$). This upward shift continued into the delayed post-test, where the MBI group reached a mean score of 52.15 ($SD = 5.48$), whereas the control group showed no meaningful gain ($M = 42.90$, $SD = 7.03$). These results suggest a progressive and sustained enhancement in resilience among the intervention group following the mindful journaling program.

To ensure the equivalence of the two groups before the intervention, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the MBI and control groups on their pre-test scores for well-being and resilience. The results are summarized in Table 4. As shown, the comparison of well-being scores prior to the intervention revealed no statistically significant difference between the MBI group ($M = 47.35$, $SD = 8.92$) and the control group ($M = 43.85$, $SD = 7.68$), $t(38) = 1.33$, $p = .192$. Similarly, the difference between the two groups in terms of resilience was negligible and not statistically significant, $t(38) = -0.03$, $p = .978$, with nearly identical means (MBI: $M = 43.45$, $SD = 6.07$; Control: $M = 43.50$, $SD = 5.28$). These findings confirm that the two groups were comparable at baseline in terms of the primary outcome variables.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for well-being and resilience scores across groups and time points

		Group	Mean	Std. deviation	N
Well-being	pre-test	MBI	47.35	8.922	20
		Control	43.85	7.680	20
		Total	45.60	8.406	40
	post-test	MBI	49.75	7.933	20
		Control	42.95	6.840	20
		Total	46.35	8.081	40
	delayed post-test	MBI	47.95	7.964	20
		Control	43.30	4.426	20
		Total	45.63	6.781	40
Resilience	pre-test	MBI	43.45	6.074	20
		Control	43.50	5.277	20
		Total	43.47	5.616	40
	post-test	MBI	49.60	5.185	20
		Control	43.20	5.483	20
		Total	46.40	6.184	40
	delayed post-test	MBI	52.15	5.480	20
		Control	42.90	7.026	20
		Total	47.52	7.786	40

Table 4. Independent samples *t*-test comparing mbi and control groups on pre-test scores

Variable	Levene's F	Sig.	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean diff.	Std. error	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Well-being (pre-test)	0.75	.391	1.33	38	.192	3.50	2.63	−1.83	8.83
Resilience (pre-test)	0.68	.413	−0.03	38	.978	−0.05	1.80	−3.69	3.59

To examine the overall effect of the intervention over time and between groups on the two outcome variables—well-being and resilience—a mixed between-within subjects ANOVA was conducted using Time (pre-test, post-test, delayed post-test) as the within-subjects factor and Group (MBI vs. Control) as the between-subjects factor. The results are summarized in Table 5. The multivariate test using Wilks' Lambda revealed a statistically significant main

effect for Group, $\Lambda = .571$, $F(2, 37) = 13.88$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .429$, indicating that the two groups differed significantly when the two dependent variables were considered together. There was also a significant multivariate effect for Time, $\Lambda = .757$, $F(4, 35) = 2.81$, $p = .040$, partial $\eta^2 = .243$, showing that participants' scores changed over time. Most importantly, the Time $\times$ Group interaction was also statistically significant, $\Lambda = .706$, $F(4, 35) = 3.64$, $p = .014$, partial $\eta^2 = .294$. This indicates that changes over time in well-being and resilience were significantly different between the MBI and control groups.

Table 5. *Multivariate tests using Wilks' Lambda for group, time, and group $\times$ time effects*

Effect	Wilks' Lambda	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	Partial η^2
Group	.571	13.88	2	37	< .001	.429
Time	.757	2.81	4	35	.040	.243
Time $\times$ Group	.706	3.64	4	35	.014	.294

To investigate group differences on the average scores across the three time points, a test of between-subjects effects was conducted for both well-being and resilience (Table 6). The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the MBI and control groups for both variables. For well-being, the MBI group had significantly higher average scores across time compared to the control group, $F(1, 38) = 13.89$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .268$. Similarly, for resilience, a significant difference was observed, $F(1, 38) = 20.99$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .356$. These findings indicate moderate to large between-group effects in favor of the mindful journaling intervention.

Table 6. *Tests of between-subjects effects for average scores across time*

Measure	Source	F	df (1, 38)	p	Partial η^2
Well-being	Group	13.89	1, 38	.001	.268
Resilience	Group	20.99	1, 38	< .001	.356

Figure 1 illustrates the changes in estimated marginal means of well-being across three measurement points (pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test) for the MBI and control groups. As shown, participants in the MBI group experienced a noticeable increase in well-being immediately following the intervention, rising from an estimated mean of approximately 47.35 at pre-test to nearly 49.75 at post-test. Although a slight decline was observed at the delayed post-test ($M \approx 47.95$), scores remained higher than baseline. In contrast, the control group demonstrated a relatively stable trend, with estimated marginal means fluctuating slightly from 43.85 at pre-test to 42.95 at post-test and 43.30 at follow-up. These patterns further support the effectiveness of the mindful journaling intervention in enhancing participants' psychological well-being over time.

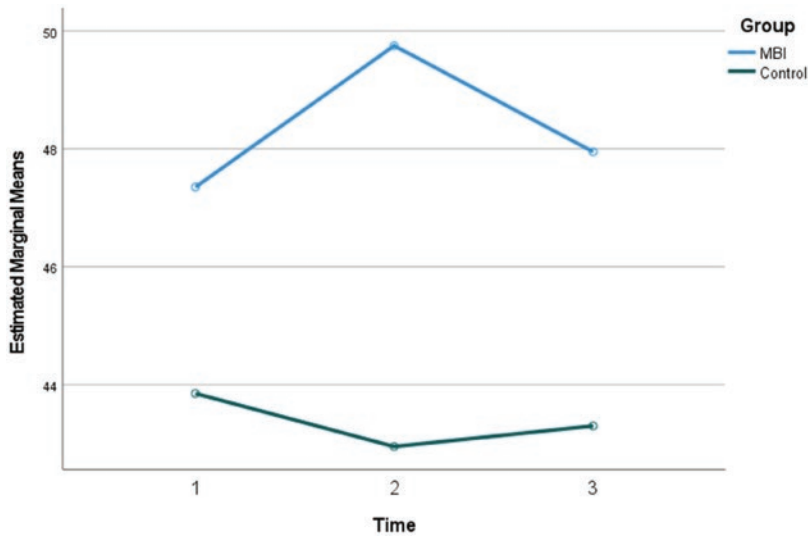


Figure 1. *Estimated marginal means of well-being across three time points by group*

Estimated marginal means of resilience across the three time points are illustrated in Figure 2. As shown, the MBI group demonstrated a consistent upward trend from pre-test ($M = 43.45$) to post-test ($M = 49.60$) and further to delayed post-test ($M = 52.15$). In contrast, the control group exhibited a slight decline over time, with scores decreasing from pre-test ($M = 43.50$) to post-test ($M = 43.20$) and delayed post-test ($M = 42.90$). This divergence highlights a sustained and cumulative benefit of the mindfulness-based journaling intervention on participants' resilience, as opposed to the stable or declining pattern observed in the control group.

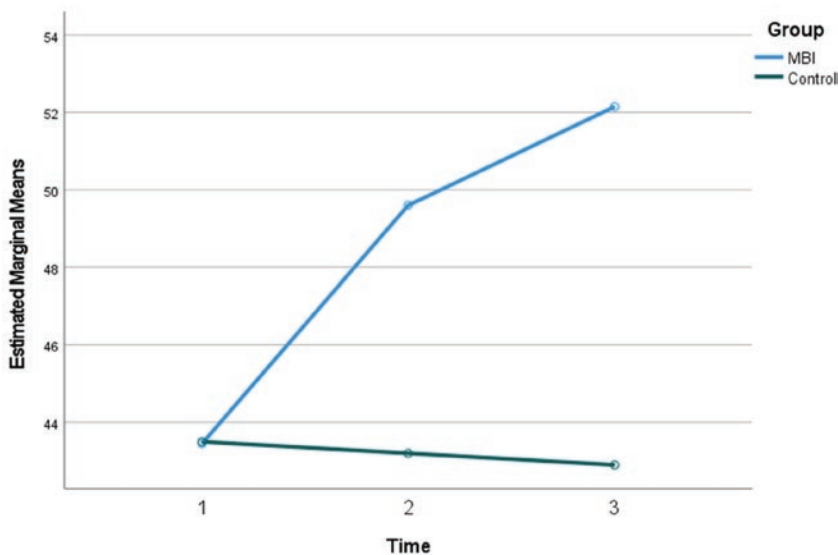


Figure 2. *Estimated marginal means of resilience across three time points by group*

Qualitative Data Analysis Findings

Table 7 below summarizes the three themes identified through thematic analysis, including a brief definition and the number and percentage of intervention-group participants whose responses contained content coded under each theme. Because themes were not mutually exclusive, individual participants could contribute to more than one category.

Table 7. *Prevalence and definition of qualitative themes*

Theme	Definition of the theme	Participants contributing (n, %)
Emotion self-regulation and inner calm	Increased awareness of emotional reactions, reduced reactivity in classroom situations, and use of journaling as a strategy for calming and processing stress	14 (70%)
Reconnection with professional purpose	Renewed sense of teaching meaning, alignment with professional values, and reflection on long-term goals and student impact	12 (60%)
Awareness of personal growth and strength	Recognition of personal development over time, enhanced confidence in coping with challenges, and reframing setbacks as opportunities for growth	13 (65%)

Theme 1: Emotional Self-Regulation and Inner Calm

One of the most salient themes that emerged from participants' reflections was their growing capacity for emotional self-regulation and an enhanced sense of inner calm. Many teachers described the journaling experience as a catalyst for increased awareness of their emotional patterns and a tool for managing stress more constructively. This ability to pause, observe, and process emotional reactions seemed to serve as a buffer against the daily stressors of teaching, allowing participants to regain control in challenging moments. Several teachers articulated that the mindful journaling process helped them create emotional distance from stressful events:

Before, I used to react immediately when something bad happened in the classroom. For example, the fact that some students don't take the class seriously bothers me most. Now, I take a breath and stop reacting immediately. This process helps me calm down and respond more thoughtfully. (Teacher 3)

This statement reflects a shift from reactive to reflective engagement with emotional triggers. Through regular writing, participants became more attuned to their emotional states and developed healthier coping strategies, such as identifying negative thought patterns and reframing them more constructively. Moreover, the participants also emphasized how journaling served as a form of emotional release, helping them offload negative feelings that might otherwise accumulate:

At the end of the day when I finish the classes, writing about what happened was a new experience. It helps me let go of the tensions and stresses that I face most of the times. It's like I'm no longer carrying them with me to my family. (Teacher 7)

This practice of emotional release appeared to mitigate the effects of emotional exhaustion, one of the core dimensions of burnout. Data analysis also revealed that for some teachers, the act of writing itself became meditative, fostering a state of calm focus and internal clarity:

The journaling made me more centered and aware of what is happening in the classroom and the ways I respond to them. I could see my thoughts clearly and realize that I don't have to believe every negative emotion that comes up during the day. (Teacher 12)

Overall, this theme highlights the development of a more mindful and composed emotional landscape among participants. The teachers' reflections point to the important role of emotional self-regulation in enhancing well-being and resilience. Through journaling, teachers created space for self-observation, emotional clarity, and regulation—all of which served to reduce stress and reinforce their psychological resources.

Theme 2: Reconnection with Professional Purpose

Another prominent theme that emerged was the participants' renewed connection to their professional purpose and identity as teachers. In this regard, some teachers expressed that the mindful journaling process gave them an opportunity to reflect deeply on why they entered the profession and what aspects of teaching brought them meaning. This introspection (re)awakened a sense of purpose that had been overshadowed by routine stress and institutional demands. In this regard, teachers described journaling as a reminder of their deeper motivations and a source of inspiration to persist in the profession despite its challenges. One participant shared:

Journaling made me remember why I chose to be a teacher in the first place. It's easy to forget that in the middle of a busy year, but writing helped me reconnect with my goals. (Teacher 1)

Such reflections were often tied to moments of student growth, expressions of gratitude, or memories of impactful teaching experiences. These recollections seemed to foster a sense of fulfillment and professional affirmation:

I started writing about the little moments—when a student said thank you or showed progress. It reminded me that I'm making a difference in their lives, even when it doesn't always feel that way. (Teacher 6)

This perspective illustrates how journaling helped participants shift their focus from institutional stressors to student-centered values. Teachers also reported that writing helped them gain clarity on their long-term goals and envision a more meaningful trajectory in their careers:

I've started thinking about the kind of teacher I want to become, not just how to survive the semester. That shift in thinking is because of being more mindful. (Teacher 10)

The intervention not only reaffirmed participants' existing sense of professional commitment but also revitalized their aspiration to grow within the field. This renewed sense of purpose

contributed to a more resilient outlook, as teachers were better able to contextualize challenges within a broader mission of service and contribution. Overall, this theme reveals how reflective writing re-centered participants on their core values and professional ideals. It offered a psychological anchor amid the pressures of teaching, helping them find renewed meaning in their roles. Such purpose-driven resilience is closely linked to teacher well-being and long-term occupational sustainability.

Theme 3: Awareness of Personal Growth and Strength

The final theme that emerged from the data was an increased awareness of personal growth and inner strength. Participants reported that journaling provided a space not only for emotional processing but also for tracking their development over time. Many expressed surprise at the resilience they discovered in themselves as they documented and revisited their experiences. Teachers described the act of writing as a mirror that allowed them to observe patterns, note progress, and articulate internal changes that might have otherwise gone unnoticed:

Looking back at my entries from the first weeks, I can see how far I've come. I don't react the same way anymore. I've become more patient, more confident. (Teacher 8)

Such realizations reinforced participants' belief in their capacity to adapt, cope, and grow through adversity. Some teachers also emphasized that journaling helped them identify personal strengths, such as perseverance, empathy, and creativity. These discoveries contributed to a more positive and empowered self-image:

Writing helped me see that I've developed strengths I didn't know I had. I'm more resilient than I thought. (Teacher 4)

Participants also described how journaling allowed them to reframe difficult experiences as learning opportunities. Rather than viewing challenges as failures, they began to interpret them as sources of insight and growth:

Now when something goes wrong, I write about what I can learn from it. It makes me feel more in control and less defeated. (Teacher 11)

This reflective stance seemed to cultivate a form of cognitive resilience, enabling participants to maintain perspective and emotional stability during setbacks. Several teachers even mentioned that the practice of journaling had begun to spill over into other areas of their lives, enhancing their self-awareness and emotional literacy beyond the professional sphere.

The way I reflect in my journal has helped me deal with personal issues too. I'm more balanced overall, not just at work. (Teacher 9)

This broader transformation underscores the lasting impact of mindfulness practices when internalized as part of a teacher's identity and routine. By recognizing their growth and resilience, participants reported feeling more capable of navigating future stressors and more confident in their role as educators. In sum, this theme illustrates how journaling promoted a deeper understanding of self, illuminated pathways of growth, and fostered a resilient identity. The increased self-awareness and acknowledgment of internal strength were central to sustaining well-being and coping with the complex demands of the teaching profession.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the effects of an eight-week mindful journaling and reflection intervention on Iranian EFL teachers' psychological well-being and resilience. Quantitative results revealed statistically significant improvements in well-being and resilience among the intervention group, both immediately after the program and at a four-week follow-up, while the control group showed no comparable change. Thematic analysis of participants' written reflections further illuminated how the intervention fostered emotion regulation and inner calm, reconnection with professional purpose, and awareness of personal growth and strength. These findings underscore the psychological value of reflective mindfulness practices and provide empirical support for the integration of journaling into teacher development programs. At the same time, the discussion below differentiates the implications for well-being and resilience, and clarifies what mindful journaling contributes relative to more established mindfulness-based intervention formats.

The primary quantitative outcome—enhanced psychological well-being—demonstrates that regular engagement in structured mindful journaling can promote positive affective states in EFL teachers. This aligns with previous research showing that mindfulness-based interventions, particularly those emphasizing self-awareness and present-focused reflection, can meaningfully enhance well-being (Khouri et al., 2015; Hwang et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2021). In the present study, the well-being gains observed immediately after the intervention and retained at follow-up suggest that reflective writing can function as a practical route to sustained positive functioning, rather than producing only short-lived affective uplift. The observed improvement in resilience similarly echoes prior studies that have documented the capacity of mindfulness practices to strengthen coping resources and adaptive functioning in educators (Cheng et al., 2022; Rupprecht et al., 2017). What distinguishes the current findings, however, is the cumulative nature of the gains in resilience, which not only increased post-intervention but continued to rise at the delayed post-test, suggesting that journaling may support enduring internalization of mindfulness-based competencies. This pattern is theoretically meaningful because it implies that resilience-related change may consolidate over time as teachers repeatedly rehearse reflective, non-reactive coping and integrate it into daily professional routines. The present findings are largely consistent with the broader literature on mindfulness and teacher well-being. Previous studies have established the efficacy of various MBI formats, including MBSR-based programs (Hwang et al., 2019), brief mindfulness interventions (Taylor et al., 2021), and yoga-integrated mindfulness (Ancona & Mendelson, 2014). These interventions have commonly led to improvements in stress regulation, emotional exhaustion, and professional engagement. Similarly, the outcomes of this study confirm the psychological benefits of MBIs; however, the use of mindful journaling as the sole intervention modality adds to a more limited body of research on written mindfulness-based practices. Although reflective writing has been utilized in teacher education (Farrell, 2015), its empirical examination as a standalone mindfulness practice in EFL contexts remains sparse. Thus, while this study confirms effects of MBIs, it also extends the evidence base by illustrating that journaling alone—when designed within a structured, theoretically informed framework—can achieve comparable outcomes. A key difference is that journaling operationalizes mindfulness through language-mediated self-observation and meaning-making, rather than through sustained meditative practice; this may lower access barriers for teachers who find formal meditation unfamiliar, time-intensive, or culturally distant, while still retaining core mindfulness processes such as present-centered attention and non-judgmental awareness.

In considering why mindful journaling contributed to these improvements, it is important to reflect on the theoretical mechanisms underpinning mindfulness. One such mechanism is

enhanced emotion regulation, which has been widely documented as a mediating factor in the success of MBIs (Lawlor, 2016; Young, 2016). Participants in the current study frequently reported that journaling provided a safe space for processing emotions, identifying internal patterns, and de-escalating stress responses. These qualitative insights suggest that the intervention cultivated a form of meta-cognitive awareness, whereby teachers learned to observe their emotional experiences with greater distance and clarity. This process is theoretically consistent with the cognitive decentering proposed by Zelazo and Lyons (2012), as well as the broader conceptualization of mindfulness as a form of non-reactive awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). By offering repeated opportunities for written reflection, the journaling format likely facilitated the cultivation of this capacity in a manageable and contextually appropriate way. In practical terms, the repeated cycle of noticing an emotional trigger, articulating it in writing, and revisiting it through a calmer lens may help teachers interrupt automatic classroom reactivity and replace it with more intentional responses, which is consistent with the qualitative accounts of pausing, reappraising, and responding more thoughtfully. A second theoretical explanation for the observed outcomes lies in the broaden-and-build model of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2003, 2013). According to this framework, the cultivation of positive affect through mindfulness can enhance teachers' cognitive flexibility and emotional resilience over time. The intervention's weekly themes, which progressed from gratitude and joy to empathy and long-term goal setting, were intentionally designed to elicit such positive emotional states. The qualitative data suggest that this sequencing allowed participants to build on early insights and establish a more hopeful and future-oriented perspective on their teaching careers. This upward emotional spiral appears to have reinforced psychological resources, thereby contributing to the gains in well-being and resilience measured in the quantitative data. In this regard, the journaling process functioned not only as a therapeutic tool for emotional release but also as a developmental scaffold for cultivating positive psychological traits. This dual function is important because it links immediate relief and processing to longer-term resource building, which provides a coherent explanation for why resilience continued to increase at delayed post-test rather than plateauing immediately after the program ended.

The study contributes to research on language teacher well-being by offering a context-specific, accessible intervention that directly addresses psychological and professional challenges in the Iranian EFL context. While teacher mental health is increasingly recognized as critical in language education (Nazari, 2025; Pentón Herrera et al., 2025), few studies have investigated interventions that are feasible within low-resource or culturally specific settings. By demonstrating the efficacy of a brief, non-intrusive, and low-cost intervention, the current study provides evidence that mindfulness-based programs need not be resource-intensive to be effective. Moreover, the intervention's alignment with local teaching practices—particularly its emphasis on self-study and reflective autonomy—may explain its positive reception and outcomes among Iranian teachers. This context-sensitive design, informed by both theoretical and pedagogical frameworks, distinguishes the study from more generic applications of MBIs and enhances its relevance for other underrepresented or under-researched educational contexts. Another contribution lies in the program's focus on professional identity development through mindfulness. While many MBIs prioritize stress reduction or emotion regulation, the current intervention was intentionally structured to prompt deeper reflection on teaching purpose, values, and long-term vision. The emergence of "reconnection with professional purpose" as a core qualitative theme illustrates that journaling not only reduced negative affect but also facilitated meaning-making processes central to teacher motivation and resilience. These findings resonate with previous conceptual work emphasizing the importance of purpose-driven reflection in sustaining teacher engagement. In this way, the study contributes to a more

nuanced understanding of how mindfulness can support not only psychological functioning but also the relational and existential dimensions of professional life. Notably, the qualitative pattern of purpose reconnection provides an interpretive bridge between improved well-being and strengthened resilience, because renewed meaning and value alignment can sustain coping efforts when institutional pressures remain unchanged.

This study has some practical implications for teacher education and professional development in similar contexts. First, it suggests that mindful journaling can be feasibly integrated into teacher support programs without requiring extensive time commitments, specialized equipment, or prolonged facilitator training. The structured, thematic format used in this study can be readily adapted by teacher educators, school administrators, or even teachers themselves as part of ongoing professional development. Second, the findings suggest that journaling may be particularly suitable for language teachers, whose work involves high levels of emotional labor, interpersonal sensitivity, and self-presentation. Because these teachers are already accustomed to textual production and reflection, journaling offers a familiar medium through which to explore internal experiences. Importantly, the intervention did not aim to “fix” or pathologize teachers’ emotions, but rather to support a more balanced and reflective stance toward the inherent demands of teaching. Furthermore, the observed gains in resilience suggest that mindful journaling may offer a protective factor against occupational burnout, particularly in contexts where institutional support is limited. The increased ability to recognize personal growth, reframe challenges, and sustain a sense of purpose may help teachers remain engaged in the profession over the long term. While the current study did not assess burnout directly, the improvements in resilience and well-being, along with the qualitative reflections on emotional renewal, point to the potential buffering effects of journaling practices. As such, the intervention may be especially valuable in resource-constrained environments where formal psychological support is scarce or stigmatized. In addition, because resilience showed a progressive increase from post-test to delayed post-test, the intervention may be especially useful as a continuing professional self-support practice rather than a one-time workshop, with teachers potentially benefiting from ongoing journaling beyond the formal eight-week period. Finally, the study holds implications for future research on mindfulness in language education. While the literature on MBIs in mainstream education has expanded considerably, relatively few studies have examined how these interventions function within language teacher populations. This gap is significant given the unique affective, cultural, and communicative demands of language teaching. The present study responds to recent calls for more differentiated and context-specific research on teacher well-being (Gregersen et al., 2020; Mercer, 2021), offering a model that integrates mindfulness with teacher identity, reflection, and emotional awareness. Future studies can extend this line of work by comparing mindful journaling directly with other MBI formats and delivery modes, including meditation-focused interventions or blended programs that combine brief mindfulness practice with reflective writing, to clarify whether journaling produces distinct pathways of change for well-being and resilience in language teacher populations.

Conclusion

This study examined the psychological effects of an eight-week mindful journaling and reflection program on the well-being and resilience of Iranian EFL teachers. The quantitative findings indicated that participants in the intervention group experienced statistically significant and sustained improvements in both outcomes, while the control group showed no meaningful changes. Importantly, the resilience gains showed a progressive pattern, with scores continuing to increase from post-test to the delayed post-test, suggesting that the benefits of

reflective mindful writing may consolidate over time rather than remaining confined to the immediate intervention period. These improvements were further supported by qualitative evidence highlighting teachers' enhanced emotion regulation, renewed sense of professional purpose, and increased awareness of personal growth. Collectively, these findings suggest that journaling, when integrated into a structured mindfulness-based intervention, can offer meaningful psychological benefits for language teachers. Unlike resource-intensive MBIs, the journaling program required minimal materials, offered flexibility in implementation, and allowed teachers to engage in self-reflection using familiar modes of expression. This makes it a promising option for similar low-resource educational environments where teacher well-being is a growing concern but institutional support structures remain limited. At the same time, the present results suggest that mindful journaling may function not only as a short-term support activity but also as a sustainable self-directed practice that teachers can continue beyond a formal program to protect and strengthen everyday coping resources.

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to several limitations. The sample size was relatively small, and all participants were drawn from private language institutes, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the intervention effects were assessed over a relatively short follow-up period, and long-term outcomes remain unknown. While the qualitative data provided contextual insights, participation in this component was voluntary, potentially introducing self-selection bias in the depth and nature of reflective accounts. Because the primary outcomes were measured using self-report instruments, the findings may also be influenced by response tendencies such as social desirability or positive response bias, and the scales capture general well-being and resilience rather than situation-specific or skill-based functioning in classroom contexts. Finally, the absence of classroom observation or behavioral data restricts the ability to infer how changes in well-being and resilience might influence teaching practices or student experiences. Future research should consider employing longitudinal designs, larger and more diverse samples, and mixed-methods approaches that include classroom-based data. Investigating how journaling-based mindfulness interventions interact with institutional conditions, personality traits, or stages of professional development may also yield more nuanced understandings. Additionally, expanding the intervention to include peer dialogue or community-of-practice elements may enhance its relational and pedagogical impact. Comparative research designs that examine mindful journaling alongside other mindfulness-based intervention formats would also help clarify whether reflective writing produces distinctive change pathways for well-being and resilience, or whether it is most effective when combined with other mindfulness practices. Such work would further clarify the role of reflective mindfulness practices in supporting teacher well-being across contexts and career stages.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

This manuscript made use of ChatGPT to assist in improving the clarity of text. No AI tools were used for the generation of research hypotheses or the writing of conclusions. The final manuscript was authored and reviewed by the listed authors without additional AI input.

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