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Jollie Alson

University of Perpetual Help System DALTA

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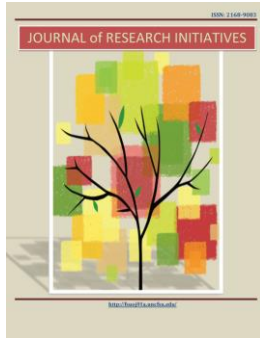
Stress Among Public School Teachers

About the Author(s)

Dr. Jollie N. Alson is the Director of Research and Development Center at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA, in Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines. He is active in quality assurance in the private non-sectarian higher education institutions, a graduate school professorial lecturer who specializes in moral philosophy, leadership and management.

Keywords

Stressors, Public School Teachers, Cause of Stress, coping-up mechanisms



STRESS AMONG PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

Jollie Alson, University of Perpetual Help System DALTA
Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines

Abstract

The study measured different stressors experienced by teachers in a public national high school and their coping mechanisms. The study is anchored on the Person-Environment Fit or Mis-fit Model (PEFM) (Astroff & Yunjie, 2011; Caplan, 1987) and the Conceptualization of Emotions in coping with stress (Lazarus, 2005). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the work-related, emotional and personal stressors and coping mechanisms of teachers. Teachers experienced stress that was brought on by hazardous working conditions, a lack of materials and resources to do their tasks effectively. There was a feeling of excessive monitoring and demands for outputs from the administration. This was sometimes compounded by conflicting instructions. Personal stress was usually triggered by simply being exhausted at the end of the day, sometimes overtly manifested through emotional outbursts. Although stress cuts-through gender and age barriers, everyone devised their own cognitive (thinking-centered) strategies to cope with stress.

Keywords: *Stressors, Public School Teachers, Cause of Stress, Coping-up Mechanisms*

Introduction

Everyone may feel stress when facing certain situations. This is either eustress when positive like facing challenges as spices of life, or distress when negative that may result in low morale, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and lower productivity. Environmental stressors are perceived to be a threat to survival. It is innate in the human body to respond to the negative demands of the environment. The economy is recognized worldwide and developed countries are spending a major part of their budget on education to combat elements that hinder processes of educational effectiveness. Teachers hold a vital position within the educational system of any country. Stress among them is a complex and multifarious phenomenon as they mold the most valued asset of the country. The success of educational institutions is the backbone of the economy is mostly dependent on teachers. Leaders and managers of educational institutions turn their critical and fundamental concerns on the performance of teachers. Stress is an embedded component in the lives of educators in the Philippines negatively affects their professional performance. This lowers individual and institutional productivity that deeply affect institutions of learning. The need for educational leaders and managers to focus on understanding work-related problems of teachers is an emerging urgency. Educational and civil society leaders must provide mutual support and work as a team to ensure sustainable growth of educational institutions for socio-economic development.

The ability of teachers deliver knowledge and skills to the students is affected by the learning environment, assigned tasks, and financial security which further define their levels of professional performance. Teachers are valued assets of any society, they do not only teach in ways that can satisfy the required teaching tasks, but also must manage time, ethics, and discipline. Motivating students, ensuring interaction and maintaining links with the parents and

administration while imparting knowledge and skills for the development of the economy (Hanif, 2010) is a delicate equilibrium that they must achieve.

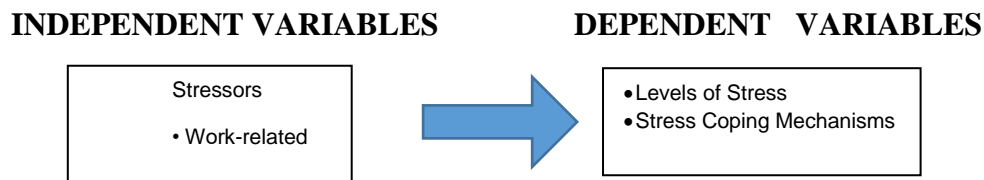
Recent educational changes have resulted in new challenges that shaped technological advancements, quality assurance, standardization and cost maximization in education. Educational leaders and academicians are under immense pressure to meet the expectations of internal and external stakeholders. Exposure of teachers to unnecessary stress hampers routine abilities decreased satisfaction and level of productivity that resulted in the development of feeling exhaustion and strain. When teachers are highly stressed, students have low social adjustments and academic performance overtly manifested in absenteeism, misbehavior, and dissatisfaction (Greenberg, MT *et al.*2016).

Stress experienced by secondary teachers and their coping mechanisms to lessen the impact on their professional performance is hereby closely looked at Kapayapaan National High School in the City of Calamba, province of Laguna in the Philippines. This school is missioned to provide unlimited access to quality and relevant education for the total development of every resident of the city in a technologically oriented and value-driven teaching-learning environments forging a partnership in realizing the vision of the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual approach is developed from a mosaic of theories for this specific study: The Person-Environment Fit or Mis-fit Model (PEFM) (Caplan, 1987, Astroff and Yunjie, 2011) and Conceptualization of Emotions in coping up with stress (Lazarus, 2005) define psychosocial stress in terms of fit (needs-supplies fit / abilities-demands fit and objective vs. subjective fit) between the person and the environment. Conceptualization of Emotions in coping up with stress considers work environments as stressful when it is evaluated as harmful, threatening, or challenging to the well-being of employees. Coping consists of cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and internal conflicts appraised as taxing and exceeding the resources of the person's coping efforts comprise two broad dimensions: problem-focused coping (action-centered), and cognitive coping strategies (thinking-focused) involving mainly cognition to change the person-environment relationship.

Figure 1 Research Paradigm



Methodology

The study used purposive sampling to gather data from teachers who have verbally indicated the stress they experienced in the workplace. It was conducted during their break time and in a jovial setting in the faculty room. Data were collected for one week from thirty-one females and eleven males of the Basic Education teachers. This comprised ninety-eight percent (98%) of teachers at Kapayapaan National High School, in the city of Calamba, province of Laguna in the Philippines. Work-related, personal and emotional stresses that affected their teaching performance were explored. Quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires using a four-level (4) scale and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Gathering of

qualitative data particularly on their coping up mechanisms were through in-depth interview approach. A constructivist philosophy was used to interpret the qualitative arranged to themes that surfaced during the in-depth interview.

Results

The school has existed for at least twenty-five years manned dominantly by married female and relatively young, sixty-nine point ten percent (69.10%) are below thirty-five years old. Negligible percentage despite being tenured is receiving below the mandated national salary standard for teachers. There is constant work for teachers, but many have not risen from the salary-ranks. This resulted to psychological burnout and has become a major source of stress for teachers who are overworked, low salary, low self-esteem, and low access to in-service training and new information (Bataineh & Alsagheer, 2009).

Over-all assessment on the sources of work-related stress is perceived to be moderately affecting their teaching performance. Organizational support appeared to be closely associated with job satisfaction among teachers. It is very notable that there exists a perceived hazardous working condition. This is confounded by a lack of resources to fulfill their tasks and conflicting instructions coming from informal sources. The teachers further averred that they experienced strict monitoring from their school administrators that manifested additional stress. High work-related stressors like time pressure, educational changes, administrative problems, educational system, professional distress, and students misbehavioral causes emotional burn-out among educators (Bulatevych, 2017). Teachers in this study, however, are satisfied with personal security and travel time to work attributable to less-urbanized environment. Everyone professed their high level of commitment and engagements to their vocation as teachers.

Personal source of stress emanates primarily from lack of financial security. Teachers perceived their salaries to be insufficient for their needs, despite the claim from the government agency that salaries of teachers is above the poverty level according to the survey of the Philippine Economic Index. Current legislation, however, is working to address this problem. Teachers work long hours in a relatively hot environment that eventually deprive them of quality time with their family. This is compounded when they are obligated to bring their work at home which eventually led to conflict with the working spouse. In the study of Ortega and Hechanova (2010) among dual-earning couples showed that work-related stress predicts work-family conflict. Unmarried teachers, however, appeared to be happy with the support from their family regarding their chosen careers despite bringing school-works at home. Many of them openly expressed their satisfaction being spared from household works by their parents and siblings. Work-related stress is correlated with job satisfaction and home-related stress is correlated with marital satisfaction. Personal and social supports among family members, co-workers, and friends moderate the relationship between home-related stress; while marital satisfaction has direct relationships with life and job satisfaction.

Teachers experienced moderate stress from emotional stressors. They sometimes felt being lethargic, anxious, worried, angry, annoyed and feeling emotionally drained at the end of the day. They experienced emotional outburst and low energy that lead to lack of sexual interest. This is triggered by overcrowded classrooms, less support from parents and overworked administrators. Younger teachers are fearful of the future that sometimes make their minds seem to go blank easily even at the workplace. Experienced teachers, however, felt lower levels of emotional stress (Fadia Nasser-Abu Alhija, 2014). They have strong abilities in letting go of certain things and develop a strong feeling that there are a lot of important things in this world that must be dealt with focus and enthusiasm.

Secondary school teachers experienced moderate levels of Work-related and Emotional Stressors while experiencing little on personal stressors. The feeling of being overworked under strict monitoring by school administrators and financial inadequacy affected their performance as professionals. They believed that organizational practices, financial adequacy and sense of emotional security are best predictors of job satisfaction and professional performance. It appears that age, gender, and civil status are weak moderating factors in determining the level of stress among teachers. There is a tendency that teachers who are above thirty-five years old, male and married are more prone to experience work-related, emotional, and personal stress. Growing family concerns in a patriarchal society and uncertainties brought about by aging with minimal annual salary increases compounded these stresses among them.

This study showed no strong difference that exists between the male and female teachers on the level of stress they experienced and in their choice of coping strategies, in contrast to the findings among secondary teachers in Ebonyi State, Nigeria (Nwimo and Onwunaka, 2015). Teachers regardless of gender used occasional eating-out together as bonding moments to discuss situations that interest them to cope with job strains. Although male teachers tend to cope with the dysfunctional environment by using humor and cracking jokes in the faculty room, while female teachers adopted a range of coping strategies and tend to assume a functional role with their families. Teachers believe that civil society leaders should work together with educational policy-makers of promoting modified workplaces and improve the cooperation between the Philippine Health Insurance (Philhealth) and professional health service providers. It is further averred that educational policy-makers should address suitable wage to match task-assignments so that stress experience in the workplace could be abated.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Teachers have enough maturity to handle stress. Despite experiencing stress in different levels there is no overt manifestation of adverse effects on the learning processes of students. Work environment which is perceived by teachers as hazardous is the main source of stress. Teachers have resulted in Cognitive Strategy (CS) by facing life with paradox and humor as the best way to cope with stress. It is therefore recommended that the institution should conduct regular sensitivity training and spiritual consultations with experts. A regular and periodic self-evaluation to reduce the feeling of rage and negative emotions may take a prominent space in the creation of a Psycho-Social Program (PSP) with provisions on recognitions and incentives.

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