

Relationship between Work Stress and Burnout among High School Special Education Teachers

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Assignments, role conflicts, role ambiguity and student discipline problems can cause job stress and lead to burnout among teachers. This study was conducted to identify the relationship between work stress and burnout for a high school Special Education Teacher in Malacca. A total of 145 respondents in Central Malacca were selected using simple random sampling technique. Quantitative approach with survey design and written questionnaire were used. The instruments are adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI). Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0 using the Pearson Product Moment correlation parametric test. The findings indicated that work stress has a significant positive relationship with two burnout subdivisions namely emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.397$, $p < .05$) and depersonalization ($r = 0.494$, $p < .05$). However, work stress was negatively associated with the third subdivision of personal achievement ($r = -0.253$, $p < .05$). This finding has provided the Ministry with an opportunity to understand the pattern between work stress and burnout among Special Education Teachers by incorporating appropriate content into their teacher training programs. This issue of work stress among Special Education Teachers should be given attention in ensuring a balanced ratio in their work environment and their lives.

Key words: *Work stress; burnout; relationship; Special Education Teachers.*



Introduction

Education plays a major role in the development of a nation. Good quality of education will contribute to the formation of a wonderful generation and a sustainable, productive and healthy nation (Ibrahim, 2013). The National Philosophy of Education is emphasized on the continual efforts to further develop the potential of the individual as a whole and to produce strong human, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and social capital (Khalim & Jamil 2011; Mohd Salmi et al. 2015; Sajat & Mohammed Sani 2012; Cavico,et.al 2017). Previous research in Malaysia shows several studies related to the correlation of adversity quotient (how well a person reacts to the adversities) to any other type of intelligences (Ahmad Zamri & Mohd Effendi, 2017; Mohd Effendi, 2019a, 2019b; Mohd Effendi, Ahmad Zamri, Siti Mistima, Nor Adila, & Effa Rina, 2018; Mohd Effendi & Ahmad Zamri, 2016). Unfortunately, there is a lacking part of the focus group which is not focusing on teachers and how adversity like work stress can cause serious problems such as burnout.

In line with the goals of the Ministry of Education Malaysia, which emphasizes education for all Malaysians, a program for special needs students has been designed to meet these demands. Special Education Programs are specifically designed to meet the special needs of students (Mazlina 2013). Therefore, Special Education Teachers also play an important role in shaping the nation's educational goals, to produce young people who are knowledgeable, capable of thinking critically and creatively, highly skilled and capable of facing future challenges. Various educational policies and systems have been formulated to achieve the aspirations of national education. The implementation of the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013 - 2025 has made the role and responsibilities of teachers more challenging (Saedah & Mohammed Sani 2012). The role of a teacher is increasingly burdensome and can contribute to job stress (Fazura 2011; Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018). Teachers tend to feel overwhelmed by having to take on more challenging responsibilities. This situation can disrupt teachers' learning and teaching processes leading to work stress and burnout if teachers fail to handle it well (Ibrahim 2013; Khalim & Jamil 2011; Mohd Salmi et al. 2015). High work stress can lead to dissatisfaction with work, unselfishness and neglect of one's responsibilities as a teacher (Norashid & Hamzah 2014; Brahim & Nourredine 2017). Pressures will affect the quality of education and the profession of teachers will in turn impede efforts towards creating a knowledge society in the future (Ibrahim 2013; King Maria 2011). If this continues, it will indirectly frustrate the government's efforts to achieve the goal of excellence in education.

Special Education Teachers are also found to be under stress. It is clear that the Special Education Teacher is found to be the highest rated burnout profession compared to other professions (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis 2017). Burnout can cause teachers to quit their jobs (Charity 2006; Serious Ebbie 2013). The factor that causes the Special Education Teacher to

suffer from work stress is the variety of student groups and challenging behaviours in the classroom (Mazlina 2013; Bruce and A.G 2017). The approaches used in teaching and learning are different and more difficult based on the students' ability. This situation is reported by the Special Education Teachers who often face a variety of student disabilities and this increases their difficulties (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis 2017; Burcu Ozcan, 2019).

Implementation of all forms of government policies, policies and educational innovation indirectly impacts teacher behaviour (Ibrahim 2013; Saedah & Mohammed Sani 2012). This can lead to high levels of pressure and constraints on teachers who are determinants of their effectiveness (Tajulashikin, Fazura & Mohd Burhan 2013). Teachers who fail to control themselves under pressure will affect the relationship between teacher and student and academic achievement (Ibrahim 2013; Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018). This can have a detrimental effect on the quality of education and the teaching profession. The increasing burden of teacher duties requires a teacher to be fully committed to their duties and responsibilities (Khalim & Jamil 2011; Saedah & Mohammed Sani 2012). The commitment of good teachers will enable them to take higher education institutions.

Problem statement

The role of teachers is seen as increasingly challenging as the national education field grows (Ibrahim 2013; Khalim & Jamil 2011; Saedah & Mohammed Sani 2012). This situation causes teachers to become overwhelmed by their workload which leads to stress and negatively impacts the quality of the country's education (Fazura 2011; Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018; King Maria 2011). Thus, stress is seen as a disease associated with one's mental health and teachers are the most affected group. Many teachers are now suffering from breast cancer, hypertension, heart disease, and are even receiving psychiatric treatment because of increased stress due to increased workload (Ibrahim 2013; Mazlina 2013). The workload of teachers is seen as overstated by the responsibility of teachers to improve students' academic performance and teachers are forced to perform tasks that are inappropriate (Fazura 2011; Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018; Mazlina 2013).

Educational issues such as serious student discipline problems, workloads, not enough teacher and classrooms, role conflicts, role ambiguity and any other unresolved issues can threaten teacher well-being (Ibrahim 2013; Khalim & Jamil 2011). Special Education Teachers are no exception to this. They often face challenges due to lack of parental involvement, levels of parental awareness and support for the future of special needs children (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis 2017). The attitude of parents who depend on the school solely on the personal management of special children is a serious burden on the Special Education Teacher. This serious burden is feared to be the cause of the increasing workload of these teachers and they are not able to fully commit themselves to the task as teachers (Mazlina

2013). If the issue of teacher burden is not addressed immediately, this may cause teachers to feel pressured and apply for resignation or apply for early retirement (Fazura 2011; Mazlina 2013; Carter, et.al 2017).

Teacher commitment is not focused on teaching tasks but teachers need to focus on clerical, administrative and other tasks that can put pressure on them (Ibrahim 2013; Mazlina 2013). Teachers are burdened with external tasks such as attending meetings and various courses outside of school. Teachers also experience stress due to the large amount of teaching time and the limited time spent performing tasks (Fazura 2011; Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018; King Maria 2011). Even student behaviour and the need to fulfil school standards are also factors in the tension burden experienced by teachers (Ahmad Azahari 1998). Work pressure by teachers has led teachers to decide to terminate their services sooner than expected (Khalim & Jamil 2011; Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018). Most teachers who are depressed at work experience burnout at some point in their field of work (Cormarks 2000). Ghazali (1997) states that low teacher job satisfaction is due to frequent stress and lack of enthusiasm during work.

Work stress is also seen as contributing to a lack of job satisfaction among educators (Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018; Mazlina 2013). The stress of work affects teacher performance. This can be seen through declining work performance, loss of interest in the profession, dissatisfaction with the level of attendance and constant avoidance of assignments (Ibrahim 2013). As a result, many of these educators want to leave their teachers' careers sooner than expected (Khalim & Jamil 2011; Mohd Salmi et al. 2015). The parties need to find a solution so that the Special Education Program Teacher is not depressed and able to fully commit to the task and responsibility given to ensuring the quality of education in the country.

Previous studies on the relationship between work stress and burnout levels have been extensively conducted in Malaysia such as studies by Amal Hayati (2006), Faridah and Zubaidah (1998), Serious Ebbie (2013), Supian (2001) and Zakiah (2003). However, these studies are less focused on Special Education Teachers in secondary schools. Therefore, this has prompted researchers to study the relationship between work stress and burnout levels among high school Special Education Teachers.

Literature review

Stress is a disease often associated with mental health and it often attacks the world over this millennium (Ibrahim 2013). According to the dictionary of the Fourth Edition board (2005), pressure can be defined as a pressure to push or a situation that is difficult to bear. Stress means a stressful situation that can disrupt one's thinking and physical condition (Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018). Sometimes extreme stress can have adverse effects such as anxiety, sudden

onset of anger, inability to negotiate and emotionally unstable. Supian (2001) argues that stress is a non-specific response to the urge to be real or imagined. Work stress is one of the factors that causes teachers to make mistakes that can distort the image of teachers (King Maria 2011).

Stress is divided into two types: eustress and distress (Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018; Mazlina 2013). Eustress means a positive and positive pressure. Eustress is also a pressure that improves one's achievement and is constructive (Lia Indah & Ruslin 2018; Mazlina 2013). While distress is a negative and negative pressure. Distress is destructive and can interfere with an individual's achievement. Brock & Buokley (2012) argue that prolonged and sustained stress can cause an individual to suffer from stress. Negative feelings that may include self-control, depression, prolonged sadness, anxiety for no reason and worry. Prolonged and unbearable stress can cause individuals to experience burnout (Charity 2006; Faridah & Zubaidah 1998; Serious Ebbie 2013).

Work stress is a condition arising from human interaction with work and this situation causes them to change from normal to abnormal (Rohany 2003). Work stress is an act of pressure, pressure, coercion, pressure or stress while working in school, which is a difficult situation to bear (Fazura 2011). Ibrahim (2013) states that there are a number of factors that cause work stress including workload, task pressure, role ambiguity and environmental relationships.

Burnout was coined by Herbert Freudenberger who was a psychiatrist in 1974. Burnout is defined as a feeling of failure in life and exhaustion as a result of demands or demands that are overstated and overly burdensome. Maslach & Later (2008) defined burnout as a psychological syndrome that involves emotional exhaustion or exhaustion, depersonalization and self-achievement among individuals at work. Burnout is divided into three dimensions including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and declining personal achievement and each stage represents each of the different aspects of each other (Kyriacou 1987; Mahdiehsadat Taheri et al. 2012; Maslach & Later 2008).

Anbar & Eker (2008) argue that more professional careers are prone to burnout syndrome. Burnout among teachers can occur because teachers need to connect with a wide variety of students with different behaviours, intelligences and need to cater to the diverse needs of parents and superiors (Nor Hamizan & Ferlis 2017). Teachers who have negative values in themselves are more prone to emotional exhaustion and high depersonalization experiences in their careers (Smith & Milstein 1984). Mahdiehsadat Taheri, Forouzandeh and Leila Zameni (2012) stated that stress or stress refers to physical responses caused by internal or environmental factors while burnout refers to a new concept in which the individual responds more to emotional or emotional stress in the workplace. Several previous studies on the relationship between work stress and burnout have been conducted.

Saklofske et al. (2007) and Salvagioni et al. (2017) show that there is a relationship between positive affect (realization) and academic burnout. Positive and positive emotional states can influence an individual's daily thinking process. Individuals with positive emotions are individuals who have positive information in memory and vice versa. The study by Karin et al. (2006) suggest that there is a significant relationship between work-related stress, burnout and job satisfaction among nurses in South African countries. Burnout can affect productivity, performance, compromise and affect the quality of patient care. Ebbie's (2013) revealed that there is a significant relationship between burnout and job satisfaction among primary school teachers in Ranau district. While stress with the level of job satisfaction also shows a significant relationship. Overall, past research shows a clear gap in the need to conduct work-related stress and burnout studies in the context of Special Education Teachers.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative methodology with survey design through online questionnaire forms. The study population consisted of 173 high school Special Education Teachers in Central Melaka. Several secondary schools with Special Education Integration (Learning Problems) programs in three districts namely Ayer Keroh, Jasin and Central Melaka were selected. Researchers chose the Central Melaka area as the study population because of the greater number of teachers than other districts. A total of 145 respondents were selected using simple random sampling and calculation based on the sample size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Two instruments have been adapted namely the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) for measuring burnout and Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) for measuring work stress. Burnout is measured through three constructs namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement while job stress is calculated as a full score.

The MBI research instrument is divided into three parts. Section A is the demographic profile of respondents. Part B consists of 22 questionnaires related to burnout levels that represent three main elements namely emotional exhaustion (7 items), depersonalization (7 items) and personal achievement (8 items). Part B was tested using a seven Likert scale of 0 to 6 for each item representing never (0), a few times a year or less (1), once a month or less (2), a few times a month (3), once a week (4), a few times a week (5), and every day (6). Part C consists of 36 questionnaires of item TSI that related to work stress. This section was tested using a five-point Likert scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The study data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science for Windows (SPSS) version 25.0. Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between work stress and burnout among high school Special Education Teachers. All items were piloted using Cronbach's Alpha for assessing reliability such as Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) with

0.835 and Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) with 0.922. Hair et al. (2017) stated that all items must have a reliability greater than 0.7 to determine high internal consistency. Therefore, the items reliability are satisfactory and sufficient for research.

One of the considerations for analysing parametric tests is assessing the normality. This research used Skewness and Kurtosis analysis as shown in Table 1. Most statistical analysis books do not give recommendations to determine whether a variable is normal or not. SPSS suggested that dividing the skewness with the standard error (with value less than 2.5 is considered normal). However, the weakness of this method is the use of a calculator and the standard error value depends on the size of the sample in which most of the data with a larger sample will be found not normally distributed (Leech et al., 2005). Field (2009) explained that the determination of normality is based on skewness and kurtosis (positive or negative) that must not exceed 1.96 for a small sample and not more than 2.58 for a large sample (i.e., 200 or more). For this research, all ratios show the values are in acceptance range of ± 1.96 . It means that the data is normally distributed and fulfils the requirements of parametric testing.

Table 1: Test of normality

Construct	Testing	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Emotional exhaustion	Skewness	.221	.201	1.099
	Kurtosis	-.484	.400	-1.210
Depersonalization	Skewness	.343	.201	1.705
	Kurtosis	-.438	.400	-1.095
Personal achievement	Skewness	-.363	.201	1.805
	Kurtosis	.276	.400	0.690

Results

This study used Pearson correlation analysis to identify whether there was a significant relationship between work stress and burnout among high school Special Education Teachers. Table 2 shows the correlation between work pressure and burnout.

Table 2: Correlation between burnout with work pressure

Independent variable (burnout)	Dependent variable (work stress)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Emotional exhaustion	0.397**	0.000
Depersonalization	0.494**	0.000
Personal achievement	-0.253**	0.002

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on Table 2, the Pearson correlation analysis showed a weak and significant positive relationship between work stress and emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.397$, $p < 0.05$). These results suggest that the high work pressure that is faced, will cause respondents to experience high exhaustion. The relationship between work stress and depersonalization showed a simple and significant positive relationship with ($r = 0.494$, $p < 0.05$). This significant positive correlation confirms that respondents who have high work stress, respondent depersonalization is also high. Whereas the relationship between work stress and personal achievement showed a weak and significant negative relationship ($r = -0.253$, $p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that respondents who are experiencing high work stress will result in lower personal achievement of respondents.

Discussion

Overall, the findings show that there is a significant relationship between work stress and burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal achievement among high school Special Education Teachers. The elements of exhaustion are at a low level while depersonalization is at a moderate level. The element of personal achievement is at the weak level. The relationship of work stress with moderate personalization may be due to temporary changes in the self-awareness of Special Education Teachers. Burnout among teachers is at a moderate level even when teachers are under stress (Charity 2006). The burden of workload causes teachers to become less concerned and less sensitive to their surroundings.

Burnout phenomenon is often associated with stress. It is clear here that someone with work stress is at high risk for burnout. This finding is supported by Chyi et al. (2018) that mentioned a positive relationship between pressure with burnout and it occurs indirectly. Individuals with high work stress will experience burnout in their work. This statement was also supported by Karin et al. (2006) that explain burnout can affect a person's productivity and work performance.

Conclusion

The results show that there is a significant relationship between work stress and burnout among high school Special Education Teachers. The relationship between work stress and burnout is at a relatively low level. This empirically proved that the relationship between work stress and burnout among Special Education Teachers can still be controlled. The findings can serve as a valuable guide to officials from the Special Education Division of the Ministry of Education Malaysia, State Education Department, District Education Office, school administrators and Special Education Teachers to identify key factors in the work pressure that may affect a teacher to experience burnout symptoms. Authorities as the Ministry of Education Malaysia (Special Education), the State Education Department and the



District Education Office should take steps to reduce the workload of teachers by holding workshops, seminars or campaigns on the negative effects of stress and burnout on teachers to make teachers aware it will have an impact on them. Good collaboration between teachers and administrators can also reduce work stress among teachers and reduce the risk of a teacher being involved in burnout.

This study shows that Special Education Teachers are not overly concerned with their work but still need to be careful not to focus on burnout. Special Education Teachers should think creatively and extensively in addressing problems at work that can lead to stress and burnout. Further research can be done to see the impact of work pressure on teachers' burnout levels in other districts or states. This study can also be conducted on primary or subject-based teachers in schools and is not confined to Special Education Teachers.

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