

Occupational Stress Among School Teachers In Jordan

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Abstract

Occupational stress is the reaction to work stress and pressures that are not harmonized to the knowledge and skills of an individual/worker and which challenges his ability to manage. This research was conducted to assess occupational stress among teacher in Jordan; identify sources of stress; and suggest possible strategy to reduce stress levels thereby help teachers cope with work related stress. The research used a cross-sectional survey design with a sample of 280 teachers. Descriptive statistics of percentage and bar charts was used in presenting the data for the study. The result obtained revealed that most of the Jordan teachers experience work-related stress. The result also showed that poor working condition is the highest contributing factor to occupational stress among Jordan teachers, followed by Personal Factors, Employment Factors, Lack of Support and Student Factor in that order. As solutions, conducive working environment should be provided for teachers; teachers empowered; students motivated by the government/societ; and the cultivation of a healthy interpersonal relationship amongst teachers.

Keywords: *stress, occupational stress, teachers, Jordan Hashemite kingdom*

INTRODUCTION

Stress refers to a feeling of physical or emotional tension which may result from thought or activities that cause frustration, anger, or fear. Stress is simply the body's non-specific response to any demand made on it. It is the body's reaction to a challenge or demand. There are many definitions of work stress. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined occupational or work –related stress “as the response with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope.” Health and Safety Executives (HSEs) official definition of work related stress is: “The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work. Stress can be beneficial, for instance when it helps meet a deadline. But when stress accumulates over a long period in large magnitude to the extent that an individual cannot control or cope with, it may have negative effects on the health and general well-being of a person (Di Martino, 2003). Such effects may include physical or psychological illness and exhaustion, heart attack and accident. The entire human life today is characterized by stress emanating from the ever increasing needs and aspirations, tough competition, pressure of meeting deadlines, uncertainty of future and weakened social support.

According to (Kyriacou, 2001), ‘an occupational stress is any force that pushes a psychological or physical factor behind its range of stability, producing a strain within the individuals. Stress in teaching is an ongoing issue of concern for those involved in education. Teacher stress is defined as experiences in teachers, of unpleasant, negative emotions such as anger, frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness, resulting from some aspect of their work as teachers’. Work stress is believed to be one of the most important factors affecting productivity.

Teaching is an important and prestigious occupation. Teachers are thought to be makers of leaders, scientists, philosophers, advocates, politicians and administrators. Teaching is the principle means by

which all educational programs of the organizations of educations are implemented. The teacher must be clearly aware of his role in nation building. Teacher stress is defined as experiences in teachers, of unpleasant, negative emotions such as anger, frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness, resulting from some aspect of their work as teachers (Kyriacou, 2001). Stress has been on the increase in the teaching profession owing to the rising complexities of the occupation and increased economic pressure on teachers. One of the major sources of stress among teachers is result of failure of school to meet the social needs and jobs demands of the teachers. Teachers are over burdened with regular teaching load.

Aim of study: This study aims to explore occupational stress among teachers in Jordan; identify sources of stress; and suggest possible strategy to reduce stress levels and help teachers cope with work related stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Occupational Stress

According to Robbins (2005), occupational stress is an increasing problem in organizations. (Nagra and Punjab, 2013) defined occupational stress as mental state of an individual which faces a pressure or any constraint in the organization which he or she feels is threatening to her or himself. Robbins, Coulter., & Woods (2013) define professional stress as “an adverse reaction of employees, the result of the extraordinary demands, opportunities, and constraints at workplace”. Robbins and Judge (2012) stated that “Stress is an unpleasant psychological process that occurs in response to environmental pressures”. Al-khasawneh & Futa (2013) revealed that occupation is a major stress factor along with other factors including organizational climate, economic factors and competition among peers. According to Pithers (1995), the teaching profession is comparatively one of the most stressful jobs. Wilson (2002) stated that there has been an increase in the number of teachers who report stress. Othman and Hussein (2018) remarked that nurses and teachers are the groups that are studied most often when it comes to work-related stress. A study conducted by ElOmari and Freihat (2011) revealed that there is a high level of stress among English teachers in Jordan. Mrozek (2005) states that recent research has revealed that one in every three teachers report teaching as being very or extremely stressful. Aydogan *et al.* (2009) carried out a research to investigate perceived stress levels among Turkish teachers, the study showed that stress is a common problem among Turkish teachers irrespective of the country where they teach.

Ghaleb and Mohammad (2014) gave a comprehensive list of the factors that contributes to occupational stress as follows: 1. Employment factors: economic status, poor salaries, job related problems, and certification issues; Working conditions factors: job assignments, caseload, job stress, heavy paperwork, lack of empowerment, and poor school climate; Personal factors: social related factors, family factors, lifestyle, and moving to a different location; Lack of support factors: lack of collegial, school administration, and district support; lack of proper professional staff development; Students’ factors: poor students motivation.

Kyriacou (2001) listed lack of motivation among students, maintaining orderliness among the students, general time management, workload demands, exposure to a large amount of change, being evaluated by others, relationships with colleagues, job insecurity, management, unsatisfactory working conditions, ambiguity of the teacher’s role, poor relationships with colleagues, administrators, administration and poor working conditions as the main sources of teacher stress. Berhem *et al.* (2004) in their study on ‘A New Model for Work Stress Patterns’ opined that role ambiguity is the main source of work stress and suggested self-knowledge as the main coping strategy to overcome work stress.

Stages of Occupational Stress

(Mohamed, 2018) identified three different stages of stress to include alarm stage, resistance stage and exhaustion stage.

1. The alarm stage: this is the stage where an individual is jolted by an external stress, insisting on an issue that must be taken care of. It may assist the individual to think of such moment as the defense via personal experience. If this reaction is adequate, the body will return to its resting state having dealt with the source of pressure successfully. (Bauer & Erdogan, 2009).

2. The resistance stage: This stage starts with progressive increase in stress and high degree of pressure and anxiety. The resistance may however lead to several negative phenomena like urgent decision making and the events of clashes or dangerous conflicts. The resistance can also result in advent of many positions and demands that result from the control of the persons and the organization in a way that cause collapse of resistance and the advent of series of negative problems and symptoms (Moorhead & Griffin, 2012).

3. The exhaustion stage. If occupational stress progresses, the body eventually lost its adaptability and this gives rise to the state of overloading (Stranks, 2005).

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Al Mamlakah al Urduniyah al Hashimiyah) is the official name for the country of "Jordan (Al Urdun)". Jordan is among the small, developing countries (of Arab) which lie in the Middle East. It is distinct from most of its neighbors, as it has no considerable oil resources of its own thus greatly rely on the importation of oil to carry out its domestic energy needs (Library of Congress, 2006). "Jordan had one of the highest literacy rates in world at about 97.9% in 2012, which increased to 98.01% in 2015, and is expected to reach almost 100% by 2020".

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Method of the Study

In other to achieve the set objectives, the investigator explored the occupational stress among teachers working at secondary schools. A survey method was used for this study. The investigator then administered a self developed questionnaire on occupational stress.

Sample Size: 280 questionnaires were administered, 274 were duly filled and completed while 6 of them were not, the study worked with the valid 274 duly filled questionnaires. The teachers are selected randomly from various schools Thus they become our representative sample in Jordan.

Data Analysis: The collected were screened, collated and used to develop a frequency distribution table for analysis. Descriptive statistics of percentage and bar charts was used in presenting the data for the study

Sampling Techniques: A simple random sampling was used for this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A total of two hundred and eighty (280) questionnaires were administered; two hundred and seventy-four, 274 (97.9%) of them were properly completed and returned while remaining 6 (2.1%) of the questionnaires were neither not properly completed nor returned. Table 1 show the demography of the respondents of the 274 (97.9%) questionnaires.

	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	114	41.6
	Female	160	58.4
Age (Years)	Under 25	36	13.1
	26 - 34	142	51.8
	35 - 44	76	27.7
	45 and above	20	7.3
Marital Status	Single	96	35.0
	Married	178	65.0
No. of Children	None	15	8.43%
	1 – 2	50	28.1
	3 – 5	64	36.0
	Over 5	49	27.5
Years of Experience	< 5	93	33.9
	6 – 10	84	30.7
	11 – 16	71	25.9
	> 16	26	9.5
Teacher's Qualification	Bachelor	159	58.0
	High Diploma in Education	71	25.9
	Master Degree	44	16.1

Table 1: Demography of the Respondents

Level of Stress	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at all stressful	22	8.0
Mildly stressful	61	22.3
Moderately stressful	74	27.0
Very stressful	79	28.8

Extremely stressful	38	13.9
Total	274	100.0

Table 2 : Level of Occupational Stress Among Secondary School Teachers

Most of the respondents amounting to 28.8% (79) reported that the level of stress among teachers is very stressful; followed by 27% of them who reported the level of stress as moderate. 22.3% of the respondents claimed the teaching profession is mildly stressful. 13.9% are of the opinion that teaching is extremely stressful while 8% (22) of the respondents claimed teaching should not be a big deal as it is not all stressful. From the result, most of the respondents acknowledge that there is indeed occupational stress among teachers.

Source of Occupational Stress	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employment Factors	55	20.1
Poor Working Conditions	71	25.9
Personal Factors	63	23.0
Lack of Support	46	16.8
Student Factor	39	14.2

Table 2 : Source of Occupational Stress in Jordan

From the table above 55 (20.1%) of the respondent reported employment factors being major source of stress. This can be economic status related, poor salaries, certification issues or job related problem. Most of the respondents, 71 (25.9%) blamed poor working conditions related factors for the stress in their job. The poor work conditions as a result of heavy paper work, inadequate empowerment programmes for teachers, higher workloads and poor school environment 23% (63) of the respondents reported personal factors such as stress from family, lifestyle, social related stress, or getting to change location as a major source of stress among school teachers. 16.8% owe occupational stress to lack of support either from district or school administration and inadequate professional staff development. Only a handful of the respondents (14.2%) do see poor students' motivation as a source of stress for teachers.

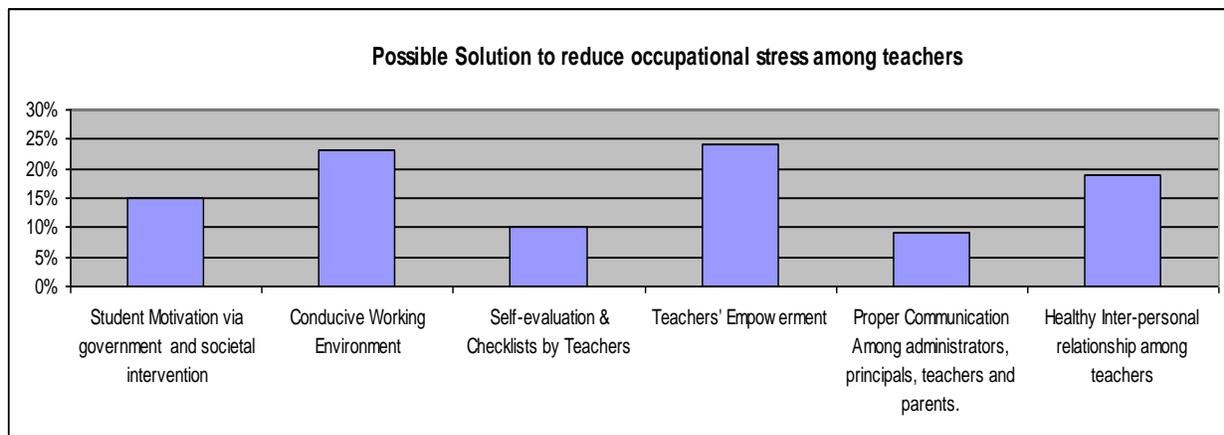


Figure 1: Solutions to reduce occupation stress among teachers

Of the possible solution proffered, most (66 or 24.1%) of the respondents strongly believe that occupational stress among teachers can be checked by the empowerment of teachers in Jordan. This should also in a long be seen in the wages of teachers whose grievances paint a familiar picture of the struggling working class in Jordan. This is followed by 63 (23%) of teachers who responded that a conducive working environment would go a long way in reducing if not eliminating the stress among teachers in the country. 52 (19%) of the respondents are of the opinion that an healthy interpersonal relationship among teachers would pacify the perceived occupation stress among Jordanian teachers. 27 (10%) of the respondents admit that self-evaluation and checklist by teachers is a possible solution to occupational stress; while 25 (9%) of the respondents see proper communication among administrators, principals, teachers and parents as a means of curbing occupational stress among the teachers.

CONCLUSION

Occupational stress among teaches is a widespread phenomenon among Jordan teachers. Its effects can be damaging and counterproductive if not properly managed. It can lead to tremendous health issues among teacher and result to ill bred student which will eventually give rise to a stagnant and unproductive nation. It is a critical problem that requires more attention from decision makers including governments and relevant non-governmental parastatal. With the findings of this study, it is recommended that further research should be carried out to probe into teaching methods that can ease stress among Jordan teachers, techniques and activities that can promote positive motivation among students and ways to fashion good interpersonal relationship among teachers.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made to reduce stress and help teachers cope with work related stress:

1. Better guidelines and procedure for practice should be put in place to help teachers perform their duties in a better organized and effective way.
2. Educational work should be developed in line with latest technological advancement
3. Individual needs of teachers should be carefully identified and provided.
4. Proper communication, collaboration and partnership should be gender among administrators, principals, teachers and parents.
5. Teachers should employ self-evaluation methodology and checklist.
6. Seminars, lectures and conferences should be organized at regular intervals to train and update teachers with latest advancement in educational policies.
7. A conducive working environment especially classrooms and staff quarters should be provided for teachers.
8. Good interpersonal relationship should be promoted among teachers.
9. Government and the entire society should implement initiatives that will motivate student to learn and also promote discipline among students.

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