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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**STRESS FACED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHERS IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
THE BAYAN LEPAS/BALIK PULAU DISTRICT OF
PENANG**

BY

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THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

Before it moves, hold it

Before it goes wrong, mold it

Drain off water in winter before it freezes

Before wheat grow, sow them to the breeze

You can deal with what has not happened, can foresee

Harmful events and not allow them to be.

(Chinese Proverb)

Something that needs immediate attention

Teachers suffer from this tension

Regardless of the level of education

Every teacher needs attention

Stress can be a lot of agitation

Simply left it destroys, checked it provides satisfaction.

By JSS

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to examine the sources of stress among English Language teachers in rural secondary schools. For the purpose of this study, 69 English Language teachers from seven secondary schools in the Bayan Lepas/Balik Pulau district of Penang were chosen. The respondents completed a 40-items modified version of the Teacher Stress Inventory/Measures.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that stress among English Language teachers is significantly related to role conflict, role ambiguity, poor students' performance and attitude towards English Language, changes in the English curriculum, dissatisfaction of teachers towards the appraisal and pay system, uncompromising head teacher, peers relationship and working environment.

Finally, among the demographic variables, gender, marital status and years of teaching experience, do not have any significant influence in determining the degree of teacher stress. However, regarding academic qualification, non-graduate teachers were found to be more stressed than graduate teachers. As for the correlation between the older and younger teachers, it was found that older teachers experienced more stress than younger teachers did.

Basically, the final outcome of the research does concur with the fact that English Language teachers do experience stress in their vocation because of the factors that have been outlined in this project paper.


APPROVAL PAGE

TITLE OF PROJECT PAPER: STRESS FACED BY THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAYAN LEPAS/BALIK PULAU DISTRICT, PENANG.

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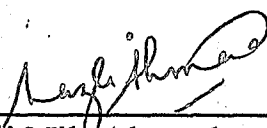
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project paper is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. Reference notes acknowledge other sources and a bibliography is appended.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the Problem

The primary focus of this research is to investigate the stress faced by the English language teachers in rural secondary schools. This study is deemed to be essential as stress among teachers has become a matter of increasing concern. Teachers today are continually charged with new responsibilities as a response to the changing world outside the school. Changes in the society at large require corresponding change within the school if the latter is to be responsive to society's ever changing needs. Teachers faced with competing expectations from the government and school systems, unions, parents and the media, have frequently been found to display symptoms of occupational stress. Such stress has been described as arising "when discrepancies exist between occupational demands and opportunities on the one hand and worker capacities, needs, and expectation on the other" (New South Wales Teacher Federation 1988).

Stress occurs when there is "a perceived excess of environmental demands over an individual's perceived capability to meet them and when failure to meet this demands has important perceived consequences" (McGrath 1970).

In 1995, at least 10 incidents involving teachers were reported in the media. This includes a student who was slapped and punched by his teacher. The boy had badly hurt

his shoulder and head as well as suffering a severe headache and body pain (Berita Harian, 26 July 1995). There was a report whereby fifteen students were hospitalized after being hit by their mathematics teacher for obtaining a weak mathematics grade (Utusan Malaysia, 17 September 1995).

This phenomena shows that there is definitely something wrong with these teachers. Are they having stress? Well, considering what Humphery and Humphrey (1986) reported that there are possibilities that the teachers' profession has the highest risk of violence due to stress. Therefore this project paper would investigate and determine the level of stress that occurs among English Language teachers specifically from rural schools.

Furthermore, recent changes in the English curriculum is making this very likely because of the fact that teachers are required to meet the demands stemming from curriculum changes that will ultimately emerge as a major cause of stress in schools. Dr. Hannah Pillay, an English lecturer from the Specialist Teachers' Training College says English Language teachers generally encounter problems teaching the language under the '*Kurrikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah*,' that is "Teachers have problems with a syllabus which attempt to integrate skills and grammar using the topic as medium. Teachers find it confusing to interpret the syllabus, thus they have difficulty integrating skills into lessons."

There is little doubt that teaching in schools is one of the most stressful professions, and the nature of the demands made on teachers in their work especially English Language teachers means that this is likely to remain a stressful profession for many years to come. Occupational stress level among teachers appear to be high in comparison with managers in industrial organizations and various other types of white collar workers (Kyriacou 1980).

Furthermore, teacher stress is also a problem in schools because of its effect on job performance. This can include teacher absence, taken to avoid stress or resulting from stress-precipitated ill health, a lowered level of job satisfaction and commitment and even an impaired quality of classroom teaching.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study will investigate whether stress does exist among English Language teachers in rural schools in the district of Bayan Lepas/Balik Pulau in Penang Island. Furthermore, the study will specifically attempt to evaluate different factors which contribute to increased stress among English Language teachers as well as suggest and recommend certain ways to help stressed teachers to cope and minimize the effects of stress within their working environment.

1.3 Research Questions

This study will attempt to provide answers to the following questions:

- a. Is there a correlation between gender, age, level of education, teaching experience, area of specialization, and marital status and work stress?
- b. Is there a correlation between role conflict and role ambiguity and work stress?
- c. Is there a correlation between students' characteristics with work stress?
- d. Is there a correlation between rewards and recognition and work stress?
- e. Is there a correlation between curriculum demand and work stress?
- f. Is there a correlation between uncompromising heads and peers and work stress?
- g. Is there a correlation between work environment and work stress?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research study has a number of significant implications. Firstly, it has important implications for school administration. Added to this, a high quality teaching service requires a managerial system that makes it easy for personnel to do a good job, rather than one which places unreasonable demands on workers regardless of their capacities, needs and expectations. Therefore, principals should develop strategies to prevent staff stress through staff development activities, such as having a discussion/forum concerning approaches in teaching weak and non-speaking English students. Added to that, principals should identify stressed teachers and take steps to reduce stress in that individual by providing a supportive atmosphere.

Furthermore, this study is aimed to help people involved with initial and in-service courses for teacher training, to recognize problems and causes of stress among teachers and help prepare these teachers to overcome such problems that they are likely to face, thus providing them with effective possible ways of solving these problems so that teachers are able to function effectively in their noble job.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

This study will be confined to respondents who are secondary school English Language teachers, from seven rural secondary schools located in Penang Island.

The findings of this study will be limited in generalizability to the rural secondary school teacher in the district of Bayan Lepas/Balik Pulau only. As such the results may not be representatives of all rural secondary schools in Penang.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter discusses the context of the problem, research objectives, research questions, research hypotheses, the significance of the study and the delimitation of the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the related literature review whereby the definition of stress, previous studies on stress, sources of stress, and effects of stress are also discussed.

Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology whereby the population and sample, the data collection techniques, the survey instrument, and the data analysis technique are also discussed in detail.

Chapter 4 deals with the data analysis whereby respondents' characteristics and the eight stressors are examined and the hypotheses tested.

Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and the implications of the study whereby some suggestions, limitations, and future research directions in the area of stress are also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The chapter will look at the various definition of stress, followed by the three-stage theory of stress so as to substantiate the researcher's claim and study about stressed teachers and its effects among teachers.

2.1 Definition of Stress

Kyriacou (1987) defined teacher stress as:

"The experience by a teacher of unpleasant emotions, such as tension, frustration, anxiety, anger and depression, resulting from aspects of his work as a teacher."

Stress occurs when the demands exceed the resources or when there are a discrepancy between the teacher's capacities, needs, and expectations on the one hand, and the occupational demands and opportunities on the other. Thus, the experience of stress occurs when aspects of one's work or life situation are perceived as frustrating, worrying, excessively or insufficiently demanding, or threatening to one's security confidence or desired self-image (Otto 1986). Whether or not stress will result in ill health depends on the duration and intensity of the perceived stress and the available coping resources. Ivancevich and Matteson (1990) define stress as "the interaction of the individual with the environment. Stress is an important result between the job and the individual." Beehr and Newman (1978) define job stress as "a condition arising from the

interaction of people and their job and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning."

Stress is normally thought of in negative terms and can be extremely unpleasant and destructive when it is caused by something bad, such as reprimanded by a superior for poor work performance. This is a form of distress. Furthermore, stress can also be extremely pleasant and exciting when it is caused by something good. This is a form of eustress, coming from the Greek, eu, which means 'good'.

2.2 A Three Stage Theory of Stress

It is difficult to isolate a single factor as the sole cause of stress (Numerof 1983). Dr. Hans Seyle has been credited for his pioneering research on stress. In his book, 'Stress without Distress' (1974), Seyle conceptualized the psychological and physiological components. It is important to note that stress is neither anxiety nor nervous tension. Anxiety is purely psychological while nervous tension is purely physiological.

Seyle considered stress as a non-specific response to any demand on an organism. He developed a three-stage theory of stress called General Adaptation Syndrome (G.A.S) which include:

2.2.1 Alarm Stage

This is the immediate response to a challenge or threat. Mobilisation of the automatic nervous system triggers the stress response ('fight or flight' response). On first exposure to the stressor, the body tries to avoid or contain this stimulus by strengthening itself with hormones, and with co-ordinated changes in the central nervous system. This is a dangerous phase when the body's resistance is diminished.

2.2.2 Resistance Stage

The alarm reaction cannot be maintained indefinitely, and longer exposure to stressors causes people to reach the resistance stage. Bodily signs of the alarm virtually disappear. If the exposure to the stressor continues and the body is able to adapt to it, resistance ensues and rises above normal. Specific bodily signs are stimulated to contain the effect of the stressor.

Furthermore, coping mechanism may be adequate or inadequate. People tend to prefer short-term relief to long term solutions and try to escape uncomfortable situations with quick remedy. Unfortunately, most easy, short-term measures are inadequate because they usually lead to secondary problems such as long term reduction in performance. Therefore, people need help to identify measures that can lead to long term benefit.

2.2.3 Exhaustion Stage

The stress response is healthy in origin and is necessary to keep a person motivated and adaptable. It is when the demands on the body and the mind are too high or cannot be met in an appropriate way that the person becomes "distressed." After prolonged exposure to stress, adaptation energy becomes exhausted. Harmful reactions start to spread throughout the body. Prolonged stress can lead to chronic problems, ultimately an exhaustion of all reserves and energies and even frank depression.

Physical symptoms of impending exhaustion maybe present with a general feeling of tiredness, lack of energy, and weakness. Non-specific signs can be visual blurring, dizziness, chest tightness, discomfort in breathing, and gastrointestinal symptoms ranging from chronic constipation to diarrhea and cramps. Sleeping patterns may be disturbed, with difficulty in getting off to sleep and early morning waking accompanied by nightmares. Weight gain or loss is common. In the workplace, absence from work ensues and the problems present elsewhere.

Emotional symptoms of stress in the exhaustion stage relate to depression and frustration. This may be manifested in uncontrollable crying; lack of interest in friends, hobbies, and family; and general indifference and reduced attention to personal issues such as exercise, clothes, and eating. In extreme cases, self destructive and suicidal tendencies are present. Irritability, coldness, and harshness towards others are often accompanied by extreme guilt. Panic attacks and restlessness can make work difficult and increase stress at work, as they are more apparent to colleagues.

Mental dysfunction in the exhaustion stage presents as a lack of concentration and coordination. This leads to impaired performance and judgement as well as a negative attitude towards work and indecisiveness. In the workplace, signs of mental dysfunction are usually noticed more easily than signs of physical illness because they are directly related to performance and thus more apparent to colleagues. Furthermore, the resulting loss of confidence and control disturbs the individual and further reducing performance. Added to that, misuse of alcohol, cigarettes, tranquilizers, and other drugs is often observed.

Seyle (1974) concluded that all human beings have a nominal level of resistance to stress. Some have a higher threshold while others can handle much less.

2.3 The Stressed Teachers

According to Aristotle, as cited in Otto (1987),

"Those who educate children well are more to be honored than even their parents, for these only give them life, those the art of living well."

Aristotle, the renowned Greek philosopher, who paid tribute to teachers, said teachers should be held in the highest honor for their sacrifice and dedication in molding the mind of the young. The fact that there is a day, May 16 in Malaysia and October 5 as World Teachers Day designated by UNESCO, dedicated to teachers shows that society holds them in high esteem.