



A Teacher's Writing Habit as Emotional Expression in a Demanding Teaching Routine

Rostina

Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

Corresponding E-mail: rostina@unm.ac.id

Abstract: This study explored how a teacher's writing habit functions as emotional expression within a demanding teaching routine. Specifically, it examined four aspects like writing as emotional release, writing as reflective practice, writing within a demanding teaching routine, and writing as an emotional coping strategy. A qualitative single-case study design was employed. The participant was one female teacher at SD Negeri 060 Pekkabata, Polewali Mandar, Sulawesi Barat, who had a very hectic schedule including full-time teaching, administrative duties, and private tutoring. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom and WhatsApp chat, as well as document analysis of the teacher's syllabus, lesson plans, blog, Instagram posts, journal book, and mobile phone notes. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that writing served as a powerful emotional release, helping the teacher process anxiety and accept difficult situations. Reflective writing occurred primarily during professional training periods and motivated her to improve classroom practice. Despite her demanding routine, the teacher maintained a writing habit by using multiple platforms, writing during natural breaks, and prioritizing short, happiness-focused notes. She considered writing equally effective as talking to others for emotional expression and strongly recommended writing to fellow teachers. The study concludes that a flexible writing habit focused on emotional release and small positive moments can be a sustainable, low-cost coping strategy for teachers facing overwhelming professional demands. These findings have implications for teacher well-being program and teacher education.

Keywords: teacher writing habit, emotional expression, demanding teaching routine, emotional coping strategy, case study.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is widely accepted as one of the most emotionally challenging professions in the modern world. Unlike many other jobs, teachers are expected to manage their own feelings while simultaneously responding to the emotional needs of students, parents, and school administrators. This constant regulation of emotion, often called emotional labour, can lead to high levels of stress, anxiety, and eventually burnout if not managed properly. Teachers often experience a significant level of work-related stress in their profession. According to Kavitha et al. (2025), many school teachers face moderate to high levels of stress due to various job demands. These demands include large class sizes, heavy workloads, and difficulties in managing student behavior. In this context, finding simple, affordable, and sustainable strategies to help teachers cope with emotional demands has become an important goal for educational research.

One such strategy that has gained attention in recent years is the development of a regular personal writing habit. Writing about emotions, experiences, and daily challenges is not a new idea, but its application to teacher well-being is still relatively unexplored. Expressive writing, originally studied by Pennebaker and colleagues, has been associated with various psychological and physical health benefits, including improved emotional well-being (Forster

et al., 2022). However, teachers face unique pressures, including time constraints, heavy workloads, and the need to constantly adapt to different student needs. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how writing functions specifically for teachers, not just as a general stress-relief tool, but as an integrated part of their professional lives.

Despite growing interest in teacher mental health, few studies have focused specifically on how teachers use writing to express emotions in the middle of their demanding routines. Many existing studies have examined structured writing interventions in controlled settings, but very little is known about how teachers naturally develop and maintain a writing habit on their own. Furthermore, the different ways that writing can support teachers such as providing emotional release, encouraging reflection, fitting into busy schedules, and serving as a coping mechanism have not been clearly separated or studied in depth. This study aims to address that gap by investigating four specific aspects of teachers' writing habits.

The first aspect to be examined in this research is writing as emotional release. Emotional release refers to the process of expressing pent-up feelings through writing, which can help reduce internal tension and prevent emotional overload. In the teaching profession, where daily interactions often involve frustration, disappointment, joy, and anxiety, having a safe and private outlet for these emotions is crucial. Culver (2021) argues that expressive and creative writing can offer educators a form of emotional relief, allowing them to let go of burdens and calm their anxieties. Unlike verbal expression, which may be limited by social expectations or lack of time, writing allows teachers to fully articulate their feelings without fear of judgment. Therefore, this study will explore how teachers use writing as a channel to release strong emotions that arise during their workday.

The second aspect is writing as reflective practice. Reflective practice is a well-known concept in teacher education, where teachers think back on their actions and decisions in order to improve their future performance. However, reflection is not only about professional growth, it can also serve emotional purposes. When teachers write reflectively, they can gain a deeper understanding of why certain events made them feel angry, sad, or happy. Lee and Chae (2025) found that writing activities based on cognitive and emotional processes enhance teachers' self-reflection and emotional understanding, leading to improved self-awareness and overall psychological well-being. Writing as reflective practice allows teachers to step back from immediate emotional reactions and analyze them more calmly. This study will therefore investigate how teachers use writing to reflect on their emotional experiences and what benefits they gain from this process.

The third aspect is writing within a demanding teaching routine. One of the biggest barriers to any self-care activity for teachers is lack of time. A demanding teaching routine often leaves little room for extra activities, no matter how beneficial they may be. Therefore, for a writing habit to be sustainable, it must be integrated into existing daily routines rather than added as an extra task. Round et al. (2022) noted that even short periods of positive expressive writing, completed over three consecutive days, produced measurable benefits for teachers' anxiety and job satisfaction. This suggests that writing does not need to be time-consuming to be effective. However, the specific ways that teachers fit writing into their busy schedules such as writing during breaks, before school starts, or after grading papers have not been systematically studied. This research will explore how teachers manage to maintain a writing habit despite their demanding routines and what strategies help them succeed.

The fourth and final aspect is writing as an emotional coping strategy. Coping strategies are behaviors or thoughts that people use to manage stress and difficult emotions. Unlike emotional release, which focuses on expressing feelings, coping strategies involve actively trying to reduce the impact of stressors. Writing can serve as a coping mechanism in several ways, it can help teachers reframe negative events, plan solutions to problems, or simply distract themselves temporarily from overwhelming emotions. Grounded in the framework of *emotion-focused coping* proposed by Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984), expressive writing enables individuals to process and regulate their emotions by translating stressful experiences into structured narratives.

Early experimental work by James W. Pennebaker and Sandra K. Beall (1986) demonstrated that writing about traumatic events can reduce psychological inhibition and improve health outcomes. Subsequent research further confirmed that expressive writing contributes to both psychological and physical well-being, including reduced stress, improved mood, and enhanced cognitive processing (Pennebaker & Chung, 2011; Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005). This process allows individuals to organize their thoughts, gain insight into their emotional experiences, and reduce maladaptive patterns such as rumination. As a result, writing is increasingly viewed as a low-cost, accessible, and evidence-based strategy for coping with stress across both clinical and non-clinical populations, making it particularly relevant for professionals, such as teachers, who experience high levels of work-related stress.

Based on the four aspects described above, this research has the following specific objectives:

1. To investigate how teachers use writing as a means of emotional release to manage intense feelings arising from their daily teaching experiences.

2. To explore the role of writing as a reflective practice that helps teachers understand and process their emotional responses to classroom events.
3. To examine how teachers integrate a writing habit into their demanding teaching routines, including the challenges and strategies involved.
4. To analyze how writing functions as an emotional coping strategy that enables teachers to reduce stress and build resilience in the face of professional demands.

By addressing these four objectives, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between teachers' writing habits and their emotional well-being. The findings will be useful not only for individual teachers who are seeking practical ways to manage stress, but also for school administrators and teacher training program that wish to support teacher mental health without expensive or time-consuming interventions. Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing recognition that writing is not merely a skill to be taught to students, but also a powerful tool for teacher self-care and emotional sustainability.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a qualitative single-case study design. A case study approach was chosen because the research aimed to explore in depth how a teacher used writing as emotional expression within her real-life demanding routine. Unlike large-scale surveys, a single case allowed the researcher to capture detailed, contextualized data from one individual who represented a typical yet unique situation (Yin, 2018). In this study, the case was a teacher at SD Negeri 060 Pekkabata, Polewali Mandar, Sulawesi Barat.

Participant

The participant was one female teacher who taught at SD Negeri 060 Pekkabata and also worked as a private tutor outside school hours. She was selected purposively because she had a very hectic schedule. Her daily routine included teaching full-time at a public elementary school, managing administrative tasks such as lesson plans (RPP) and syllabus development, handling school events, and providing extra tutoring in the evenings. This heavy workload created significant emotional pressure, making her an ideal participant to study writing as an emotional outlet. Additionally, she actively wrote on various platforms, including a personal blog, Instagram, a physical journal book, and notes on her mobile phone. Her writing habit was consistent and diverse, providing rich data for analysis.

Data Collection

Three types of data were collected. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand the teacher's feelings about her demanding routine, how she used writing to release emotions, reflect on experiences, and cope with stress. The interviews were carried out via Zoom because the researcher and participant could not always meet in person. In addition, sometimes the researcher continued the conversation via WhatsApp chat to clarify answers or ask follow-up questions when the teacher was busy. These chat exchanges were saved and treated as part of the interview data. Second, documents were collected, including her syllabus and lesson plans (to understand her administrative burden), as well as her written products from her blog, Instagram posts, journal book, and phone notes. These writings showed direct evidence of emotional expression. Third, because the researcher could not visit the school in person, a reflective journal was kept. After each Zoom interview and after reviewing the teacher's online writings, the researcher wrote down personal observations, emerging themes, and contextual notes. This journal helped document the research process without requiring a physical school visit.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006). The researcher read all interview transcripts (from Zoom and WhatsApp chat), written documents, and field notes several times. Then, codes were assigned to segments related to the four research objectives: emotional release, reflective practice, demanding routine, and coping strategy. After coding, themes were identified and interpreted. The teacher's syllabus and RPP were analysed to see how much administrative pressure she faced, while her blog, Instagram, journal, and phone notes were analysed for emotional language and coping statements.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Writing as Emotional Release

The first research objective was to investigate how the teacher used writing as a means of emotional release to manage intense feelings arising from her daily teaching experiences. Data from the interview and the teacher's written documents revealed that writing served as a powerful outlet for both positive and negative emotions, particularly when the teacher felt overwhelmed by her demanding routine.

The participant, a second-year teacher at SD Negeri 060 Pekkabata, described her daily schedule as extremely busy. She woke up before dawn, left for school by 7 a.m., taught young children, attended meetings after school, and often returned home around 2 p.m. In addition,

she worked as a private tutor. She also had extra administrative duties such as managing the school library, looking after school assets, and cleaning classrooms. When asked about the biggest challenges in her job, she stated, *“Additional tasks besides teaching, such as managing the library, school assets, and cleaning classrooms, writing as an emotional outlet.”* This statement directly linked writing to emotional release, suggesting that the teacher consciously used writing to let go of work-related pressure.

The teacher wrote in various situations, not only when she felt tired or stressed but also when she experienced positive emotions. She explained, *“When I was falling in love or heartbroken, I poured everything into my notebook. When I felt tired or grateful, I also wrote it down.”* This shows that writing served as a general emotional container for both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Importantly, she clarified that writing in her personal notebook made her feel happy, not pressured or negative. She said *“Specifically when writing in my personal notebook, I feel happy. There is no feeling of pressure or any negative emotion.”* This finding aligns with expressive writing theory, which posits that transferring emotional experiences into language can reduce distress and improve mood (Pennebaker, 1997).

A concrete example of writing as emotional release occurred during a recent crisis. The teacher described a situation two days before the interview when there was a fuel shortage in Polewali Mandar. She lived 5 km from her school and worried about how to commute. She could not afford an electric motorbike, and walking or cycling would be difficult. Before sleeping, she wrote about this problem. She recalled, *“Tears fell as I wrote the sentences in my notes. After writing, I fell asleep. I woke up in the morning and felt that I could accept the changes I would face.”* This narrative demonstrates that writing allowed her to cry, release tension, and process her anxiety. By morning, her emotional state had shifted from fear to acceptance. This is consistent with research showing that expressive writing helps individuals regulate emotions and achieve cognitive resolution after stressful events (Smyth, 1998).

Finally, when asked whether writing helped her express things that were difficult to say to others, the teacher responded, *“So far, I write more often for myself. To other people, like to Aba [her father], yes. To others besides Aba, I think not yet.”* This suggests that writing provided a private, safe space for emotional release that was not fully available in interpersonal communication, except with her closest confidant. In summary, the teacher consistently used writing as an effective tool for emotional release, helping her cope with daily workload, administrative burdens, and unexpected life challenges.

Writing as Reflective Practice

The second research objective was to explore the role of writing as a reflective practice that helps teachers understand and process their emotional responses to classroom events. Interview data revealed that although the teacher did not write reflectively on a daily basis, she used writing as a tool for self-reflection during specific periods, particularly when she was required to evaluate and improve her teaching.

When asked whether she used writing to reflect on her teaching experiences, the teacher responded, *"Sometimes yes"*. This indicates that reflective writing was not a regular habit but an occasional practice. The teacher explained that the content of her reflective writing focused on two main areas, *"My feelings while teaching and my teaching process inside the classroom"*. This dual focus on both emotional states and instructional practice suggests that reflective writing served as a bridge between her inner emotional world and her external professional actions. Research has shown that Writing is utilized as a reflective practice that enables teachers to examine their experiences while contributing to their self-development and professionalism (Andriani et al., 2022).

A significant period of reflective writing occurred when the teacher participated in a professional development program. She stated, *"When I participated in the deep learning training from September to November 2025, I wrote a teaching journal. During that time, I reflected on my teaching process from my notes."* This shows that structured training programs can encourage teachers to engage in reflective writing, which in turn helps them examine their own classroom practices more systematically.

More importantly, the teacher acknowledged that her reflective writing influenced her subsequent teaching behaviour. She explained, *"Because at that time I was required to implement deep learning, I feel that looking at my teaching journal motivated me to try to make learning happier and more meaningful, in line with the principles of deep learning."* This statement reveals that reflective writing did not merely document past experiences, it actively shaped future teaching decisions. The journal served as a motivational tool that reminded her of her goals and encouraged her to align her classroom practice with the values of meaningful and joyful learning.

Regarding the role of writing in her learning and self-development, the teacher offered a longitudinal perspective, *"I look at my writing results from my teenage years until now. I must admit, I see that the quality of my writing in my notebook has improved year by year."* This observation indicates that writing contributed not only to her professional reflection but also to her personal growth as a writer. The ability to track her own development over time provided

tangible evidence of progress, which may have reinforced her motivation to continue writing. Studies have confirmed that writing empowers teachers to engage in continuous self-development and professional growth, strengthening their personal reflection and making them more productive educators.

In summary, the teacher used writing as a reflective practice primarily during professional training periods. Her reflective writing focused on both her emotions and her teaching processes. Importantly, reviewing her written reflections motivated her to improve her classroom practice, making learning more meaningful and enjoyable for her students. Furthermore, writing allowed her to observe her own long-term development, from adolescence to adulthood, which contributed to her sense of growth as both a person and an educator.

Writing within a Demanding Teaching Routine

The third research objective was to examine how the teacher integrated a writing habit into her demanding teaching routine, including the challenges and strategies involved. Interview data revealed that writing had been a long-standing practice since childhood, that the teacher wrote across multiple platforms, and that despite a very hectic schedule, she found ways to continue writing, particularly for emotional relief.

The teacher confirmed that she had a writing habit and traced its origin to her primary school years. She explained, *“Since elementary school, I saw my older cousins come home from school, go into their rooms, and write about their daily experiences at school. There were times when they shared their writing and I was allowed to read it. There were also times when they wrote in a special diary that no one else was allowed to read. Following my cousin’s habit became the basis of my writing habit.”* This statement indicates that the teacher’s writing habit was not imposed by any formal requirement but developed naturally through social observation and imitation during childhood. The habit thus became an internalized, personal practice rather than an external obligation.

Regarding the platforms she used for writing, the teacher described a progression over time, *“I started with a diary in junior high school. Then in senior high school, I was active in writing on a blog. Currently, I only occasionally write on a blog. More often, I write in a daily notebook or a note-taking application.”* This shows that the teacher’s writing habit was flexible and adapted to different life stages and available technologies. The shift from a physical diary to a blog and then back to a combination of a physical notebook and a digital note app suggests that convenience and accessibility were important factors. Writing in a notebook or phone note could be done quickly, anywhere, without requiring internet access or a formal writing setup.

When asked about the specific times she wrote, the teacher stated *“Recently, I write when my emotional condition is unstable. The last time I wrote was during the fuel shortage.”* This indicates that writing was not scheduled at fixed times each day but was triggered by emotional fluctuations. In other words, writing served as an immediate response to emotional instability rather than a disciplined daily routine. This finding is important because it shows that for this teacher, writing was integrated into her demanding routine not by adding another scheduled task, but by using it as a flexible tool available whenever strong emotions arose.

The teacher was then asked how she found time to write in the middle of her busy teaching schedule. She responded, *“Writing is like giving special time to myself. When there is a break after teaching or before sleeping, I write.”* This statement reveals two key strategies. First, the teacher viewed writing as an act of self-care which gave it personal value and motivated her to prioritize it. Second, she used naturally occurring breaks in her day, such as rest time after school or the period before sleep rather than creating entirely new blocks of time. This approach made writing sustainable because it did not compete with her existing responsibilities.

Concerning moments that triggered her to write, the teacher explained, *“When I am happy about small things I receive, or when I am confused about the uncertain condition of the country.”* This indicates that writing was activated by both positive emotions (happiness about small things) and negative or confusing emotions (uncertainty about national conditions). Writing thus served as a companion in both joyful and difficult moments, capturing fleeting happiness and untangling confusing thoughts.

The teacher was also asked whether her busy routine had ever caused her to stop writing. She answered, *“Stopping long writing, yes. Because of the density of activities. But writing about things that feel happy, I have not stopped writing them. Because writing feels relieving.”* This distinction between long-form writing and short, happiness-focused writing is crucial. The teacher acknowledged that her hectic schedule prevented her from engaging in extended, reflective writing sessions. However, she never stopped writing brief notes about happy moments because doing so provided relief. This suggests that the emotional benefit of writing, the feeling of relief was strong enough to maintain the habit even when time was extremely limited. It was emphasized that writing practices can be sustained within demanding professional routines, despite the constraints of heavy teaching workloads and institutional expectations (Winter, 2023)

Finally, when asked how important writing was in her daily life as a teacher, the teacher responded with strong emphasis, *“Very important. When I feel emotionally chaotic because the*

school environment does not match my expectations, writing becomes a calming escape.” This statement confirms that writing was not merely a hobby or an occasional activity, it was an essential tool for emotional regulation in her professional life. The phrase *a calming escape* captures the dual function of writing, it provided both a temporary escape from overwhelming emotions and a calming effect that restored her inner balance. In the context of a demanding teaching routine filled with administrative burdens, unexpected challenges, and emotional chaos, writing emerged as a portable, private, and powerful resource that helped the teacher maintain her emotional stability.

Writing as an Emotional Coping Strategy

The fourth research objective was to analyze how writing functioned as an emotional coping strategy that enabled the teacher to reduce stress and build resilience in the face of professional demands. Interview data revealed that writing was one of several coping mechanisms the teacher used that she placed writing on an equal level with talking to others, and that she perceived writing as beneficial for both emotional release and cognitive development.

When asked what she typically did when facing work pressure, the teacher responded, *“Going for a walk and watching Netflix.”* This indicated that the teacher employed multiple coping strategies, including physical activity and entertainment, alongside writing. When specifically asked whether writing was one of her ways to cope with stress, she answered, *“Writing also, yes.”* This casual but affirmative response suggested that writing was a recognized and regularly used tool in her stress management repertoire, even if it was not her first or only choice. This finding aligns with research showing that expressive writing can serve as an effective coping mechanism for teachers experiencing work-related stress (Round et al., 2022). Their study demonstrated that positive expressive writing reduced state anxiety and improved aspects of job satisfaction among full-time workers.

The teacher was then asked how writing compared to other coping strategies, particularly talking to other people. She explained, *“Writing and chatting are similar for me. Both are equally a way to pour out what is in my heart.”* This statement revealed that the teacher did not view writing as inferior to verbal expression rather, she considered both channels as equally valid for emotional disclosure. Unlike some individuals who may prefer oral communication because it provides immediate feedback and social support, this teacher found writing to be just as effective as conversation. The phrase *pouring out what is in the heart* captured the essence of emotional catharsis, the release of pent-up feelings through expressive acts.

When asked whether writing helped her maintain emotional balance, the teacher answered simply but firmly: “*Yes.*” Although brief, this affirmative response carried significant meaning. In the context of her demanding teaching routine, which included administrative burdens, classroom management, and unexpected challenges such as the fuel shortage, maintaining emotional balance was essential for her professional functioning and personal well-being. Writing served as a regulatory tool that helped her return to a state of equilibrium after emotional disturbances. The ability to self-regulate emotions through writing is particularly valuable for teachers, who must continuously manage their own feelings while responding to the emotional needs of students.

Then, the teacher was asked about the long-term impact of her writing habit on her well-being as a teacher. She provided a thoughtful response, “*When I write, I describe the feelings that are inside my heart. Besides releasing emotions, writing also sharpens the brain.*” This statement identified two distinct long-term benefits of writing. The first benefit, emotional release was consistent with the findings from earlier sections, writing allowed her to let go of negative feelings and prevent emotional overload. The second benefit, cognitive sharpening, suggested that writing engaged her mental faculties in ways that went beyond emotional regulation. By describing her feelings in words, she practiced articulation, organization of thoughts, and self-expression skills that likely transferred to her teaching practice, lesson planning, and communication with students and colleagues. This dual benefit, emotional and cognitive suggested that writing contributed to her overall professional development, not just her stress management.

Besides, when asked how important a writing habit was for a teacher in general, she answered with strong conviction, “*Very important. Teachers are required to continuously sharpen their brains, and writing is one way to do that.*” This extended the benefit of writing beyond personal emotional management to a professional obligation. She would also recommend other teachers to write, “*Yes. Because I feel that writing helps to release emotions, as I have already explained.*” Her recommendation was based directly on her lived experience.

Finally, the teacher was invited to add anything else about her writing experience. She offered a reflective and slightly humorous observation, “*Honestly, I also judge other people from their writing. Although sometimes it is accurate and sometimes not. Hahah.*” This spontaneous remark revealed that writing had become so central to her way of thinking that it shaped how she perceived and judged people around her.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide several important insights into how a teacher uses writing as emotional expression within a demanding teaching routine. Regarding writing as emotional release, the teacher in this study used writing as a direct outlet for emotional pressure, particularly during the fuel shortage crisis where she wrote about her worries, cried, and woke up feeling more accepting of the situation. This finding supports Pennebaker's (1997) theory that writing about emotional experiences reduces distress and improves mood, as well as Smyth's (1998) finding that expressive writing helps individuals regulate emotions and achieve cognitive resolution after stressful events.

Unlike previous studies conducted in controlled laboratory settings, this study demonstrates that emotional release through writing can occur naturally in a teacher's home environment without any structured intervention or external instruction. Turning to writing as reflective practice, the teacher engaged in reflective writing primarily during professional training periods, writing a teaching journal during a deep learning program from September to November 2025, and she reported that reviewing her journal motivated her to make her teaching happier and more meaningful. This aligns with Andriani et al. (2022) who argued that writing empowers teachers to engage in continuous self-development and professional growth. However, an interesting difference emerged, the teacher did not maintain regular reflective writing outside of training periods, suggesting that reflective writing may be more easily sustained when it is linked to external requirements or structured programs, while spontaneous emotional writing may be more natural for teachers with demanding routines.

Regarding writing within a demanding teaching routine, the teacher maintained her writing habit despite a hectic schedule by using flexible strategies such as writing on multiple platforms (diary, blog, notebook, phone notes), writing when emotional instability arose rather than at fixed times, and using natural breaks such as after school or before sleeping. She also distinguished between long writing, which she sometimes stopped due to busyness, and short happiness-focused writing, which she never stopped because it felt relieving. This finding directly supports McGhie's (2023) argument that even brief moments of writing can be integrated into overcrowded schedules without adding significant burden, and it adds a new practical insight, prioritising short, positive writing over long, reflective writing when time is extremely limited.

Finally, concerning writing as an emotional coping strategy, the teacher used writing alongside other strategies such as walking and watching Netflix, and she considered writing and talking to others as equally valid ways to pour out her heart. She reported that writing

helped maintain emotional balance and provided long-term benefits including emotional release and cognitive sharpening, and she strongly recommended other teachers to write based on her own experience. This aligns with Round et al. (2022) who found that positive expressive writing reduced anxiety and improved job satisfaction among teachers. However, this study extends their findings in two ways. First, the teacher explicitly compared writing to talking with others and found them equal, suggesting that for some individuals writing is not a second-best option but a genuinely equivalent channel for emotional expression. Second, the teacher identified cognitive sharpening as an additional long-term benefit, a dimension that has received less attention in expressive writing research.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore how a teacher's writing habit functions as emotional expression within a demanding teaching routine, focusing on four specific aspects such as, writing as emotional release, writing as reflective practice, writing within a demanding teaching routine, and writing as an emotional coping strategy. The findings from this single case study of a teacher at SD Negeri 060 Pekkabata, Polewali Mandar, Sulawesi Barat, demonstrated that writing served as a powerful and flexible tool for managing the emotional pressures of a hectic teaching schedule. The teacher used writing to release intense emotions during personal crises, such as the fuel shortage, and found that writing helped her shift from anxiety to acceptance. She also engaged in reflective writing during professional training, which motivated her to improve her classroom practice.

Despite her demanding routine, she maintained a writing habit by using multiple platforms, writing during natural breaks, and prioritizing short, happiness-focused notes when time was limited. Additionally, she considered writing equally effective as talking to others for pouring out her heart and recommended writing to other teachers based on her own experience of emotional relief and cognitive sharpening. What is new from this study is the finding that the teacher prioritized short, positive writing over long reflective writing when time was extremely limited, and that she viewed writing as equivalent to talking with others, not as a secondary option. The teacher's admission that she judges other people from their writing also revealed how deeply writing had become embedded in her personal identity.

In conclusion, this case study provides evidence that a regular writing habit can be a sustainable, low-cost, and accessible strategy for teachers to express emotions, reflect on practice, and cope with work-related stress, even within a demanding routine. The teacher's success was not because she had abundant free time, but because she adapted her writing to fit

naturally into her existing daily rhythms, using short notes, phone applications, and natural breaks. For teachers who feel overwhelmed by administrative burdens, classroom challenges, and personal anxieties, developing a flexible writing habit focused on emotional release and small moments of happiness may offer a realistic path toward better emotional balance and professional resilience. Schools and teacher training programs should consider encouraging writing not only as a pedagogical tool for students but also as a valuable practice for teacher well-being. Future research with more participants and longer time frames is needed to confirm these findings across different contexts and career stages.

REFERENCES

- Andriani, A., Hidayati, A. N., Abdullah, F., Rosmala, D., & Supriyono, Y. (2022). Menulis sebagai Refleksi Pengembangan Diri dan Profesionalisme Guru. *E-Dimas: Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat*, 13(4), 692–698. <https://journal.upgris.ac.id/index.php/e-dimas/article/view/11961>
- Baikie, K. A., & Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 11(5), 338–346. <https://doi.org/10.1192/apt.11.5.338>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Culver, K. (2021). Therapeutic Writing Can Benefit Educators, Too. *ASCD*. <https://ascd.org/blogs/therapeutic-writing-can-benefit-educators-too>
- Forster, M., et al. (2022). The promotion of functional expected teaching-related emotions through expressive writing. *PLOS ONE*, 17(5), e0267905. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0267905. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9060328/>
- Kavitha, B., Veigas, J., & Mannadath, N. (2025). Work stress among school teachers: A systematic literature review. *Social Medicine*, 18(2), 110–117. <https://doi.org/10.71164/socialmedicine.v18i2.2025.1869>
- Kim, S., et al. (2025). Enhancing teacher well-being through cognitive behavioral theory and visual imagery-based writing with the resulting tower model. *Scientific Reports*, 15, Article 2081. DOI: 10.1038/s41598-024-80997-9 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11873202/>
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing Company. <https://books.google.com/books?id=i-ySQQuUpr8C>
- Lee, C., & Chae, S. E. (2025). Enhancing teacher well-being through cognitive behavioral theory and visual imagery-based writing. *Scientific Reports*, 15, Article 11873202. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-80997-9>

- Pennebaker, J. W., & Chung, C. K. (2011). Expressive writing: Connections to physical and mental health. In H. S. Friedman (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of health psychology* (pp. 417–437). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195342819.013.0018>
- Pennebaker, J. W., & Beall, S. K. (1986). Confronting a traumatic event: Toward an understanding of inhibition and disease. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 95(3), 274–281. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843X.95.3.274>
- Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process. *Psychological Science*, 8(3), 162–166. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.1997.tb00403.x <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1997.tb00403.x>
- Round, E. K., Wetherell, M. A., Elsey, V., & Smith, M. A. (2022). Positive expressive writing as a tool for alleviating burnout and enhancing wellbeing in teachers and other full-time workers. *Cogent Psychology*, 9(1). DOI: 10.1080/23311908.2022.2060628. <https://doaj.org/article/0cba0e405c624677ad0dbb0982585b73>
- Smyth, J. M. (1998). Written emotional expression: Effect sizes, outcome types, and moderating variables. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 66(1), 174–184. DOI: 10.1037/0022-006X.66.1.174
- Winter, A. (2023). *Taking a text and tweaking it: Using Wendy Belcher's 12-week journal writing program to support writing wellbeing for busy educators*. Student Success, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.5204/ssj.2764>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/case-study-research-and-applications/book250150>