

Cultivating Resilience and Hope Through Mindfulness in Teacher Education During Wartime: Insights from a Self-Determination Theory Perspective

Hilla Cohen

Kaye Academic College of Education, Beer Sheva, Israel

Abstract:

Mindfulness techniques have gained increasing recognition as effective tools for managing stress and anxiety, offering accessible pathways to enhanced personal well-being and strengthened interpersonal relationships (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). During periods of armed conflict, the need for such interventions becomes particularly acute, as educators face unprecedented challenges while supporting students through collective trauma and uncertainty.

This study examines the pedagogical experiences of graduate students enrolled in a mindfulness course within a master's degree teacher training program at a tertiary institution in southern Israel during wartime conditions, specifically investigating how mindfulness practice cultivates resilience and hope in the face of ongoing security threats and educational disruption.

This qualitative, exploratory inquiry drew on psychological research principles and employed inductive thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The research was conducted using twenty student journey journals and fifteen personal reflections as primary data sources, offering rich, first-person perspectives on the learning process during crisis. The study identified four main themes:

The first focused on the learning process, reflecting a shift from both explicit and implicit resistance and skepticism to full acceptance and engagement. The second theme addressed the group and its influence—relationships, shared practice, and group reflections strengthened the sense of relatedness, which in turn enhanced commitment to the process. The third theme focused on the experience itself, persistence, success, and improved emotional well-being.

The fourth theme concerned freedom of choice—the autonomy and independence participants had in determining how and what to practice.

These four themes support and reinforce Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), demonstrating how mindfulness learning meets the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.