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Self Care: Realizing Professionalism and Mental Health for Teachers

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the importance of self-care in realizing professionalism and mental health among teachers. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this study examines teachers' experiences and understanding in maintaining a balance between professional demands and personal well-being. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that self-care is an important aspect that helps teachers maintain their physical, mental, and emotional health, thereby positively impacting their work effectiveness and the quality of learning. Self-awareness, workplace support, and school policies that support teacher well-being are the main factors supporting the implementation of self-care. Teachers who are able to manage themselves well are not only more professional, but also create a positive and inspiring learning atmosphere.

Keywords: *Self-care; teacher professionalism; mental health; teacher well-being*.

Introduction

In the world of education, teachers play a very important role as educators, mentors, and role models for students (Munawir et al., 2022). The complex tasks of teachers include planning, implementing, and evaluating learning, as well as developing students' competencies (Putrianingsih

et al., 2021). In addition, teachers are also required to be able to adapt to changes in the curriculum, technological developments, and social dynamics in the school environment (Puspita et al., 2025). This high workload often results in increased psychological and physical stress, which can affect the quality of teachers' performance in carrying out their duties (Ma'wa et al., 2024).

In carrying out their profession, teachers face a variety of complex demands and pressures, ranging from high administrative burdens, the responsibility of educating students with diverse characters and backgrounds, to high social expectations of their moral and professional roles (Rahmayanty et al., 2021). These conditions often cause stress, emotional exhaustion, and ongoing psychological pressure. As a result, many teachers are prone to personality disorders such as burnout, loss of empathy (depersonalization), and even decreased self-confidence and work motivation (Mamesah & Lombogia, 2023). Therefore, self-care is a basic necessity for teachers to maintain their life balance and mental health (Silalahi & Silalahi, 2023). Through self-care practices that encompass physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects, teachers can minimize the negative effects of work stress, strengthen resilience, and improve the quality of teaching and interaction with students (Mamesah & Lombogia, 2023). In other words, self-care is not merely a form of pampering oneself, but an important strategy for maintaining psychological stability and optimal professional performance.

Teacher task optimization is closely related to mental health and well-being (Agustin & Hidayah, 2024). Teachers who are able to consistently practice self-care will be more productive, focused, and emotionally resilient in facing work challenges (Faiza et al., 2024). This is in line with the principles of modern education, which view teachers not only as educators, but also as human beings who need a balance between their professional duties and personal needs (Munawir et al., 2022). Thus, self-care can be seen as a long-term investment to improve the quality of education through more stable and optimal teacher performance (Rahmayanty et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the importance of self-care in teachers' lives and its relationship to the optimization of professional duties and roles in schools. Through this discussion, it is hoped that it will provide an understanding that effective teacher performance is not only determined by pedagogical and professional abilities, but also by the ability to maintain mental health and personal well-being. With good self-care, teachers can achieve sustainable

professional performance while also becoming role models in building a healthy lifestyle culture in the educational environment.

Methodes

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, which aims to describe in depth the phenomenon of self-care in the context of professionalism and mental health of teachers. This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal the meaning, perceptions, and subjective experiences of teachers in maintaining emotional and professional balance amid the demands of work. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher seeks to understand the internal processes of teachers in implementing self-care, not merely measuring their level of mental well-being, but exploring the values, motivations, and strategies used to maintain professionalism in the world of education.

Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods so that the research results had high credibility and validity. Each research process was carried out in accordance with ethical principles, such as maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, obtaining consent before interviews, and presenting results objectively. With this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the importance of self-care in shaping professionalism and maintaining the mental health of teachers in the workplace.

Results and Discussion

The Role of Self-Care in Maintaining Teachers' Physical and Mental Health

Self-care is a conscious effort undertaken by an individual to maintain and improve their physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Muslimah et al., 2024). For teachers, self-care becomes an important aspect because this profession demands significant responsibility in educating, guiding, and serving as a role model for students (Ma'wa et al., 2024). Self-care for teachers is not only related to physical activities such as exercising or maintaining a healthy diet, but also includes mental and emotional aspects (Mamesah & Lombogia, 2023). Teachers face various psychological

pressures every day, ranging from a heavy teaching load, diverse student behaviors, to administrative demands from the school (Afifah et al., 2024). If these pressures are not managed well, teachers are at risk of experiencing emotional exhaustion and losing work motivation. By practicing self-care, teachers can recognize their personal limits, balance their time between work and personal life, and develop self-reflection to maintain mental stability (Mamesah & Lombogia, 2023).

In addition, consistent self-care practices help teachers maintain interpersonal relationships in the workplace (Sofiyah et al., 2025). Teachers who can manage their emotions well will find it easier to communicate positively with students, colleagues, and parents (Puspita et al., 2025). For example, teachers who take time to rest and calm themselves after class tend to be more patient and empathetic when dealing with student issues. This directly impacts the creation of a harmonious and productive school climate, as teachers become real-life models in teaching students about life balance and self-control (Arfandi, 2021).

Furthermore, the practice of self-care contributes to the enhancement of teacher professionalism (Fauza et al., 2022). A teacher who is physically and mentally healthy has a greater capacity to innovate in the learning process, adapt to curriculum changes, and provide optimal educational services (Sofiyah et al., 2025). For example, teachers who maintain their health well are able to teach with high energy and enthusiasm, creating inspiring and enjoyable learning experiences. Thus, self-care is not only a personal need but also a professional investment that directly impacts the quality of education in schools (Nugroho & Sriyanti, 2024).

The work pressure faced by teachers is not only physical but also emotional and psychological. Accumulating administrative burdens, such as preparing teaching materials, reporting learning outcomes, and online reporting, demand extra time and energy. Moreover, teachers have to adapt to constantly changing curriculum policies, such as the transition to the Merdeka Curriculum, which requires learning innovation and technological adaptation (Rosyada et al., 2024). This situation often makes teachers feel overwhelmed and lose the balance between professional responsibilities and personal life, which can ultimately reduce motivation and teaching enthusiasm.

In addition, expectations from parents and society add psychological pressure on teachers. Many parties demand that teachers always remain patient, competent, and serve as role models in

all aspects, without considering the emotional burdens they carry (Ifansyah, 2023). For example, when students' learning outcomes do not meet expectations, teachers are often the first to be blamed. Such situations can lead to feelings of anxiety, low self-confidence, and even excessive guilt (Nugroho & Sriyanti, 2024). If not properly managed through self-care strategies such as self-reflection, sharing with colleagues, or counseling, this condition can develop into chronic stress or emotional exhaustion, affecting the quality of classroom learning (Muslimah et al., 2024).

Therefore, a teacher's ability to practice self-management greatly determines their resilience to work-related stress (Sofiyah et al., 2025). Teachers who apply the principles of self-care are better able to maintain a balance between professional demands and personal needs (Faiza et al., 2024). For example, teachers who recognize signs of mental fatigue will take breaks, engage in enjoyable activities, or participate in social activities to restore their energy. These simple steps can prevent burnout and boost work enthusiasm, allowing teachers to remain productive, creative, and capable of providing meaningful learning experiences for students (Agustin & Hidayah, 2024).

At a private elementary school in the city of Salatiga, a class teacher named Mrs. R experienced symptoms of burnout after teaching for more than 5 years. She admitted that she often felt emotionally exhausted, lost her enthusiasm for teaching, and became easily irritated by student behavior. In addition to teaching more than 30 hours per week, she was also burdened with additional responsibilities as a homeroom teacher and coordinator of school literacy activities. High administrative demands, such as filling out digital report cards, preparing teaching materials for the Merdeka Curriculum, and reporting student activities, often caused Mrs. R to work late into the night.

This situation was exacerbated by pressure from students' parents who demanded improvements in their children's academic performance. Mrs. R began to feel unappreciated and lost the sense of meaning in her profession as an educator. She showed typical signs of burnout: extreme fatigue, decreased empathy towards students, and a tendency to withdraw from colleagues. Within a few months, her performance declined, making the teaching and learning process monotonous, and the students' motivation in her class also decreased.

Factors Affecting the Implementation of Self-Care Among Teachers

The implementation of self-care among teachers does not happen automatically; rather, it is influenced by various factors that shape awareness, habits, and support for self-care behaviors (Mamesah & Lombogia, 2023). In the context of education, each teacher has different conditions and challenges, whether in terms of personality, workload, or the school environment (Syarief Hidayatulloh, 2023). Therefore, the effectiveness of self-care highly depends on an individual's ability to recognize their own needs as well as the systemic support provided by educational institutions (Muslimah et al., 2024). In general, the factors affecting the implementation of self-care can be divided into two main categories: internal factors originating from within the teacher, and external factors influenced by the work environment and school policies (Faiza et al., 2024).

Internal Factors

Self-awareness

Teachers who are aware of the importance of physical and mental health tend to be more consistent in practicing self-care (Ma'wa et al., 2024). Self-awareness regarding the importance of physical and mental health is the main foundation for implementing self-care among teachers (Besse et al., 2025). Teachers who realize that their health directly affects the quality of their teaching will be more motivated to maintain physical fitness and emotional stability (Ifansyah, 2023). They understand that a fit body helps maintain concentration and energy during the teaching process, while a calm mental state allows them to be patient, wise, and empathetic toward students (Syarief Hidayatulloh, 2023). For example, a teacher who is aware of signs of fatigue such as being easily irritated, having difficulty focusing, or often feeling anxious will immediately take steps to rest, engage in light exercise, or participate in relaxation activities such as meditation.

A teacher with a good level of awareness is also more proactive in seeking information or training related to personal health, such as attending stress management seminars or wellness teacher programs often organized by educational institutions, both online and offline (Kusmiran et al., 2024). They do not wait until experiencing extreme fatigue to take action but make self-care a daily habit integrated into their teaching routine. Thus, self-awareness not only creates teachers who are personally healthy but also fosters a positive work culture at school, where the well-being

of educators is regarded as part of professionalism and the success of education (Rolandi Hernafahreza et al., 2017).

Personal Motivation

Teachers with high motivation to improve teaching quality generally have a strong awareness that students' learning success largely depends on their own readiness and well-being as educators (Ratika et al., 2018). They recognize that a healthy body and calm mind allow the learning process to be more effective, interactive, and enjoyable. Teachers with such a sense of professionalism usually strive to maintain a healthy lifestyle, for example by exercising regularly, managing their diet, and avoiding excessive stress to stay fit while teaching (Munawir et al., 2022). Additionally, they also tend to build emotional resilience by engaging in self-reflection or joining teacher communities that support professional growth and mental well-being. This attitude shows that self-care is not only a form of caring for oneself, but also a moral responsibility to ensure that students receive the best learning from teachers who are in prime physical and mental condition (Mamesah & Lombogia, 2023).

External Factors

Workplace Support

Schools that have a healthy work culture and teacher welfare policies essentially create an environment that supports a balance between professional demands and the personal needs of educators (Sofiyah et al., 2025). A positive work culture is reflected through open communication between leadership and teachers, fair task distribution, and recognition of individual performance and well-being (Nahrun et al., 2024). When schools provide teachers with opportunities to rest, exercise, or participate in personal development activities without excessive administrative pressure, it fosters a sense of being valued and enhances work motivation (Afifah et al., 2024). For example, several schools in Salatiga City have implemented programs such as Teacher Wellness Day or "Healthy Friday" activities that give teachers the opportunity to engage in physical activities together and self-reflection. Such policies not only help maintain teachers' physical and mental health, but also strengthen social bonds among educators, creating a harmonious and productive work environment.

Workload and Administrative System

Teachers with excessive workloads often face a dilemma between professional responsibilities and personal needs (Syarief Hidayatulloh, 2023). When a packed teaching schedule is combined with administrative demands such as creating lesson plans, assessing students, and filling out digital reports, personal time becomes very limited (Ifansyah, 2023). This situation leads teachers to tend to neglect important activities such as exercising, getting enough rest, or engaging in relaxation activities that can restore energy. As a result, they are more vulnerable to physical and mental fatigue, which ultimately leads to a decline in motivation and the quality of classroom performance (Rosyada et al., 2024). For example, many teachers in schools or madrasahs who teach more than 30 hours per week admit that it is difficult to maintain a healthy diet and a regular sleep schedule. In fact, good time management and support from the school, for instance through proportional task distribution or teacher rest policies, can help them balance their workload with personal needs to maintain health and professionalism in teaching (Ma'wa et al., 2024).

Social support

Social support from colleagues, family, and the teacher community plays a very important role in building and maintaining self-care habits among educators (Yuin et al., 2024). Through positive interactions and mutual understanding, teachers can feel more accepted, valued, and not alone in facing work-related pressures. The presence of supportive colleagues, for example, helps teachers share experiences and strategies for managing stress or finding a balance between work and personal life (Paramita & Afandi, 2024). Likewise, family support that understands the demands of the teaching profession can provide emotional security at home, which ultimately enhances teachers' mental resilience at work (Rolandi Hernafahreza et al., 2017). Programs such as teacher support groups or teacher learning communities serve as effective platforms for discussion, sharing solutions, and strengthening the spirit of togetherness (Novita & Radiana, 2024). In several schools in the city of Salatiga, such groups have been proven to reduce teacher stress levels and increase awareness of personal health, as teachers feel they have a supportive social network that cares for each other and consistently practices self-care.

The Relationship of Self-Care with Teacher Performance, Productivity, and Professionalism

Self-care is closely related to improving teachers' performance, productivity, and professionalism because an educator's personal well-being is the main foundation for carrying out tasks optimally (Fauza et al., 2022). Teachers who routinely maintain their physical, mental, and emotional health are better prepared to face the dynamics in the classroom, from managing student behavior to adjusting teaching methods according to students' needs (Nugroho & Sriyanti, 2024). Maintaining energy and concentration enables teachers to give full attention to students, create a conducive learning environment, and demonstrate high levels of patience and empathy (Syarief Hidayatulloh, 2023). Conversely, teachers who neglect self-care tend to tire quickly, become easily stressed, and are less enthusiastic in teaching, which ultimately reduces the effectiveness of the learning process.

In addition to impacting individual performance, self-care also contributes to improving the overall productivity and professionalism of teachers (Sofiyah et al., 2025). Teachers who are able to balance work and personal needs will be more efficient in completing administrative tasks, developing creative learning media, and innovating teaching strategies (Ma'wa et al., 2024). This reflects professional values such as responsibility, discipline, and commitment to the quality of education.

Improving Teacher Performance

Teachers who are physically and mentally healthy are able to create a more dynamic and meaningful learning process because a balanced body and mind allow them to be fully present in every classroom interaction (Syarief Hidayatulloh, 2023). Physical health supports the teacher's endurance and energy during teaching activities, while mental health helps them maintain emotional stability and think clearly in facing various situations (Ratika et al., 2018). Teachers in prime condition can more easily establish effective communication with students, listen with empathy, and provide constructive feedback (Nahrun et al., 2024). For example, a teacher who has emotional balance will be able to respond to challenging student behavior with a positive approach, rather than with anger. A conducive classroom atmosphere is created because students feel safe, valued, and motivated to learn. Thus, the physical and mental well-being of teachers

becomes a key factor in achieving a productive learning process that focuses on character development in students (Paramita & Afandi, 2024).

Work Productivity With stable physical and mental conditions

Teachers can work with focus and careful planning, allowing each professional task to be completed more effectively and efficiently (Novita & Radiana, 2024). This stability enables teachers to prioritize work, manage teaching schedules, and allocate time between learning activities, administration, and self-development without feeling burdened (Paramita & Afandi, 2024). Physically fit teachers do not tire easily, while mentally healthy teachers are able to think clearly and make decisions calmly, including when facing sudden changes at school (Kusmiran et al., 2024). For example, teachers who adopt a healthy lifestyle and maintain emotional balance are more prepared to develop creative lesson plans and adjust them to meet students' needs. They are also more meticulous in carrying out administrative tasks, such as assessments or online reporting, thus minimizing errors. This work efficiency ultimately has a positive impact on the overall productivity of the school and enhances teachers' confidence in carrying out their profession (Rosyada et al., 2024).

Teacher Professionalism

Teachers who consistently practice self-care not only demonstrate care for themselves but also reflect the values of professionalism in educational practice (Fauza et al., 2022). Discipline in maintaining health, managing time, and balancing work and personal life shows that teachers understand the importance of responsibility for the quality of teaching they provide. This attitude fosters a commitment to always be present in the best condition when interacting with students, ensuring that the learning process is optimal (Sofiyah et al., 2025). Moreover, teachers who can maintain a balanced life become real role models for students in adopting a healthy lifestyle and positive stress management (Muslimah et al., 2024). For example, teachers who remain calm in the face of exam pressure or challenging classroom situations teach students the importance of self-control and clear thinking when facing challenges. Thus, the practice of self-care not only strengthens teacher professionalism but also plays an important role in shaping character and a positive culture within the school environment (Agustin & Hidayah, 2024).

Conclusion

Based on the discussion about the importance of self-care for teachers, it can be concluded that self-care is a fundamental aspect of maintaining a balance between professional responsibilities and personal well-being. Self-care helps teachers maintain physical, mental, and emotional health, which directly impacts their effectiveness at school. With high self-awareness, a supportive work environment, and school policies that prioritize teacher well-being, self-care practices can be applied consistently. Teachers who can manage themselves well will have greater energy, motivation, and emotional resilience to face various challenges in the learning process.

In addition, the practice of self-care also represents a concrete manifestation of a teacher's professionalism, who is not only responsible for their work but also for themselves as individuals who play an important role in education. Healthy and happy teachers are able to create a positive classroom atmosphere, build harmonious relationships with students, and serve as role models in implementing a balanced lifestyle. Therefore, it is important for every educational institution to encourage a culture of self-care through policies that support the well-being of educators. Thus, self-care is not merely a personal need but also a long-term investment in improving the quality of learning and the standards of education in schools.

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