



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**FACTORS AFFECTING OCCUPATIONAL
STRESS AMONG TEACHERS
OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL
IN SARAWAK**

YONG ING THUNG

FPP 1999 59

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**MASTER OF SCIENCE
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**BY
YONG ING THUNG**

**Project Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science (Human Resource Development)
in the Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia**

APRIL 1999



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Associate Professor Dr. Azimi bin Hamzah and Dr. Jamilah bte Othman for their encouragement and guidance. Their expertise and useful suggestions had helped a lot to the quality of this paper.

I am also thankful to all the lecturers in UPM who had directly or indirectly contributed to the completion of this paper. Their guidance throughout the Masters Programme in Human Resource Development had provided me with the knowledge to conduct this research project.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to my classmate especially Haji Sulaiman bin Husaini and Puan Bibiana Pek who had provided me encouragement and moral support throughout the project. I also wish to thank the school principal and the teachers of school who had cooperated with me to complete this study. My special appreciation is given to my colleague who had edited my paper.

Finally, and foremost, I would like to thank my wife, Deborah Tan who had supported me to complete this project as scheduled. This paper is specially dedicated to my three beloved children – Cynthia Yong, Esther Yong and David Yong to compensate for my negligence on them throughout my post graduate study.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	. . . . .	ii
LIST OF TABLES	. . . . .	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	. . . . .	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	. . . . .	x
ABSTRACT	. . . . .	xi
CHAPTER		
I. INTRODUCTION	. . . . .	1
Background	. . . . .	1
The Organization – a Secondary School in Sarawak	. . . . .	2
Problem Statement	. . . . .	3
Objectives	. . . . .	4
General Objective	. . . . .	4
Specific Objective	. . . . .	4
Limitations of the Study	. . . . .	5
Assumptions	. . . . .	6
Significance of the Study	. . . . .	6
Definitions of Terms	. . . . .	7
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	. . . . .	8
Introduction	. . . . .	8
Stress	. . . . .	8
Social Support	. . . . .	10



Theories of Stress	11
Stress as an external factor – the stimulus approach	11
Stress as a response or reaction to external factor – the response approach	12
The interaction approach	13
Theories of Social Support	16
Modes of Social Support	19
Definition of Occupational Stress	20
Cooper’s Models of Occupational Stress.	21
Models of Teacher Stress	23
Framework of the Study	27
Sources of Occupational Stress	28
Stress Symptoms	30
Individual Variables and Occupational Stress	31
Personal variables	32
Conclusions	34
III. METHODOLOGY	35
Research Design	35
Population and Sampling	37



Measurement and Instrumentation	38
Demographic	38
Sources of teacher stress	39
Level of occupational stress	39
Teachers' social support	40
Data Collection	41
Pre-Testing	41
Reliability of the Instruments	42
Analysis of Data	42
IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	45
Profile of the Respondents	45
Mean level of Occupational Stress	47
Occupational Stress Level and Demographic Characteristics	51
Factors that Cause Teacher Stress	56
Social Support and Demographic Characteristics.	61
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	67
Statement of Problems and Objectives.	67
Objective 1	67
Objective 2	67
Objective 3	68
Objective 4	69
Objective 5	70
Conclusions	70



Implications	. . . . .	81
Recommendations	. . . . .	82
Practical Recommendations	. . . . .	82
Recommendations for Future Research	. . . . .	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY	. . . . .	85
APPENDICES		
A	Research Questionnaire	92



LIST OF TABLES

TABLES	PAGE
1 Items of the Five Modes of Social Support Behaviour Scale	40
2 Alpha Reliability Coefficients of the Different Measurements at Pre-Test	42
3 Distribution of Respondents by Personal Characteristics	46
4 Distribution of Respondents by Professional Characteristics	47
5 Distribution of level of Occupational stress	48
6 Mean and Standard Deviation of Each Item in the Stress Level Questionnaire	49
7 Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Level of Occupational Stress by Personal and Professional Characteristics	52
8 Independent t-test Results of Occupational Stress Level by Gender, Marital Status and Service Grade	53
9 One Way ANOVA Results of Occupational Stress By Demographic Characteristics Variables	54
10 Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents Sources of Teacher Stress by Four Factors	56
11 Mean and Standard Deviation of Each Items in Factor I (Pupil's Misbehaviour)	57
12 Mean and Standard Deviation of Each Items in Factor II (Poor Working Condition)	58
13 Mean and Standard Deviation of Each Items in Factor III (Time Pressure)	59



14	Mean and Standard Deviation of Each Items In Factor IV (Poor School Ethos)	60
15	Correlation Coefficient between Occupational Stress Level and Each Factor that Caused Stress As Perceived by the Teachers	60
16	Mean and Standard Deviation of Five Modes of Teacher’s Social Support from Family	61
17	Mean and Standard Deviation of Five Modes of Teachers’ Social Support from Friend	62
18	Independent t-test Results of Social Support from Family by Gender and Marital Status of Teachers	63
19	Independent t-test Results of Social Support from Friend by Gender and Marital Status of Teachers	64
20	Independent t-test Results of Five Modes of Social Support from Friend by Gender and Marital Status	65
21	Summary of the Objectives, Literature, Reviews and Findings	76



LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1	The response approach of stress 12
2	Interactional model of stress and coping 14
3	The interactional approach of stress 15
4	Two points at which social support may interfere with the hypothesized casual link between stressful events and illness 19
5	A model of occupational stress 22
6	Boyle Teacher stress model 23
7	A model of Teacher stress 26
8	Framework of this study 27
9	Summary of the specific Objectives, Research Questions, Data and analysis Of the Study 43
10	Histogram for Frequency Distribution of Occupational Stress 49



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TSI	:	Teacher Stress Inventory
TSLI	:	Teacher Stress Level Inventory
SS-B	:	Social Support Behaviour Scale
GAS	:	General Adaptation Syndrome
TMAS	:	Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale
PAQ	:	Personal Attribute Questionnaire

Abstract of project paper presented to Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Human Resource Development.

**FACTORS AFFECTING OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG TEACHERS OF
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By

YONG ING THUNG

Supervisor: Associate Professor Dr. Azimi bin Hamzah

Faculty: Faculty of Educational Studies

This study aimed to examine factors affecting occupational stress among teachers of a secondary school in Sarawak.

The specific objectives of this study are to examine the significant difference between occupational stress levels of different subgroups according to their (1) gender, (2) marital status, (3) service grade, (4) length of years of teaching experience, (5) race, (6) age group, and (7) education level. This study also examined the significant difference between social support of different subgroup of teachers according to gender and marital status. The research designs used by this ex post facto study are independent two-tailed t-test and One Way ANOVA. The respondents compound of 95 teachers who are selected by using the stratified random sampling. Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) was used to determine the factors that cause occupation stress.



Teacher Stress Level Inventory (TSLI) was used to determine the level of stress among teachers. The Social Support Behaviour (SS-B) scale was used to determine the support from family and friends.

The results reveal that the occupational stress levels of teachers is generally low. The factors that they perceived to be most stressful is pupil misbehaviour whereas the two least important factors are time pressure and poor working conditions. The results indicated that there is a significant difference in stress according race. Chinese teachers are found to be facing most stress and compared to Sarawak native teachers and Malay teachers. It is also found that there are significant difference in friend social support by gender and marital status. Finally, the results reveal that there are moderate or substantial correlation between four stress factors (pupil misbehaviour, poor working conditions, time pressure and poor school ethos) with teacher stress levels.



Abstrak Kertas Projek yang dikemukakan kepada Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan, Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan bagi Ijazah Sarjana Sains (Pembangunan Sumber Manusia).

FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MENYEBABKAN TEKANAN KERJA DI KALANGAN GURU-GURU DI SEBUAH SEKOLAH MENENGAH DI SARAWAK

Oleh

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April 1999

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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menguji faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan tekanan kerja di kalangan guru-guru di sebuah sekolah menengah di Sarawak.

Tujuan khas kajian ini adalah untuk membuktikan bahawa terdapat perbezaan di antara tahap tekanan kerja di kalangan pelbagai kumpulan guru mengikut: (1) jantina, (2) tarap perkahwinan, (3) gred perkhidmatan, (4) jangka masa mereka berkhidmat dalam profesion perguruan, (5) keturunan, (6) umur, dan (7) tahap pendidikan guru. Kajian ini juga adalah untuk membuktikan bahawa terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan antara sokongan sosial dalam kumpulan guru mengikut jantina dan taraf perkahwinan. Kajian ini adalah satu kajian *ex post facto* yang menggunakan ujian t-dua hujung dan ANOVA. Seramai 95 orang guru telah dipilih sebagai sampel dengan menggunakan persampelan rawak berlapis. “Teacher Stress Inventory” (TSI) telah digunakan untuk menentukan faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan tekanan kerja dan “Teacher Stress Level Inventory” (TSLI) telah digunakan untuk menentukan tahap tekanan kerja di kalangan guru-guru. Untuk menentukan sokongan ahli keluarga dan kawan-kawan, skala “Social

Support Behaviours Scale” (SS-B) telah digunakan. Keputusan yang diperoleh menunjukkan bahawa tahap tekanan kerja di kalangan guru pada amnya adalah rendah. Faktor-faktor utama yang menyebabkan tekanan mengikut pandangan guru ialah kelakuan pelajar (pupil misbehaviour), sementara faktor yang dianggap kurang menyebabkan tekanan ialah tekanan masa dan suasana kerja yang tidak baik. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan di antara keturunan dalam tekanan kerja. Didapati bahawa guru cina menghadapi lebih tekanan kerja berbanding dengan guru melayu dan guru bumiputera Sarawak. Dapatan kajian ini juga menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan di antara sokongan kawan mengikut jantina dan taraf perkahwinan. Akhir sekali, keputusan kajian menunjukkan terdapat korelasi yang sederhana di antara empat faktor tekanan (pelajar yang tidak berkelakuan baik, suasana kerja yang tidak baik, tekanan masa dan peraturan sekolah yang lemah) dengan tahap tekanan kerja.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Over the last 10 years occupational stress among teachers has been an interesting topic for research. In Malaysia, particularly in Sarawak, teachers' stress issues had not only been an interesting topic for research but has also caught the attention of the mass media. The Borneo Post (1996) reported, the Minister of Industrial Development, Datuk Abang Johari Bin Abang Haji Openg as a minister in-charge of the welfare of education in Sarawak quoting seventy-five reasons why teachers in the state had quitted teaching profession since 1993 to May 1996. Among the reasons were personal problems, looking for greener pasture outside, wanting to be near family, poor working environment and heavy work load. All these reasons were related to stress faced by teachers.

According to Muhamad (1995), a survey done by the Kongress Kesatuan Guru-guru Dalam Perkhidmatan Pendidikan Malaysia (KONGRESS) showed that teachers complained of yearly, term, monthly and daily preparation of lesson plans. In Malaysia, Noor Azzudin (1990), Noriah (1995), and Abu Omar (1996) did studies on work stress. Gold and Roth (1993) stated that the teaching profession nowadays is facing three negative situations, which are stress, low teacher morale, and resignation (though this is less apparent in economic recession). Dunham (1976) has drawn attention to the prevalence of stress among schoolteachers. With the rapid changes in the National Education Curriculum to transform Malaysia into a fully developed nation by the year 2020, a lot more is expected of the teachers as the changing roles of teachers become more challenging. According to Cole and Walker (1989), job stresses have been

reported to be taking a drastic toll on teachers in United Kingdom even in the seventies and seemed to worsen in the eighties. They added that the rapid rate of policy change, the relative decline in salaries, status and promotion prospect and the insecurity of redeployment threat have been likely to exacerbate teacher stress. They concluded that teaching will always be stressful and that the radical changes in the education system are likely to increase rather than reduce levels of stress.

The above observations and studies are becoming major issues in the teaching profession. Further studies need to be done to reveal the situation in Malaysia. The study attempted to unveil the stress experienced by teachers in a school in Sarawak.

The Organization – a Secondary School in Sarawak

The school is one of the Grade A secondary schools in Sarawak. Presently it has a work force of 130 teachers consisting of 50 graduate and 80 non-graduate teachers with teaching certificates. The school is headed by the principal, two senior assistants and one afternoon supervisor. The number of students from Transition to Upper six classes, totals up to 2023.

As one of the grade A secondary school in Sarawak, its vision is as follows:

“To be a leading school academically and giving services to produce individuals who are balanced and excellent intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically”

With the approach of the next millenium, Malaysia aims at becoming an industrialized nation that is on par with the developed nations of the world. In order to achieve this vision, the Prime Minister of Malaysia has listed nine challenges for making Malaysia a developed nation. To meet these challenges, a serious effort through quality education at all level is required.

To improve the quality of education, we must have teachers of high calibre to achieve excellent results in public examinations and extra-curricular activities. The high expectation on the students' performance from the teachers in addition to the major changes in curriculum are the potential causes of stress faced by the teachers in schools. Another possible stressor is the extracurricular activities besides teaching itself. Apart from administrative work, setting questions, marking students' work and extra classes, teachers have the added responsibility of having to handle many clubs as well.

Problem Statement

The Government of Malaysia has inadequate empirical information that might guide its efforts in reducing occupational stress among teachers. Teachers play vital role in ensuring the successful implementation of any educational program especially when the government had put a lot of emphases on education.

Nevertheless, studies on teachers' stress have established that many teachers are facing stress from pupil misbehaviour and heavy work load (Trendall, 1989), time pressure (cook and Leffingwell, 1982) poor work conditions (Manthei and Solman, 1988), and too much paperwork (Litt and Turk, 1985). The decline in the quality of teachers and the increased in the number of teachers opting for early retirement may be the result of occupational stress faced by them. Teachers form the taskforce and human resource that play an important role in the successful implementation of educational programmes.

While considerable research on teacher stress has been undertaken especially in the western countries, there is very little researches on teacher stress done in developing countries like Malaysia. Thus, the researcher is of the opinion that it is imperative to have a deeper understanding on teachers' well being especially in the area of stress

faced by them if Malaysia is to have a pool of world-class educators. This need becomes more pressing with the many changes in the field of education, loaded with never-ending student problems, workload, appraisal and changes in education policy. The changes and demand cause stress among teachers. Several research questions can be raised concerning the stress experienced by teachers. The research questions to be addressed include: (1) What is the level of occupational stress among teachers in the school?, (2) What are the factors that cause stress among the teacher in the school?, (3) What is the relationship between demographic characteristics (such as gender, service grade, age, education levels, and length of teaching experience, race and marital status) and the level of work stress of the teachers of the school?, (4) What is the relationship between demographic characteristics (gender and marital status) and the social support?, and (5) what is the correlation between four stress factors with teacher stress level.

Objectives

General Objective

The objective of the study is to examine the factors affecting occupational stress among teachers of a secondary school in Sarawak.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the average level of work stress experienced by the teachers of the school.
2. To determine the most common stressors that cause work stress of the teacher in the school.

3. To examine the relationships between selected individual attributes and level of work stress for the teachers of the school.
4. To examine the relationship between selected individual attributes and social support for the teachers of the school.
5. To examine the correlation between the factors of stress and teacher stress levels.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher recognizes that there are many variables that are related to teachers' stress. Teacher's responses to stress is dependent on their social support, personality, personal history, needs, wants and the coping skills adopted. Stress depends on an interactive process with the environment. It is a dynamic process in which time plays an important role. Therefore, this study is limited to the teachers' personal, professional characteristics and their social supports.

The second limitation is that stress levels did not necessarily remain constant. When things are going well, score may be different from the one obtained when things are going badly. The circumstances within which stress occurs also vary from individual to individual. Finally the finding derived from this study are unique to the teachers of the school under study and are not generalisable to all school teachers in Sarawak.

ASSUMPTIONS

The basic assumption adopted in this study is that every teacher experiences a certain degree of stress and that the level of teachers' stress is measurable based on the physiological, physical and psychological effects on the teacher concerned. It is also assumed that the scales designed in the Teacher Stress Level Inventory (TSLI) to determine the teachers' stress level and the Social Support Behaviour Scale (SS-B) to determine the teacher's social support can also be used in the Malaysian setting. In this study, it is assumed that stress have negative effects on teachers.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is intended to promote a better theoretical understanding and recognition of the complexities associated with teachers' stress. Besides, it can contribute significantly towards future advancements in teacher stress models. It can also serve as a preliminary study in teacher stress and can become a basis for future studies on similar topic such as the coping strategies and stress for the same population or different population.

The findings may also help policy makers and the top management to have awareness and a better understanding of the existence of stress among teachers. This understanding can then be used for the formation of a comprehensive human resource management to optimize the quality of working life. Therefore, findings may be valuable in that they may help in the playing of better organizational productivity and effectiveness.

Definitions of Terms

Stress: the physiological and psychological reaction that occurs when people perceive an imbalance between the level of demand placed upon them and their capability for meeting that demands.

Teachers' stress: a response syndrome of negative affects (anger and depression) usually accompanied by potentially physiological and psychological changes.

Social support: the existence or availability of people on whom we can rely, people who let us know that they care about, value and love us.

Family support: supportive relationship from family members such as spouse, parents relatives, brothers and sisters as a protection against adverse environment forces or negative life events.

Friend support: supportive relationship from friends such as friends, colleagues, headmasters and senior assistants as a protection against adverse environment forces or negative life events.

Overload: a level of stimulation or demand that exceeds the capacity to process or comply with those demands and over stimulation.

Buffer effect: the effect of social support on reducing the adverse impact of teachers' stress.

Occupational stress: the interaction of work conditions with characteristics of the work such that the demands of work exceed the ability of the worker to cope with them.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Studies have been done to show the prevalence of stress among teachers. However, the mere knowledge of the existence of stress among teachers is not much use to the administrators, educationists and teachers themselves without the prior knowledge of the main stressors. Hence, it is crucial to gain insights into the main stressors in teaching in order to successfully implement practical strategies to help reduce or at least help teachers cope with the stressors. Therefore, this chapter looks into the definition of stress and social support, theories of stress and social support, models of occupational stress and teacher stress, and past studies on teacher stress based on the individual variables.

Stress

Stress is a familiar concept since it is an inescapable part of life. Everyone experiences stress in varying forms and degrees. Company directors, teachers, actors, airline pilots, government officials, sportsmen, soldier in combat, housewives and students experience stress.

There are many different definitions of stress. According to Bruno (1990), stress 'is the system of internal forces, organic or psychological, tending to produce wear and tear on the body. Selye (1974) defined stress as a non-specific response to specific events or stressors that could be either positive or negative in valence. The relevancy of stressors was found to be in their impact on human adaptation and the intensity of stress seemed largely dependent on three factors:

- (a) the availability of external resources for support
- (b) individual stress tolerance, and
- (c) individual perception of stressful events