The Impact of Formal Training Workshops on Reducing Anxiety in Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Lessons are generally considered stressful jobs, with a significant portion of educators showing an increased level of fear that negatively affects personal wells and professional performance. This literature overview examines the role of formal training workshops to reduce teacher fear through the integration of evidence from recent empirical research. This review categorizes interventions in four key domains: mindfulness and self-compassion, character empowerment programs, uncertainty management rates, and traditional educational seminars. The results show that well-designed interventions, particularly those focused on mindfulness and compassion (e.g., compassionate thinking), demonstrate a measurable reduction in fear towards teachers. Similarly, distinctive approval and structured education seminars are equally promising to reduce teacher fears and improve teacher trust. However, there are particularly limitations when fighting serious anxiety symptoms in several studies that emphasize the need for complementary support mechanisms such as meditation and institutional support. Methodological diversity across studies, including randomized controlled studies, quasi-experimental design, and mixed methods highlight both the intensity and variation in assessing intervention outcomes. This overview highlights the importance of integration of psychological and educational strategies in teacher training programs and calls for further longitudinal and context-specific research to optimize the effectiveness and sustainability of intervention.

Keyword: - Include at least 5 keywords or phrases

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is consistently recognized as one of the most stressful professions, with educators experiencing heightened levels of anxiety that can impair both their personal well-being and professional effectiveness. Worldwide, stress and burnout continue to be a problem among teachers, leading to anxiety and depression. Burnout may adversely affect teachers' health and is a risk factor for poor physical and mental well-being [1]. The prevalence of anxiety among teachers is alarming, with research indicating that when considering only clinically meaningful (moderate to severe) psychological conditions, anxiety rates among teachers range from 38% to 41.2%[1]. Given these concerning statistics, there has been growing interest in developing and evaluating formal training interventions aimed at reducing anxiety among teaching professionals. This literature review examines the current state of research on the impact of formal training workshops on reducing teacher anxiety, drawing from empirical studies that have investigated various intervention approaches. The review synthesizes findings on the effectiveness of different training modalities, identifies common methodological approaches, explores the mechanisms of change, and highlights gaps in current research that warrant further investigation.

1.1 Types of Formal Training Interventions

Several types of formal training interventions have been developed and evaluated for their potential to reduce anxiety in teachers, ranging from traditional pedagogical approaches to more novel psychological interventions. Mindfulness and Self-Compassion Based Interventions.

One of the most extensively researched approaches involves mindfulness and self-compassion training. In the Czech Republic, a study by Dvořáková et al. (2024) evaluated a self-compassion and mindfulness-based professional development program for primary school teachers [2]. This intervention was designed to address the significant issue of teacher burnout, which affects approximately 20% of Czech teachers, with an additional 65% at risk. Using a quasi-experimental design, five schools were recruited, with two serving as intervention schools (n=47 teachers) and three as controls (n=57 teachers). Teachers completed assessments at three timepoints: pre-test (September 2018), post-test (November 2018), and follow-up (April 2019). Results revealed that teachers in the intervention group scored significantly lower in anxiety and depression compared to the control group [2]. This finding demonstrates the potential efficacy of mindfulness-based approaches in reducing anxiety among educators.

Similarly, Matos et al. (2022) conducted a pragmatic randomized controlled trial to investigate the feasibility and effectiveness of an 8-week Compassionate Mind Training program for Teachers (CMT-T) on indicators of psychological and physiological well-being. The study utilized a stepped-wedge design with 155 public school teachers who were randomized to either the CMT-T intervention (n=80) or a waitlist control group (n=75) [3]. Results indicated that CMT-T was both feasible and effective, with participants in the intervention group showing significant reductions in anxiety compared to the waitlist control group [3]. Building on this research, a subsequent study by Matos et al. (2024) examined the mechanisms of change underlying the CMT-T intervention, specifically investigating whether changes in compassion, fears of compassion, and emotions at work mediated the effects of the intervention on various outcomes including anxiety [4].

Their mediation analyses revealed that increases in compassion flows and reductions in fears of compassion from others mediated the effects of CMT-T on teachers' anxiety levels. In particular, compassion for self, fears of self-compassion, and fears of receiving compassion from others emerged as significant mediators of the reduction in stress symptoms from pre- to post-intervention. The three flows of compassion and fears of compassion were significant mediators of the impact of CMT-T on changes in teachers' anxiety levels from baseline to post-intervention [4]. These findings highlight the psychological mechanisms through which mindfulness and compassion-based interventions may reduce anxiety among teachers.

1.2 Character Empowerment Training

Another promising approach involves character empowerment training, which focuses on building teachers' psychological resources. Mirzazadeh et al. (2024) investigated the effectiveness of character empowerment training on the emotional responses of primary school teachers in Yazd city during the 2021-2022 academic year [5]. Using a semi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest approach and a control group, the researchers selected 30 primary school teachers through convenience sampling and randomly assigned them to either an experimental group (15 teachers) or a control group (15 teachers) [5].

The Teachers' Emotions Questionnaire was used to measure outcomes, and the experimental group underwent character empowerment training over two months, comprising 12 sessions of 50 minutes each [5]. The findings revealed a significant difference between the two groups in terms of anxiety (18%), with character empowerment training reducing anxiety in the experimental group [5]. This study provides evidence that interventions focusing on character strengths and empowerment can effectively reduce anxiety in teaching professionals.

1.3 Design for Uncertainty Training

A novel approach to teacher training involves preparing educators to handle uncertainty in teaching contexts. Capolla et al. (2024) analyzed the impact of uncertainty on teaching and proposed a method to rethink learning design and teaching action management. Their research specifically focused on how learning design can help future teachers deal with the unexpected [6]. They proposed design strategies, including modularity, anticipation, hierarchy, redundancy, and deviation formalized in the "Design for the Unexpected in Education" (DUE) method, and presented results from research conducted on initial teacher education at the University of Macerata [6].

Data analysis of future teachers' learning designs and post-action reflections showed meaningful changes. After specific training and introducing the DUE method, future teachers demonstrated an increased ability to deal more confidently with unexpected situations and achieve planned goals [6]. Importantly, future teachers reported that anxiety was reduced through prior discussion of uncertainty and the provision of available regulation strategies [6]. This approach addresses the sources of anxiety by equipping teachers with concrete tools to manage unpredictable teaching situations, which are often a significant source of stress for educators.

1.4 Graduate Teacher Training Programs

Traditional pedagogical training programs have also been evaluated for their impact on teacher anxiety. Pelton (2014) investigated the effects of a newly established teaching seminar using the Teaching Anxiety Scale and a Teaching Confidence Scale. This study was motivated by the recognition that two forms of assessment commonly used in elementary and secondary teacher training programs, measuring levels of teaching anxiety and teacher efficacy, may be of use for sociology programs interested in formally evaluating the effect of teaching seminars [7].

Findings from pre- and post-test data demonstrated that the seminar lowered graduate students' feelings of anxiety about teaching for the first time and increased their levels of confidence regarding mastery of common pedagogical skills [7]. Qualitative feedback from evaluations further illustrated the positive effects of the seminar on students' senses of themselves as teachers and their knowledge of effective teaching practices [7]. This study highlights the value of structured teaching seminars in reducing anxiety specifically related to instructional duties among novice teachers.

2. EFFECTIVENESS OF FORMAL TRAINING WORKSHOPS

The literature reveals varying degrees of effectiveness for formal training workshops in reducing teacher anxiety, with some studies reporting significant positive outcomes while others suggest limitations to their impact.

2.1 Evidence of Positive Impact

Multiple studies provide evidence supporting the efficacy of formal training interventions in reducing teacher anxiety. The mindfulness-based professional development program evaluated by Dvořáková et al. (2024) led to significantly lower levels of depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion among teachers in the intervention group compared to the control group [2]. Similarly, Matos et al. (2022) found that teachers who participated in the Compassionate Mind Training program showed significant reductions in anxiety compared to those in the waitlist control condition [3].

Character empowerment training has also demonstrated effectiveness, with Mirzazadeh et al. (2024) reporting a significant reduction in anxiety (18%) among primary school teachers who received the intervention [5]. These findings suggest that targeted training programs can effectively reduce anxiety in teaching professionals when properly designed and implemented.

The Design for Uncertainty approach has shown promising results as well. Capolla et al. (2024) found that after participating in specific training and being introduced to the DUE method, future teachers could deal more confidently with unexpected situations, and they reported reduced anxiety through prior discussion of uncertainty and available regulation strategies [6]. This approach appears to address a specific source of anxiety for teachers— the unpredictability of classroom situations.

In the context of graduate teacher training, Pelton (2014) demonstrated that a teaching seminar effectively lowered graduate students' feelings of anxiety about teaching for the first time [7]. This finding is particularly relevant for new teachers who may experience heightened anxiety due to limited experience in the classroom.

2.2 Limitations of Training Workshops

Despite the positive findings, some research suggests limitations to the effectiveness of formal training workshops. A study by Ashokkumar et al. (2025) aimed to explore the effect of formal training workshops on decreasing anxiety in teachers. While acknowledging that conducting formal workshops for training is beneficial for the personal and professional growth of teaching individuals, the researchers found that formal workshops alone cannot reduce severe amounts of anxiety among teachers [8]. This finding suggests that for teachers experiencing high levels of anxiety, additional interventions beyond standard training workshops may be necessary.

The authors recommended that school authorities need to intervene and support teachers to help with stressors, and suggested that apart from conducting workshops, authorities should conduct meditation camps for teachers to improve their physical and mental health [8]. This highlights the importance of a multi-faceted approach to addressing teacher anxiety, particularly for those experiencing more severe symptoms.

The differential effectiveness of training interventions may be related to various factors, including the specific type of anxiety being addressed, the intensity and duration of the training, individual teacher characteristics, and the school environment. These contextual factors are important considerations when evaluating the potential impact of formal training workshops on teacher anxiety

3. MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION METHODS

The reviewed studies employed various methodological approaches to evaluate the impact of training interventions on teacher anxiety, including both quantitative and qualitative methods

3.1 Assessment Tools

Several validated instruments have been used to measure anxiety and related constructs in teachers. Pelton (2014) utilized the Teaching Anxiety Scale to assess changes in anxiety levels among graduate students participating in a teaching seminar [7]. This scale specifically measures anxiety related to teaching responsibilities, making it particularly relevant for evaluating interventions targeting instructional anxiety.

Mirzazadeh et al. (2024) employed the Teachers' Emotions Questionnaire to assess emotional responses, including anxiety, in primary school teachers before and after character empowerment training [5]. This instrument allows for the measurement of various teaching-related emotions, providing a comprehensive assessment of emotional responses.

In their evaluation of a mindfulness-based professional development program, Dvořáková et al. (2024) included measures of depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and other psychological constructs to assess the impact of the intervention [2]. Similarly, Matos et al. (2022) used self-report measures of psychological distress, burnout, overall and professional well-being, compassion, and self-criticism to evaluate the effectiveness of the Compassionate Mind Training program [3].

Some studies incorporated physiological measures to complement self-report assessments. Matos et al. (2022) measured resting heart-rate variability (HRV) in a subsample of participants to assess the physiological impact of the Compassionate Mind Training program [3]. This approach provides objective data on stress responses, adding validity to the findings.

3.2 Research Designs

The studies employed various research designs, with randomized controlled trials (RCTs) being the most rigorous methodology used. Matos et al. (2022) conducted a pragmatic randomized controlled study with a stepped-wedge design, involving 155 public school teachers who were randomized to either the intervention or a waitlist control group [3]. This design allows for robust causal inferences about the effectiveness of the intervention.

Dvořáková et al. (2024) used a quasi-experimental design, recruiting five schools with two serving as intervention schools and three as controls [2]. While not as rigorous as an RCT, this approach still provides valuable evidence on the effectiveness of the intervention under real-world conditions.

Mirzazadeh et al. (2024) employed a semi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest approach and a control group, randomly assigning teachers to either the experimental or control condition [5]. This design allows for comparison between groups while controlling baseline differences.

Ashokkumar et al. (2025) selected a primary quantitative methodology to carry out an online survey, collecting responses from 95 teachers [8]. While this design does not include a control group or randomization, it provides valuable descriptive data on teachers' perceptions of formal training workshops.

3.3 Time Frames and Follow-up

The studies varied in their assessment timeframes, with some including follow-up measurements to evaluate the sustainability of intervention effects. Dvořáková et al. (2024) conducted assessments at three timepoints: pre-test (September 2018), post-test (November 2018), and a follow-up in April 2019 [2]. This extended timeframe allows for evaluation of both immediate and longer-term effects of the intervention.

Matos et al. (2022) also included a follow-up assessment, measuring outcomes at baseline, post-intervention, and 3-months follow-up. Their results indicated that improvements were retained at the 3-month follow-up, suggesting the sustainability of the intervention effects [3]. These findings are particularly important given the need for interventions that produce lasting reductions in teacher anxiety

3.4 Teacher Characteristics

Individual differences among teachers may moderate the impact of training interventions. Matos et al. (2022) found that teachers scoring higher in self-criticism at baseline revealed greater improvements post-CMT-T [3]. This suggests that teachers with higher levels of self-criticism may particularly benefit from compassion-focused interventions, potentially because these approaches directly address the self-critical tendencies that can contribute to anxiety.

Interestingly, Dvořáková et al. (2024) observed that at follow-up, teachers' subjective well-being in the control group significantly worsened compared to the baseline, while the intervention group did not show significant changes over time. This suggests a "protective effect" of the intervention against worsening during the school year [2]. This finding highlights the potential of training interventions to buffer against the typical deterioration in well-being that teachers might experience over the course of an academic year.

3.5 Training Design and Intensity

The specific design and intensity of training interventions may impact their effectiveness. Matos et al. (2022) concluded that Compassionate Mind Training shows promise as a compassion-focused intervention for enhancing compassion, well-being, and reducing psychophysiological distress in teachers. They noted that given its favorable and sustainable effects on well-being and psychophysiological distress, and low cost to deliver, broader implementation and dissemination of CMT-T is encouraged [3]. This suggests that cost-effective interventions with demonstrated sustainability may be particularly valuable for wide-scale implementation.

The character empowerment training studied by Mirzazadeh et al. (2024) comprised 12 sessions of 50 minutes each over a two-month period [5]. This relatively intensive format may have contributed to its effectiveness in reducing

teacher anxiety. The optimal duration and intensity of training interventions for reducing anxiety is an important consideration for future research and practice.

3.6 Limitations and Gaps in Current Research

Despite the valuable insights provided by the existing literature, several limitations and gaps warrant attention in future research on the impact of formal training workshops on teacher anxiety.

Methodological Limitations

Some studies face methodological limitations that affect the strength of their conclusions. For instance, Ashokkumar et al. (2025) relied on survey responses from 95 samples collected via an online survey [8]. While this provides useful descriptive data, the lack of a control group or randomization limits causal inferences about the effectiveness of formal training workshops.

Even studies with stronger designs, such as Dvořáková et al.'s (2024) quasi-experimental approach with intervention and control schools, may be subject to selection bias or other confounding factors that could influence results [2]. Future research would benefit from more rigorous methodologies, including randomized controlled trials with active control groups, to strengthen the evidence base.

Generalizability Across Contexts

The generalizability of findings across different educational contexts, cultural settings, and teacher populations remains uncertain. Mirzazadeh et al.'s (2024) study of character empowerment training focused on primary school teachers in Yazd city, Iran, selected through convenience sampling [5]. The extent to which their findings would apply to teachers in different cultural contexts or educational settings is unclear.

Similarly, Pelton's (2014) investigation of a teaching seminar focused specifically on graduate teacher training programs [7]. Whether similar effects would be observed with in-service teachers at different career stages or in different educational contexts remains an open question. More diverse samples and cross-cultural studies are needed to establish the generalizability of findings.

Long-term Sustainability

While some studies included follow-up assessments to evaluate the sustainability of intervention effects, such as Matos et al.'s (2022) 3-month follow-up showing retained improvements[3], longer-term follow-up periods would provide valuable information about the durability of anxiety reduction over time. It remains unclear whether the benefits of formal training workshops persist beyond a few months, or whether booster sessions or ongoing support might be necessary to maintain reductions in teacher anxiety.

Integration with Systemic Approaches

Ashokkumar et al. (2025) highlighted that formal workshops alone cannot reduce severe amounts of anxiety among teachers, indicating the need for school authorities to intervene and support teachers to help with stressors. They suggested that authorities should conduct meditation camps for teachers to improve their physical and mental health [8]. This points to a gap in understanding how formal training workshops might be effectively integrated with broader systemic approaches to supporting teacher well-being.

Future research could explore how training interventions might be combined with organizational changes, policy initiatives, or other supports to create comprehensive approaches to reducing teacher anxiety. This would address the limitation that training workshops, while valuable, may not be sufficient in isolation to address the complex factors contributing to teacher anxiety.

Differential Effects

More research is needed to understand how the effects of formal training workshops might vary based on teacher characteristics, school contexts, or other factors. While Matos et al. (2022) found that teachers scoring higher in self-criticism at baseline revealed greater improvements post-CMT-T[3], few studies have systematically examined potential moderators of intervention effects. Identifying which teachers are most likely to benefit from specific types of training would enable more targeted and efficient intervention approaches.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This review has synthesized the current evidence on the impact of formal training workshops on reducing anxiety in teachers, highlighting several promising approaches while also identifying limitations and gaps in the existing research. The literature suggests that various training interventions, including mindfulness and self-compassion based programs, character empowerment training, and design for uncertainty approaches, can effectively reduce teacher anxiety under certain conditions.

Several mechanisms appear to underlie these effects, including enhanced self-compassion and reduced fears of compassion, improved self-efficacy and confidence, better uncertainty management, and enhanced emotional

regulation skills. The effectiveness of training interventions may be influenced by factors such as individual teacher characteristics, baseline anxiety severity, and the specific design and intensity of the training.

Future research should address methodological limitations, examine generalizability across diverse contexts, assess long-term sustainability, explore integration with systemic approaches, and investigate differential effects based on teacher and contextual characteristics. Additionally, as suggested by Dvořáková et al. (2024), further studies need to investigate if the benefits of training interventions can be sustained and if they affect teachers' physical health, their relationships with students, and the students' outcomes [2]. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the broader impact of reducing teacher anxiety through formal training workshops.

Given the favorable and sustainable effects on wellbeing and psychophysiological distress, and the relatively low cost to deliver many of these interventions, broader implementation and dissemination of effective training approaches is encouraged [3]. By addressing teacher anxiety through evidence-based training workshops, educational systems can support teacher well-being, potentially improving teacher retention, job satisfaction, and ultimately enhancing the quality of education provided to students.

In conclusion, formal training workshops represent a promising approach to reducing anxiety in teachers, with various intervention modalities showing positive effects. Continued research and refinement of these approaches, alongside consideration of broader systemic factors affecting teacher well-being, will be essential for developing comprehensive strategies to address the significant issue of anxiety in the teaching profession.

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