

A summary of the study

INTRODUCTION

The occupational stress of teachers has been researched since the 1930. The earliest studies concerned themselves largely with the incidence of emotional problems, particularly anxiety, amongst teachers whereas later studies have been trying to identify the sources of stress, its effects stress and management at schools. A number of studies have revealed that a majority of teachers experience stress during the school day (*Dunham, 1976; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978; Forman, 1982; Fontana & Abou Serie, 1993*).

Teachers are reporting an increasing amount of stress in their work. Although the incidence of stress among them may be no greater than that of other professional group, but negative effects on students may increase the scope of the problem.

Available data increasingly indicate that stress within the teaching profession may affect the school as an organization, teacher performance, as well as the physical and emotional well-being of the teacher and her or his family (*Kriacou & Sutcliffe, 1977*).

However there are many definitions of stress and approaches to research on it. Some focus on the environmental characteristics, others on individual differences in perception and appraisal of situations, and still others concentrate on the individual's stress response.

Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977), defined teacher stress as a response by a teacher of negative affect (such as anger, anxiety or

depression) accompanied by potentially pathogenic physiological changes (such as increased heart rate, or release of adrenocorticotrophic hormone into the bloodstream) as a result of the demands made upon the teacher in his role as such.

The most frequently studied stress reaction of teachers has been anxiety. Although anxiety is only one possible reaction to job related stress, the terms "anxiety" and "stress" have often been used interchangeably in the teacher stress literature, and the majority of teacher stress studies have used anxiety measures as dependent variables.

Counselors can play an important role in schools by helping to reduce the stress experienced in teaching. But they do nothing in that field, perhaps one reason for this lack of attention may be that counselors view the treatment of stress as being outside their realm of expertise, perhaps in part because of its physiological aspects.

However, stress is understandable and treatable without advanced knowledge of physiology.

The counselors can facilitate the reduction of stress felt by teachers by implementing in-service training on teacher stress, the format would include knowledge and awareness of teacher stress and its effects; this is followed by series of programs devoted to developing effective coping mechanisms. Topics in these programs include time management, relaxation exercises and cognitive restructuring.

Early teacher stress and anxiety management intervention studies examined the use of general counseling group approaches and training

in teaching skills through general methods, courses, or microteaching experiences. In addition, use of systematic desensitization was investigated, most of these studies did not show consistent reductions in teacher stress or anxiety (*Sharp & Forman, 1985*).

A number of theorists have emphasized the role of cognition in the experience of stress and emotions, and there is a growing body of literature lending empirical support to the role of cognition in behavior. The cognitive behavioral approach involves training individuals to alter thoughts in an attempt to produce appropriate and constructive emotions and behaviors, and has been used successfully to teach clients how to cope with stressors.

Cognitive interventions that are geared toward stress reduction and stress management might prove useful for helping teachers cope with both major life stress events and daily stressors. Such cognitive intervention would train the individual to recognize maladaptive self-statements and cognitive processes that contribute to emotional arousal. The individual is then taught coping responses, self instructions, and means of restructuring his or her cognitions in order to reduce these negative emotional reactions (*Meichenbaum, 1985*).

More recently, behavioral and cognitive-behavioral self-management approaches to stress and anxiety reduction for teachers have been investigated and more positive results have been obtained. These approaches have focused on training of personal coping skills which provide the individual with techniques for altering psychological

Previous Studies :

- Studies concerning teacher stress and some variables (demographic and environmental).
- Studies that provided programs or interventions for reducing teacher stress.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES :

The Subject :

The teachers from some elementary (N = 124) prep, (N = 66) and secondary schools (N = 57) in Benha have completed teacher stress inventory.

The program has been implemented with elementary school teachers as follows :

- Experimental group 22 teachers (11 males and 11 females).
- Control group 24 teachers (12 males and 12 females).

They range in age from 30-39, and have between 6-10 years of experience in teaching.

Dependent measure :

- Teacher stress inventory (*Fimian, 1984*) which was translated and standardized in Egypt by *Talhat Mansour & Viola El-Beblawi 1989*.

The Program :

This program consists of three components based upon *Meichenbaum's (1985) Stress Inoculation Training* :

- a) Presentation of a conceptual framework,
- b) Skills acquisition (Training in cognitive restructuring, relaxation training and self-statement modification), and
- c) Rehearsal and application.

The teachers participated in six one-hour sessions twice a week, for three consecutive weeks on Sunday and wednesday. As follows :

The first session; "What is stress ?"

Participants introduced themselves to each other, and definitions of stress, incidence of teacher stress, causes of teacher stress, and effects of stress on teachers and students were discussed. Each participant was then asked to identify specific situations which were stressful for him (her) during school day.

The second Session; "Biology of stress".

The physiological view of stress, Selye's work and others in this area, the biological basis of stress, and Autonomic Nervous system (Sympathic - Parasympathic) were discussed. The relation between some physical illness and stress, and importance of relaxation were discussed.

The sixth session; "rehearsal and application" :

Participants were taught how to develop "stress scripts;" the stress scripts provide cognitive, emotional and behavioral directions for reactions to stress situations. They identified their thoughts, feelings and behavior in specific stress situations, and then devised alternative thoughts, feelings and behaviors to help them cope with the situations more constructively. These reactions were then rehearsed through discussion, role play, modeling and imagery.

Assessment :

All teachers (274) completed the teacher stress inventory. The experimental and control groups completed post-assessment during the last session and the experimental group completed alone five weeks after the end of the program follow assessment.

The Statistical Style :

- 1) Analysis of variance 2 (males-females) x 3(elementary-prep - secondary).
- 2) "T" test.