Research Article

Job Stress and its Predictors among Malaysian Teachers

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Abstract

The success and competency of an education system depend on the main driver of the system. They are the teachers. Teaching is not the only profession associated with a high-stress level job. Instead, almost all other professions are. High-stress level imposed an occupational threat to the mental and physical state of a person. Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain which results from adverse or demanding circumstances. It provides both physical and emotional effects leading to positive and negative feelings among teachers. Over the years, researchers examined issues about the stress level in the teaching profession. Researchers contended that teaching preparatory work mainly causes teachers to have a high-stress level. However, there is little evidence from the Malaysian literature concerning the stress level among school teachers. Hence, it is obligatory to explore the factors affecting stress level among teachers in Malaysia. This study may help the researchers to diminish the gap. This study attempts to examine the relationship between variables that affect stress among school teachers in Selangor. This study adopted the quantitative method. Researchers distributed the Questionnaires among 15 secondary schools in Selangor, particularly in Petaling Utama district which totals up to 2259 teachers. The findings reveal that the independent variables are highly significant and positively associated with the dependent variable. Hence, all the hypotheses were accepted. The findings further reveal the teachers' stress awareness. Steps to be taken to keep stress under control were proposed using various stress management techniques. The measures proposed in this study include widespread stress handling program development for teachers.

Keywords: Stress; depersonalizations; workload; interpersonal relationship; working environment

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Introduction

According to Maphalala (2014), pressure is an organizational problem, which can disturb individuals in a somewhat public atmosphere, whether workplace, home or religious. Like everybody else in their group, teachers are unprotected to tension due to their working profession (Maphalala, 2014). The causes of stress can be internal or external to the individual (Maphalala, 2014). A study by the National Union of the Teaching Profession *Malaysia* (NUTP) found that 70 percent of 9,000 teachers across the country were depressed not only because of the burden of duties but also because they had to face headaches, clerks, parents and students (Nor Kasiman, 2009). Raja Ali (2011) in his written report stated time constraint factor was the highest mean score (2.66), followed by the task load factor (2.58), the reward factor (2.50) and the lowest mean score was the student's incapacity factor (2.10).

Stress-related issues are acceptable complaints in most workplaces, this is associated with some negative personal and professional effects (Karasek & Thorell, 1990; Roeser et al., 2013; Shirom, Oliver, & Stein, 2009). In Malaysia, there are a few studies related to stress among teachers but this is not done at all levels and areas in large scale (Rahman Budi, 2013). There is a need for some future researchers to continue studying stress among teachers in Malaysia especially at Selangor and Kuala Lumpur (Zahid Munir, 2010). The highest levels of stress among teachers were caused by the introduction of the new curriculum (Maphalala, 2012). The largest direct effect on teacher stress in this category resulted from planning and assessment workload (Maphalala, 2012). Among the factors that cause teacher stress are depersonalisation, self-success, emotional depletion, overwork, interpersonal relationships and work environment. This depersonalisation refers to a teacher's emotional state such as how to treat a student and how a teacher overcomes his student's problems. Self-success refers to the way a teacher achieves success in seeing his students achieve good results in the lesson. Emotional deprivation also refers to a strong sense of teacher in carrying out tasks without feeling angry, sad and sentimental. The working environment also affects teachers in their daily tasks including classroom environment conditions, teaching aids facilities and other tools to facilitate teacher and student relationships.

Besides good interpersonal relationships, it is also necessary for teachers to share their problems with colleagues; co-workers are always cooperating and always getting encouragement from administrators or principals. Teachers are also charged with various administrative tasks that have become routine of their work, such as filling in forms, collecting fees, updating student arrivals, preparing performance reports, preparing test and exam questions, giving guidance and more to advance their students. Kyriacou (1987) also emphasizes that long-term stress can undermine mental and physical well-being as well as significantly undermine the teacher's career and student performance as stress affects teaching quality and commitment of teachers. This study can help to inform the level of stress experienced by teachers in Selangor especially in Petaling Utama district. The effectiveness of an education depends on the main driver of the system, namely teachers. Teacher's performance and commitment are important for a teacher to help the nation in achieving success.

Stress Among Teachers

The issue of stress among teachers has gained considerable attention and began to be studied as early as the 1970s to this day (for example: Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978; Chaplain, 1995; McCormick, 1997; Lau, 2002; Lemaire,2009; Abdullah Ismail, 2010; Ages, 2011). Among them are the study by Van Dick and Wagner (2001) who find that the load factor work is a major contributor to teacher stress. Their study also shows that the stress experienced by teachers will have a negative impact not only in terms of physiology such as high

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blood pressure, but also affects the behaviour of teachers. It was also found by Tang and Yeung (1999) and Lau (2002) in Hong Kong's high school studies that the burden of duty has caused teachers to invite stress. This phenomenon is also supported in Kokkinos (2007) and Kumarakulasingam (2002).

Montgomery and Rupp (2005) conducted a meta-analysis on 65 studies related to teacher stress from 1998 to 2003 to identify the various causes that cause teachers to become stressed. The findings show that three external stress factors moderately influence stress among teachers. These factors are student behaviour, workload or job demands, and support from colleagues. Kyriacou and Chien (2004) in their study of primary school teachers in Taiwan also found that 48 percent of respondents were at moderate stress levels. Similar findings were obtained from the study of Klassen and Chiu (2010) on primary and secondary school teachers in Canada. The factors of workload and poor attitude were also found to be the dominant factors affecting teachers' stress. Compared to the Chaplain study, Klassen and Chiu reported with detail that the level of stress of a female teacher is much higher than that of a man but it is only for the factors of workload and the ability of the student alone. Based on the literature emphasized above, it is pure that there are numerous reasons that cause teachers to feel stressed, among them are workload factors, student abilities and relationships with colleagues. As teachers are an important asset needed by the state, they need to be addressed especially in the face of stress. With the stress among teachers, it will have an impact on teachers in making commitments in carrying out their duties and responsibilities at school.

The Relationship of Depersonalization and Stress among Teachers

The concept of depersonalisation emphasises the individual that remains comparatively fine after facing high quantities of traumatic lifecycle events. Individuals who contribute a high mark of stress without falling ill have a character structure differentiating them from individuals who become sick under stress (Kobasa, 1979). This character change is greatest characterized by the term "personalize" that reflects the individual's response or concern to life events which influence the way of dealing with stress. Depersonalisation is a particular type of dissociation involving a disrupted integration of self-perceptions with the sense of self, so that individuals experiencing depersonalisation are in a subjective state of feeling estranged, detached or disconnected from their own being (Daphne Simeon, 2004). Some teachers may avoid some work because they think it was not under their job scope, for example the process of data entry as well as uploading students' marks on the university online system was seen as troublesome (Kusyairi, 2010). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that,

H1: There is a positive relationship between depersonalisation and stress among teachers.

The Relationship of workload and Stress among Teachers

Occupational Stress (OS) is the employee's response when facing work stresses and burdens not matched to their resources, needs, skills and information, and overwhelmed their capability to succeed (Desouky and Allam, 2017). Committed teachers always want to finish the syllabus prior to the schedule organized by school and sometimes they do not have enough time (Norhayati, 2012). Teachers also tend to get headaches with several organizational responsibilities that have become repetitive of their work, such as filling in forms, collecting fees, bringing up-to-date student entrances, preparing performance reports, preparing quiz and exam questions, providing direction and more to advance their students (Kelly, 2011).

Kyriacou (1987) also emphasizes that long-term stress can undermine mental

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and physical well-being as well as significantly undermine the teacher's career and student performance as stress affects the teaching quality and commitment of teachers. The current research discloses that accountability for pupils to be successful in examinations and able to act like standard students was the chief workload that underwrote teachers' stress. This is shadowed by managerial work, presence training, managing stock and catalogue, and too many tasks in one time (Mohd Ghani, 2014). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that,

H2: There is a positive relationship between workload and stress level among teachers.

The Relationship of Interpersonal Relationship between Colleagues and Stress among Teachers

Investigation of this research exposes that the greatest important stress influence for interpersonal relationships is "getting blurred instruction and orders from the managerial", shadowed by observation by education officers and absence of colleagues' collaboration in accompanying an action specifically from a regular education instructor (Mohd Ghani, 2014). There are, however, insufficient studies that have been presented on pressure interferences and their efficiency among teachers (Wiley and Sons, 2006). Work stress among colleagues is common but will be problematic in the future and may lead to episodes of depression in two groups on management and administration (Lewinsohn, Rohde, Klein, & Seeley, 2010; Pine, Cohen, Gurley, Brook, & Ma, 2010; Rao, Hammen, & Daley, 1999; Weissman et al., 2011). Among other causes of conflict include misunderstanding, personal problems such as spousal relationships, financial problems and recognizing colleagues' effort despite having long working experience in a team (Cramer, 2011). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that,

H3: There is a negative relationship between interpersonal relationships between colleagues and stress level among teachers.

The Relationship of Working Environment and Stress among Teachers

One of the sources of labour pressure is the unhealthy and safe working conditions (Toscanor & Weber, 2009). This factor is due to incomplete work instructions and unspoken safety instructions, unregulated regulations, inherent hazards are not well controlled, lack of interaction between management and unprotected protection devices (Bulatao & VandenBos, 2011). Working in locked and unfriendly organizational environment manifest undesirable reactions and moods on the part of the teachers and students, these including disappointment, psychosomatic burden, shirking, insignificance, and finally job alienation leading to occupational stress which can be named the catastrophe of the contemporary era (Ahghar, 2008). Stress that is bright to decrease teacher's motivation can have harmful effects such as alienation from the school, absenteeism, and attrition. In fact, when superior education teachers are harshly harassed by the uncontrollability of their job, they are more likely to leave the special education classroom (Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 2013). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that,

H4: There is a negative relationship between workload and stress level among teachers.

Methodology

The research strategy of this research adopted survey research where the instrument used for this research would be a questionnaire. By distributing the questionnaire, the data gained are less time consuming compared to other methods. Other than that, this method would give the researcher accurate data from the respondent. The process of distributing the questionnaire is done within 10 days. First of all, the researcher will contact the administration for each of the chosen schools. The questionnaire will be given to

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administration at each school and they will give it to teachers in that particular school to answer the questionnaire. They are given 14 days to complete the questionnaire without any pressure from the researcher. If the total of questionnaires that the researcher received back from the representative of the class is not tallied for the first time, the researchers will give another set of questionnaires and collect them back within 3 days. The researcher also uses a simple word to make it easy for the respondent to answer all the questions. The content of the questionnaire is also not subjective to a specific respondent as the topic and items of the questionnaire are understandable by all respondents. The researcher would use a personal administered questionnaire through drop and collect method. For this research, the variables proposed to measure are adopted from the past research that has been conducted by the past researchers. The independent variable that is being measured is depersonalization, workload, interpersonal relationship among colleagues and working environment adopted from Yahaya & Ismail (2014).

Findings and Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, in terms of demographic profile, the respondents are mostly female (85.9%) equivalent to 305 of them. And the rest of the respondents are male (14.1%) equivalent to 50 of them. Most of the respondents have been working up to 3-4 years (45.4%) equivalent to 161 of them. The second highest are up to 1-2 years of work (45.4%) equivalent to 159 of them. Lastly followed by those who are working more than 4 years (9.9%) equivalent to 35 of them. The respondents' salary is less than or equal to RM 4000.00 (65.6%) equivalent to 233 of them. The second highest salary is less than or equal to RM 3000.00 (24.5%) equivalent to 87 of them. Lastly followed by those whose salary is more than RM 4 000.00 (9.9%) equivalent to 35 of them. The majority of the respondents are teaching elective subjects (55.2%) equivalent to 196 of them. And the rest of the respondents are teaching core subjects (44.8%) equivalent to 159 of them.

Correlation

Table below showed that there is a significant positive high correlation between workloads and stress (r=0.755, p=0.00, p<0.05). Therefore, it illustrates that the higher the workloads the higher the stress. Table 1 showed that there is a significant positive high correlation between relationships between colleagues and stress (r=0.812, p=0.00, p<0.05). Therefore, it illustrates that the higher the relationship between colleagues the higher the stress. The result highlighted that there is a significant negative almost negligible correlation between the relationship between the working environment and stress (r=-0.195, p=0.00, p<0.05), indicating that a positive working environment reduces the level of stress.

Table 1: Correlation and Cronbach Alpha Table

Variables	Workload	Depersonalization	Relationship	Work environment	Stress
Workload	(0.669)				
Depersonalization	0.362**	(0.618)			
Relationship	0.694**	0.646**	(0.660)		
Work Environment	-0.175**	-0.174	(0.035)	(0.638)	
Stress	0.755**	0.786**	0.812**	-0.195	(o.636)

*Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); Entries in parenthesis indicate Cronbach Alpha values.*

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The alpha coefficient for the 15 items for depersonalisation independent variable has questionable correlation. It shows the value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.618 (62%). It indicates that the items for depersonalisation's questionnaire can be used for future research for different samples. The alpha coefficient for the 11 items for workloads independent variable has questionable correlation. It shows the value of Cronbach's Alpha is questionable 0.569 (57%). It indicates that the items for workloads questionnaire can be used for future research for different samples. The alpha coefficient for the 9 items for interpersonal relationship between colleagues' independent variables has questionable correlation. It shows the value of Cronbach's Alpha is questionable 0.660 (66%). It indicates that the items for

interpersonal relationship between colleagues' questionnaires can be used for future research for different samples. The alpha coefficient for the 17 items for working environment independent variables has unacceptable correlation. It shows the value of Cronbach's Alpha is questionable 0.038 (4%). It indicates that the items for the working environment questionnaire can't be used for the future research.

All the four independent variables (Depersonalisation, Workloads, Relationship between Colleagues and Working Environment) together explain 88% (R^2=0.883) of the variance Stress. It is highly significant, as indicated by F-value of 658.745 (f>1) as shown in the table. It indicates that the remaining 12% was influenced by other variables.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-41.388	3.985		-10.386	.000
	Total Workloads	.637	.040	.437	16.002	.000
	Total Depersonalisation	1.215	.062	.501	19.545	.000
	Total Relationship Between Colleagues	.588	.106	.187	5.544	.000
	Total Working Environment	-.159	.084	-.038	-1.894	.059

a. Dependent Variable: Total Stress

Based on the coefficients table, depersonalisation is proven to be the highest variable that influences stress (β=1.125, p=0.000, p<0.05) where 50% of depersonalisation influences stress. This indicates the higher the depersonalisation, the higher the stress. This is followed by workloads (β=0.637, p=0.000, p<0.05) where 44% of workloads influence stress. This indicates the higher the workloads, the higher the intention to stress. Next followed by relationships between colleagues (β=0.588, p=0.000, p<0.05) where 19% of relationships between colleagues influence stress. However, the working

environment was found not significant with 4% (β=-0.159, p=0.059, p>0.05). This indicates the higher the working environment, the lower the intention to stress.

Collin (2012) stated that there is a positive relationship between depersonalisation and stress which means the higher the depersonalisation the higher the stress. People who are facing depersonalisation need to be more energetic, try to be involved in sport and get more new friends (Billy, 2013). It tends to make them feel more relaxed and peaceful (Gabriel, 2003). Therefore hypothesis 1 is supported.

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Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between workloads and stress. This is supported by Munir, (2010). The higher the workloads the higher the stress among teachers. Teachers often are burdened with administration work such as collecting fee bills, registering students' names and conducting orientation day for students (Kelly, 2013).

Hui Ling Ling (2011) stated that there is a positive relationship between interpersonal relationships between colleagues and stress. The higher the interpersonal relationship between colleagues the higher the stress. Hypothesis 3 is supported.

For hypothesis 4, Rubbin (2007) stated that the higher the working environment the higher the stress. It happened, as an example, for those who work in teaching profession including lecturers, and nursery and kindergarten, even though the environment is clean and peaceful but they need to work on Saturdays and sometimes may lead to half day on weekend (Rubbin, 2007). However, according to Kelly (2009), the relationship sometimes can be positive and negative, it depends on who your respondents are.

Conclusion

Based on the objective of the research which is to determine the relationship between depersonalisation, workloads, relationship between colleagues, working environment, four hypotheses were developed in order to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. To conclude the finding, all the hypotheses were accepted.

Overall, the results of this study have achieved its objective of responding to the study questions based on the variables studied. The findings show that teachers from 15 secondary schools in Petaling Utama district experience stress at a moderate level. The findings show that the factors that cause stress among secondary school teachers in Petaling Utama district are depersonalisation, workloads, relationship between colleagues and working environment. The importance of paying attention to these factors is seen in terms of their impact on students, teachers, and schools. Improving the positive relationship between teachers and parents is not only beneficial for both parties, but also for the excellence of the school. It is also important for appreciation and support factors, especially from the administration that can be further enhanced to create a harmonious atmosphere in the school.

School administrators should play a key role in reducing the stress of teachers. Principals, professors or administrators need to first establish a healthy and harmonious school environment by ensuring a good relationship between the administration and the teachers without any conflicts. The management style of headmasters and school principals also greatly influences the relationship with their subordinates, especially teachers. Headmasters should not only use one management style, such as collaborative or collaborative management styles but can diversify them according to the appropriate situation. The other way to treat depersonalisation is that the counsellor at school may conduct one day for teachers to do stress tests, teach them how to handle stress, how to measure stress and knowing in depth the causal effect of stress. Teachers who have a depersonalisation effect also can do some vacation or get outdoor activities such as jogging, joining music class and trying to get involved in corporate social responsibility events. They also need to talk, try to be an extroverted person, join any indoor or outdoor club and be a president for any society or do something that doesn't make them feel lonely.

As for future research, it is recommended that longitudinal study be used along with observations of the same subject over a period of time. Therefore, the objectives can be reached within time. Although it

would take more time and effort and cost more rather than doing cross-sectional studies, however, a well-planned longitudinal study will help researchers to identify causes and effect relationships for studies. As to measuring the effect of stress, researchers can detect developments or change in the characteristics of the target population at both group and individual levels.

Acknowledgement

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