

A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN CHINESE SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN KINTA DISTRICT (PERAK)  
MALAYSIA

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher stress, identify the major sources of stress and determine if there are any significant differences between gender and teaching experience with the levels of reported stress. This study employed the survey approach involving 102 English Language teachers in seven Chinese secondary schools in Kinta District. The ELTSI used, as instrument in this study was an adaptation of Vickneasvari's (1997) questionnaire on Science Teacher Stress Inventory. Data collected was analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and t-tests. Results revealed that 43.2 percent of English Language teachers rated their jobs as either being very stressful or extremely stressful. The ten major overall sources of stress identified were compared with gender and teaching experience. Results revealed that though the major stressors were almost identical, each group perceived the stressors at different levels of intensity. T-test results revealed that there was significant difference for the ELTSI subscale of "Administrative procedure" for the demographic variable of teaching experience. There was however no significant difference between the independent variables of gender and teaching experience for the overall sample of the study with the ELTS subscales. Statistical significant difference was established between gender and ELTSI stressors for 'Poor attitude of students towards English Language lessons', "Not enough time to complete lesson preparation and mark exercises and work books" and "Failure of students to do homework" Finally, the findings also revealed that three stressors were significant related to the independent variable of teaching experience. There were "Students making noise and refusing to pay attention when teacher is teaching in class", "Having to teach students who are not motivated to learn English Language" and "Lack of incentives and rewards for hardwork".

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The Secretary-General of the National Union of Teaching Profession, N. Siva Subramaniam has reported that at least one teacher in every urban school suffers from some form of 'mental' illness due to overwork and stress and that there are more than three hundred teachers who need immediate psychiatric treatment. (Star, 21 July 2000)

This report is alarming because it indicates that teaching has become such a stressful profession that many teachers are experiencing emotional and psychological problems. Apparently, these teachers are not only stressed, but they also seem to suffer from a variety of other serious problems that appear related to their jobs.

In recent years, Malaysian teachers have been severely criticized for not meeting performance standards. The National Union of Teaching Profession of Malaysia attributed the drastic changes in teacher performance and attitude to unfavorable working conditions, for example, large classes, heavy workload, unnecessary clerical work and disruptive students (Suseela 1994).

Even worse, there have been numerous cases of mentally ill teachers who reportedly abused their students (Star 21 July 2000). In a 1990 survey by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, the findings indicate that the total number of teachers suffering from psychosis was 169 and neurosis 1,119 (Suseela 1994). Although it was not clearly established that these teachers developed their psychoses and neurosis from their jobs as teachers, it is believed that the stress they experienced daily may be one of the contributing factors leading to mental illness.

Extensive studies involving the multiple dimensions of the stress in the teaching profession have been carried out in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and New Zealand. This however is not the case in Malaysia as very few research has been done to shed light as to what effects the Malaysian teachers in executing their duties in school and in the classroom.

Thus there is an urgent need for extensive studies in various aspects of teachers stress in the Malaysia context. These studies would significantly enhance deeper understanding of the stress phenomena. The generalization of the findings and suggested recommendations would be of invaluable assert to educators in their quest for education excellence.



## **1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

There has been an increase in confidence of Malaysians towards Chinese medium schools, be it at the primary or secondary level recently. This can be seen in the drastic increase in the number of non-Chinese students who have enrolled in these schools. According to a recent report, there are more than 45,000 non-Chinese pupils who have enrolled in Chinese medium schools. (Utusan Melayu, 28 October 1996)

The Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Fong Chan Onn has attributed economic reasons and the desire of parents wanting their children to learn an extra language as reasons for this recent trend. In addition, he also attributed the increased confidence in these schools to the high emphasis on discipline, the uniqueness of the teaching methods and approach and employed in these Chinese schools. (Utusan Malsysia 4, January 1994)

The general perception now, is that the teaching approaches and methods employed in these Chinese schools are unique, as these schools have been able to produce students with outstanding academic achievements.

Given this prevailing trend, the teachers in these Chinese Secondary schools face undue pressure as a result of the high expectations from parents, the Chinese community,