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MINDFULNESS BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR) LEARNING STRATEGIES IN OPTIMIZING STUDENTS' CONCENTRATION AND SOCIAL SKILLS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the application of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) learning strategies in optimizing students' concentration and social skills at SD Negeri 12 Tanah Luas. The background of this research departs from the problem of low student learning focus and the tendency to emerge social behavior that is less adaptive in daily learning activities. MBSR as a fully conscious approach is believed to be able to help students manage attention, emotions, and social interactions more positively. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive study design. The subjects of the study include classroom teachers, students, and principals as key informants. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed using Miles & Huberman's interactive model that included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study showed that the implementation of MBSR was carried out through several stages, such as mindful breathing exercises, body scans, mindful listening, and self-reflection at the end of learning. Based on the results of observations and interviews, MBSR has been proven to be able to increase students' concentration through strengthening self-regulation, increasing awareness of learning activities, and the ability to focus longer on the subject matter. In addition, students' social skills also develop, characterized by more polite communication skills, empathy, cooperation, and reduced conflicts between students. The implementation of MBSR also creates a calmer, conducive, and supportive learning atmosphere. This study concludes that MBSR is an effective learning strategy to improve the concentration and social skills of elementary school students. The implications of this study emphasize the need for training for teachers in implementing MBSR regularly and the integration of mindfulness in school habituation activities.
Keywords: Mindfulness, MBSR, Student Concentration, Social Skills, Elementary School


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INTRODUCTION

Modern education increasingly emphasizes the importance of holistic student development that includes academic, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects. The concept of education is no longer only focused on knowledge transfer, but also on character formation and students' mental well-being. One of the innovative approaches that continues to develop is *Mindful Education*, which is the integration of the principles of mindfulness or mindfulness into the learning process. *Mindfulness* aims to help individuals fully present in the present moment with non-judgmental awareness.[1] Research shows that the application of *mindfulness* in education can help improve learning focus, reduce stress, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and create a more inclusive learning environment. Mindfulness is a skill that can be trained to support mental balance, which is especially relevant in the stressful world of education.

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is a therapeutic approach that involves mindfulness meditation to help individuals manage stress, anxiety, and other psychological issues. MBSR is based on the practice of mindfulness meditation, which involves attention to the present moment, without judgment or distraction. These interventions help individuals become more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations, which can help reduce anxiety and stress.[2]

The principles of *mindfulness* introduced by Kabat-Zinn have been widely applied in various educational contexts around the world. Mindfulness can improve the ability to regulate emotions and resilience to academic pressure, thereby making a positive contribution to student learning performance.[3] Additionally, mindfulness programs often include activities such as meditation, mindful breathing, and body awareness exercises, all of which are designed to improve the quality of the learning experience.

In Indonesia, the application of mindfulness in the world of education is still relatively new. The national education system, which has been more oriented towards learning achievement, places students as the object of evaluation by emphasizing academics, often ignoring the emotional needs of students. Most of the curriculum and methods are on the mastery of the material. As a result, students often experience excessive stress that impacts their mental health. However, according to a study conducted by Walach, *the mindfulness* approach can help create a balance between academic

[1] Dawn Querstret et al., "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Psychological Health and Well-Being in Nonclinical Samples: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.," *International Journal of Stress Management* 27, no. 4 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1037/str0000165.

[2] Sarah Zoogman et al., "Mindfulness Interventions with Youth: A Meta-Analysis," *Mindfulness* 6, no. 2 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-013-0260-4.

[3] Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future.," *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 10, no. 2 (2003), https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bpg016.

achievement and students' emotional well-being.[4] With the right application, mindfulness has great potential to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. The results of the study show that the application of *mindfulness* in schools is able to increase a positive classroom climate and reduce the level of conflict between students. However, the success of implementation is highly dependent on the adaptation of this approach to local values and the structure of the education system in each country.[5]

The implementation of *Mindful Education* is not without challenges. Roeser, & Eccles, noted that lack of teacher training, time constraints, and difficulties in integrating mindfulness into the curriculum were major obstacles.[6] In addition, this approach requires policy support and commitment from various stakeholders in the education sector. Without collaborative efforts, the application of *mindfulness* risks becoming just a concept with no real impact on the ground. This study aims to analyze in depth the impact of *mindfulness based stress reduction* (MBSR) learning on science subjects in improving the concentration and social skills of students of State Elementary School 12 Tanah Luas through a meta-analysis approach to the latest studies. By focusing on empirical results, this research is expected to provide more in-depth insights and practical recommendations for the implementation of *Mindfulness Education* learning in the context of modern education in Indonesia. Thus, the question of this research is how the *mindfulness based stress reduction* (MBSR) learning strategy is applied to optimize students' concentration and social skills at the State Elementary School 12 Tanah Luas.

RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study is to analyze the *mindfulness based stress reduction* (MBSR) learning strategy applied to optimize students' concentration and social skills at State Elementary School 12 Tanah Luas. This school was chosen as the research location because it has considerable attention to the development of students' potential, especially in aspects of study concentration and social skills. In addition, the school also supports the implementation of innovative learning strategies that can improve the quality of learning, so it is relevant to implement the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) strategy in teaching and learning activities. This research uses a qualitative method, which is a research approach aimed at describing and analyzing phenomena,

[4] Harald Walach et al., "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction as a Method for Personnel Development: A Pilot Evaluation.," *International Journal of Stress Management* 14, no. 2 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1037/1072-5245.14.2.188.

[5] Laras Puspita Sari, "Manfaat Mindfulness Dalam Pembelajaran," *Maha Widya Bhuwana: Jurnal Pendidikan, Agama Dan Budaya* 6, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.55115/bhuwana.v6i2.3396.

[6] Robert W. Roeser and Jacquelynne S. Eccles, "Mindfulness and Compassion in Human Development: Introduction to the Special Section," *Developmental Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038453.

events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of people individually and in groups.[7]

The determination of data sources in qualitative research is carried out purposively, which is determined by adjusting to certain research objectives or conditions. In qualitative research, we identify participants and places with *purposive sampling* based on the places and people that best help us understand our central phenomena.[8] The sample used consisted of students, principals and teachers as respondents. Data collection techniques with interview and observation guidelines. Interview guidelines are used as a guide when the interview is conducted, so that it is in accordance with the purpose and objectives to be achieved. Observations were made on the application of *mindfulness based stress reduction* (MBSR) learning applied to optimize concentration and social skills.

In this study, the author presents the data obtained related to the application of *mindfulness based stress reduction* (MBSR) learning applied to optimize concentration and social skills and the obstacles faced by teachers. The brief description is used by the author in explaining the data that the author presents related to what the author gets in the field to be more detailed, such as the results of interviews and the results of observations obtained by the author. The validity test of qualitative data includes the test of credibility (credibility), transferability (transfer value), dependability and confirmability. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative descriptive, namely data reduction, data presentation and conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) learning strategy in the classroom takes place in a structured manner and is adjusted to the learning conditions of elementary school students. Teachers apply MBSR as part of daily learning activities with the aim of helping students improve focus, calmness, and ability to manage emotions. The implementation process starts from the beginning of learning until entering the core activities, so that students have good mental readiness before receiving the subject matter.

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher starts the MBSR session with mindful breathing exercises for three to five minutes. Students are directed to sit in a comfortable position, close their eyes, and pay attention to their slow flow of breath. The teacher gives gentle instructions for students to breathe in and exhale mindfully, observe bodily sensations, and try to release the tension they feel. This simple exercise helps students enter a state of calm and ready to learn.

[7] Imam Gunawan, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Teori Dan Praktik* (Bumi Aksara, 2013).
[8] John W. Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset: Memilih Di Antara Lima Pendekatan*, 3rd ed. (Pustaka Pelajar, 2015).

Teachers also apply body relaxation, especially when students look tense, restless, or have difficulty concentrating. In this activity, students are asked to relax their body parts slowly, from head to toe. Body relaxation helps students release physical tension that can interfere with the learning process. After that, the teacher gives students the opportunity to do a brief self-reflection. Students were invited to reflect on how they felt before and after participating in the mindfulness exercise. On some occasions, teachers ask students to tell their feelings orally or write them down in a simple reflection book. This activity helps students develop in terms of self-awareness and the ability to express emotions in a healthy way.

The implementation of MBSR is also applied on the sidelines of learning, especially when teachers see that students are starting to lose focus. Through short breathing exercises or mindful pauses, teachers can restore students' attention so that the learning process remains effective. Overall, the implementation of the MBSR strategy in the classroom went well because teachers were able to create a conducive atmosphere, provide simple instructions, and guide students patiently. Consistent application makes students accustomed to participating in mindfulness activities and ultimately shows more positive behavioral changes, both in terms of concentration and social skills.

Based on the results of observations made during the *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) learning process* at SD Negeri 12 Tanah Luas, it shows that the application of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) strategy has a real influence on students' learning behavior and social interaction in the classroom. Observations were made several times during mindfulness activities and during learning after MBSR was applied. At the beginning of the implementation, it appeared that some students still needed adjustments to mindfulness activities. Some students look restless, have difficulty sitting still, and are easily distracted. However, after a few sessions, the majority of students began to show positive changes. They are increasingly able to follow the teacher's instructions, sit quietly, and carry out breathing exercises and relaxation with more focus.

During mindful breathing activities, students look more controlled. Their eyes are closed, their bodies are more relaxed, and the movements of their normally active hands or feet begin to decrease. At the next meeting, more students can maintain focus throughout the exercise without interruption. This shows a significant increase in concentration ability. In mindful listening activities, students show positive responses. They seemed to be trying to pay attention to the surrounding voices with full awareness. Some students are even able to name sounds they hear clearly, such as the sound of the wind, the friction of a chair, or the sound of a vehicle in the distance.

This activity makes students more aware of the environment and trains their skills in listening well to instructions. In general, the classroom atmosphere becomes more conducive and calm after the implementation of MBSR. Teachers no longer need to give a lot of warnings to calm students down because most students are already able to regulate themselves after a mindfulness session. Core learning runs more effectively because students are in a state of focus and ready to receive the material. From this series of observations, it can be concluded that the application of mindfulness strategies brings significant positive changes in students' learning behavior and social skills. Students become more focused, more emotionally controlled, and better able to cooperate and interact positively with their peers.

Based on the results of the interview, the class teacher said that before the implementation of MBSR, some students often seemed restless, easily distracted, and had difficulty concentrating for a long time. But after the mindfulness practice was applied consistently, teachers saw very clear changes in students' behavior. The teacher explained that through mindful breathing exercises and relaxation, students become calmer before starting learning. These simple exercises help students regulate their emotions and thoughts so that core learning can run more effectively. Teachers also revealed that students are easier to direct and understand instructions faster. When group activities were carried out, students appeared to be more cooperative and did not fight with each other, showing a significant improvement in social skills.

According to teachers, one of the biggest benefits of mindfulness is that it helps students develop self-awareness, so they are able to understand their feelings and act more wisely. However, teachers also acknowledge that there are some challenges, especially in the early stages. Some students have difficulty sitting still, being too active, or laughing to themselves during practice. However, as time went by, the students began to be able to participate in activities better. The principal gave full support to the implementation of MBSR at SD Negeri 12 Tanah Luas. In an interview, the principal emphasized that mindfulness is in line with the school's program in developing students' emotional and social intelligence, in addition to academic aspects.

The principal explained that the current condition of students is greatly influenced by technological developments and academic pressure. Therefore, programs like MBSR are very relevant to help students become calmer, focused, and have better self-control. He assessed that mindfulness not only increases study concentration, but also helps create a more positive and conducive school culture.

Interviews with students provide a very interesting perspective. Most students state that they feel calmer after doing breathing exercises and relaxation. Some students have admitted that the exercise makes them "less irritable," "easier to listen to the teacher," and "more focused on studying." Some students say that they enjoy mindful breathing exercises because they feel

comfortable and less tense. There are also students who say that they can learn better after mindfulness because their minds feel lighter. In the context of social skills, students convey that they become easier to work with friends, more patient, and fight less. Some students say that mindfulness practice makes them more courageous to speak up and express their opinions in class, while others find it easier to understand their friends' feelings.

Discussion

The implementation of the Implementation of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) at SD Negeri 12 Tanah Luas has been proven to have a significant impact on increasing student concentration during the learning process. Students' concentration, which was previously easily disturbed by class conditions, peer conversations, and the urge to play, slowly experienced positive changes after following a series of mindfulness exercises regularly. Mindful breathing practice is the most effective main component in building students' internal focus.

When the teacher invites students to breathe in slowly, hold them for a few seconds, and then exhale consciously, students begin to learn to direct their attention to the flow of their breath. This simple activity creates a calm state in the body and mind, making it easier for students to organize themselves before entering the learning phase. These changes can be seen from the ability of students to calm down faster, no longer restless, and be more ready to accept the teacher's explanations. In addition, body scan exercises also help students recognize the sensations of the body and the tension they feel.

Through this process, students learn to focus on one point in turn, from head to toe. This activity not only provides relaxation, but also shapes students' ability to control their minds so that they do not drift. The observation results showed that after doing a body scan, students seemed to be more focused on paying attention to the teacher's explanation and less likely to engage in behaviors that interfered with learning. The application of MBSR also reduces the burden of thoughts or emotions that previously hindered concentration, such as anxiety, anger, or minor conflicts with friends.

Through emotional check-in, students are given the opportunity to express their feelings before studying. When negative emotions are channeled well, students become mentally lighter and easier to focus on the material. The implementation of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) at SD Negeri 12 Tanah Luas not only has an impact on students' concentration skills, but also has a significant influence on the development of their social skills. Mindfulness teaches students to be fully present in every experience, including when interacting with friends, teachers, and the surrounding environment. This full awareness is the basis for strengthening students' social skills.

One of the forms of MBSR activities that has the most influence on social skills is the emotional check-in exercise. In this activity, teachers invite students to recognize, express, and describe the feelings they experience. This activity helps students understand their own emotional state, which then becomes a provision to understand the feelings of others. At this stage, it can be seen that students begin to show empathy, for example by providing support when their friend is feeling sad, or not mocking when their friend is angry or afraid.

The implementation of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) at SD Negeri 12 Tanah Luas has been proven to have a significant influence on the learning atmosphere in the classroom. Before the MBSR program was implemented, the classroom atmosphere was often characterized by early learning noise, students had difficulty sitting quietly, some students disturbed each other, and teachers took a long time to create conducive classroom conditions. Through a series of mindfulness activities carried out in a structured and consistent manner, the learning atmosphere experiences real and positive changes.

The main exercises in MBSR, such as mindful breathing, body scan, and mindful movement, play a big role in creating a calm and controlled classroom atmosphere from the beginning of learning. When students are invited to focus on breathing slowly, their bodies and minds become more stable so that the overall atmosphere of the class subsides. The teacher said that the span of time that was previously used to calm the class became much shorter, because after the mindfulness exercise, students were better prepared to follow the lesson.

The effectiveness of MBSR is also seen in the ability of students to interact more harmoniously in group activities. The group work atmosphere becomes more harmonious because students are trained to be fully present when doing tasks, listening to friends, and respecting the opinions of others. This behavior has an impact on creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. In addition, the daily reflection sessions that are part of MBSR also foster a warm and open classroom atmosphere. When students share their experiences, feelings, or impressions after participating in the exercise, a positive emotional connection is formed between the teacher and the student. These safe spaces help students feel valued, accepted, and more confident, making them more comfortable in class and more likely to follow learning.

The application of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) learning strategies in elementary schools is a relevant approach in answering the challenges of low concentration and social skills of students at an early age. MBSR emphasizes full awareness of current experiences through breathing exercises, body mindfulness, and self-reflection, which have been shown to help individuals manage stress adaptively.[9] In the context of basic education, this approach is in line with

[9] Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (Hyperion, 1994).

the characteristics of children's development which is still in the stage of forming emotion regulation and attention control, so mindfulness can be an important foundation for students' learning readiness.[10] *Mindfulness* can be applied in a variety of daily activities, such as meditation, yoga, breathing exercises, and other mindfulness exercises. Some of the benefits of practicing mindfulness include: Feeling more connected to yourself, both physically and emotionally, greater emotional awareness of yourself and the individuals around you, a better understanding of your own emotions and their causes, reduced stress.

From the aspect of learning concentration, MBSR plays a role in improving students' attention and focus abilities during the learning process. Mindfulness practice consistently helps students become aware of internal and external distractions, so they are better able to redirect their attention to the learning task.[11] Research shows that mindfulness interventions in elementary school have a positive impact on improved sustained attention, working memory, as well as impulse control, all of which contribute directly to the quality of students' concentration in the classroom.[12]

In addition to increasing concentration, MBSR strategies are also effective in developing students' social skills. Self-awareness and emotion regulation trained through mindfulness allow students to better understand their own feelings and those of others, thereby encouraging empathy and prosocial behavior.[13] In daily interactions at school, students who have full awareness tend to show better communication skills, respect for friends, and emotional control when facing social conflicts.[14]

The implementation of MBSR in learning in elementary school can be done in an integrated manner through simple activities such as short breathing exercises before studying, emotional reflection after group activities, and mindfulness practice when listening to friends speak. This strategy is not only easy to implement, but also in accordance with the principles of social-emotional learning that emphasizes hands-on experience and positive habituation (CASEL, 2020). Thus, MBSR can function as a preventive strategy in creating a conducive, safe, and supportive classroom climate for students' academic and social development.

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[10] Philip David Zelazo and Kristen E. Lyons, "The Potential Benefits of Mindfulness Training in Early Childhood: A Developmental Social Cognitive Neuroscience Perspective," *Child Development Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2012.00241.x.

[11] Charlotte Zenner et al., "Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Schools a Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (June 2014), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00603.

[12] Lisa Flook et al., "Promoting Prosocial Behavior and Self-Regulatory Skills in Preschool Children Through a Mindfulness-Based Kindness Curriculum.," *Developmental Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038256.

[13] Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl et al., "Enhancing Cognitive and Social–Emotional Development Through a Simple-to-Administer Mindfulness-Based School Program for Elementary School Children: A Randomized Controlled Trial.," *Developmental Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038454.

[14] Stephanie M. Jones et al., "Educators' Social and Emotional Skills Vital to Learning," *Phi Delta Kappan* 94, no. 8 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171309400815.

Overall, MBSR learning strategies make a significant contribution to optimizing the concentration and social skills of elementary school students. This approach not only has an impact on the cognitive aspect, but also on the social-emotional development that is the basis for long-term learning success.[15] Therefore, the integration of MBSR in learning practices in elementary schools needs to be supported by school policies, teacher training, and curriculum development oriented towards the welfare and holistic development of students.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the results of this study is that the application of mindfulness practices such as mindful breathing, body scan, and mindful movement is proven to help students achieve a calmer and more focused mental state. Students become better able to maintain attention, receive instructions well, and complete tasks without being easily distracted. MBSR is effective in stimulating self-regulation so that students are better prepared to follow learning.the ability to understand themselves and others more empathic. Activities such as emotional check-ins, daily reflections, and mindful listening encourage students to recognize emotions, express feelings, and understand the condition of their friends. As a result, there is an increase in empathy, more polite communication, the ability to work together in groups, and a decrease in conflicts between students. MBSR also forms more harmonious social relationships in the classroom. The implementation of MBSR has been proven to help create a calm, controlled, and fun classroom environment. Students are more ready to learn, disruptive behavior is reduced, and teachers are more likely to organize classes. This positive learning atmosphere increases the overall effectiveness of learning.

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