



ISSN Print: 2394-7500  
ISSN Online: 2394-5869  
Impact Factor: 3.4  
IJAR 2014; 1(1): 308-311  
www.allresearchjournal.com  
Received: 26-10-2014  
Accepted: 27-11-2014

**Shahla Bano**  
Department of Psychology,  
V.K.S.U. Arrah, Bihar, India

## Stressful behaviour in primary school teachers regarding personal and job characteristics

**Shahla Bano**

### Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of teachers' personal and job characteristics on the level of stress they experience from various sources, as well as their perception of the effectiveness of cognitive, behavioral and emotional coping strategies. Data were obtained from a sample of 425 Bihari school teachers using an extended version of Kyriacou and Chien's (2004) <sup>[7]</sup> Teacher Stress and Coping Strategies Scale. Results indicate that among the personal and job characteristics examined, the effects of gender, experience, school level and culture on levels of stress caused by some stressor categories and in the degree to which teachers believe in the effectiveness of some coping strategies were found significant.

**Keywords:** Teacher stress, stressors, coping strategies, personal characteristics, job characteristics

### 1. Introduction

Teacher stress is defined in terms of unpleasant negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness that teacher experience due to some facets of their job (Kyriacou, 2001) <sup>[6]</sup>. Teaching, as a profession, is recognized as demanding and stressful (e.g., Griffith, Steptoe & Cropley, 1999) and teachers experience stress when the demands of the situation exceed their ability to cope with these demands. Some researchers even attribute the substantial attrition rates among teachers in some parts of the world, to significant levels of job-related stress that teachers experience and fail to manage (Chaplain, 2008; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007) <sup>[8]</sup>.

Research has revealed that teachers are exposed to various sources of stress. Major among these are: teaching unmotivated students; sustaining discipline in the classroom; a demanding workload; being exposed to frequent changes; being evaluated by others; undergoing difficult or challenging relationships with colleagues and administrators, and poor working conditions (Kyriacou, 2001) <sup>[6]</sup>.

As Kyriacou (2001) <sup>[6]</sup> noted, stressors experienced by one teacher are unique to him or her and are reliant on the specific interaction between the teacher's personality, values, skills, and circumstances. In addition, many factors, such as means of coping and strategies, personality traits and characteristics of the environment can interactively affect teacher's perception of the degree to which situations are stressful.

In order to deal with stressful events and to alleviate feelings of distress, teachers use means of coping that include cognitive, emotional and behavioral strategies of comforting and adaptation to the stressful situation (Admiraal, Korthagen, & Wubbles, 2000; Kyriacou, 2001) <sup>[7]</sup>.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) transactional model of stress and coping, which concentrate on how challenging events create stressful experience, when confronted by a given event, the individual engages in two consecutive processes of appraisal. The first is a primary appraisal through which the event is judged as stressful or pleasant dependent on the situation and the individual. Then the individual will engage in a process of secondary appraisal in which s/he will cognitively evaluate her/his personal and environmental resources to deal with the stressful event. The two sequential appraisal processes are both cognitive and depend, mainly, on the appraising individual.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Shahla Bano**  
Department of Psychology,  
V.K.S.U. Arrah, Bihar, India

Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model also predicts that individuals will make use of several types of coping strategies (cognitive, emotional and behavioral) to deal with any given stressful event.

Based on extensive review of the literature on teacher stress and a broad review of theoretical teacher stress models, Montgomery and Rubb (2005), proposed a model of key constructs related to teacher stress and coping and their interrelationship. According to their model, teachers are involved in intra-individual processes that consist of the experiences and evaluations of external stressful events, which stem from different aspects of teachers' professional life such as students, administration, colleagues, workload demands, and features of the school environment. Furthermore, problems in teachers' personal life, such as relationship with a partner or financial problems may also affect their emotional, cognitive and behavioral state.

Once the stressful event is appraised, teachers engage in active or passive coping strategies and perhaps both. Active strategies can take the forms of cognitive, behavioral, or emotional strategies. This type of strategy is also evident in individuals' physical responses or health posture. On the contrary, passive coping strategies such as resignation, wishful thinking and avoidance are characterized by lack of direct engagement with the stressful event en route to its resolution.

The entire intra-individual situational process as has been described thus far is mediated by personality traits, so called personality mediators (i.e., attitude posture, driven behavior) that affect the magnitude of the relationships depicted in Montgomery and Rubb's (2005) core model. In addition, the degree to which individuals feel supported in the vocational and the domestic environments mediate the relationships. Characteristics of the vocational environment such as grade level taught, average class size, subject taught, type of school and background characteristics such as gender, educational qualifications, and years of experience are stable characteristics that may have some effect on intra-individual processes of dealing with stress effects.

### Purpose of the Study

Sources and levels of stress that teachers experience as well as the extent to which they apply different coping strategies and value their effectiveness may depend on their personal and job features. This study address these issues by examining the effect of teachers' personal and job characteristics on the level of stress they experience from various sources, in addition to their perception of the effectiveness of cognitive, behavioral and emotional coping strategies.

### Method

#### Participants

Data were obtained from 425 Bihari school teachers representing diverse personal and job characteristics. Among participants, 77.6% are female teachers; 61% are experienced teachers (more than 10 years); 68% work in urban schools, 55.3% are primary school teachers; 19.1% middle school teachers and 25.6% secondary school teachers; and 48% are Bihari teachers while 52% are Non Bihari teachers.

### Instrument

Participants completed an extended Hebrew version of the Teacher Stress (23 items) and Coping Strategies (21 items) Scale, which was developed, based on the Kyriacou and Chien's (2004) [6] scale. Responses to the stress coping items are given on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great degree). Factor analysis of the stress data yielded five factors (sources) of teacher stress (workload, relations with colleagues, school climate, student behavior, and educational policy) that account for 58% of the variance in the stress data. Values of internal consistency (Cronbach's) coefficients for the five stress factors range from .66 to .75. Factor analysis of the coping data yielded five factors of personal coping strategies (active-behavioral-improve teaching practice, health posture, sharing-social support, distancing, and emotional control) that account for 47% of the variance in the coping data. Values of the reliability coefficients for the coping factors range from .64 to .72, lower than those corresponding to the stress factors. Data about teacher personal characteristics (i.e., gender, experience and culture) and job characteristics (i.e., school level) were also obtained.

### Results

The effects of teacher's gender, experience, cultural group (Non Bihari versus Bihari teachers), non-teaching responsibilities (homeroom class, administrative and/or supervision role), school size, and school level, were examined using multivariate analysis of variance-MANOVA and the significant results are presented below.

Table 1 presents the significant results regarding the effect of gender on the level of stress caused by the stress factors and on the perceived effectiveness of coping strategies.

**Table 1:** Mean, SD and for Stress Factors and Perceived Effectiveness of Coping Strategies on which the Effect of Teacher's Gender is Significant

Variable	Gender				
	Female (n=320)		Male (n=99)		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	2
Stressors					
Workload	3.93	0.77	3.03	0.84	.018
Coping Strategies					
Behavioral change	3.93	0.62	3.61	0.80	.038
Social support	3.67	0.72	3.40	0.74	.024
Distancing	4.07	0.76	3.86	0.81	.012

Table 2 displays the significant results regarding the effect of teacher's experience (less than 10 years vs. 10 years or more) on the level of stress caused by the stress factors and on the perceived effectiveness of coping strategies. Results reveal that more experienced teachers encountered lower levels of stress caused by their colleagues and higher levels of stress caused by students' misbehavior and educational policy compared to less experienced teachers. More experienced teachers also attribute higher value to coping by changing behavior and emotional control compared to less experienced teachers. Teacher experience accounts for 5.8% of the variance in the three stress factors and two coping strategies jointly.

**Table 2:** Mean, SD and for Stress Factors and Perceived Effectiveness of Coping Strategies on which Teacher Experience Exerts Significant Effect

Variable	< 10 years (n=162)	SD	≥ 10 years (n=247)	SD	2
Stressors	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Colleagues	2.97	0.73	2.81	0.70	.012
Student behavior	3.33	0.83	3.48	0.79	.008
Educational policy	3.17	0.83	3.33	0.77	.009
Coping Strategies					
Distancing	3.89	0.72	4.10	0.78	.017
Emotional Control	3.67	0.75	3.86	0.69	.017

As to school level, results (Table 3) reveal that it exerts a

significant effect on the degree of stress caused by workload and colleagues and on the perceived effectiveness of coping by changing behavior and seeking help. Post hoc analysis indicate that the significant effect of school level on the degree of stress caused by work load stems from the significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers, whereby primary school teachers reported higher levels of stress caused by workload, compared to middle school teachers. As to stress caused by colleagues, the post hoc results revealed that compared to primary and middle school teachers, secondary school teachers are significantly less stressed by their colleagues. As for coping strategies, it was found that primary school teachers perceive coping by changing behavior as more effective as compared to middle school teachers, whereas middle school teachers value coping by seeking help significantly higher than primary and secondary school teachers. Meanwhile, compared to secondary school teachers, the perceived effectiveness of coping by seeking help among primary school teacher is significantly higher. School level accounts for 20.1% of the variance in the two stressor factors and the two coping strategies jointly.

**Table 3:** Mean, SD and <sup>2</sup> for Stress Factors and on the Perceived Effectiveness of Coping Strategies on which School Level Exerts a Significant Effect

Variable	Primary (n=193)	SD	Middle (n=123)	SD	Secondary (n=109)	SD	2	Contrasts
Stressors								
Work load	3.29	0.77	3.08	0.84	3.28	0.80	.014	1>2, 3>2
Colleagues	2.91	0.74	2.96	0.69	2.68	0.71	.024	2>3, 1>3
Coping strategies								
Behavioral change	3.94	0.63	3.74	0.80	3.83	0.62	.015	1>2
Seeking help	2.78	0.79	2.99	0.79	2.32	0.87	.090	2>1, 2>3,

Note: 1= primary school, 2=middle school, 3=secondary school

Table 4 portrays the significant results regarding the effect of culture on the level of stress caused by stress factors and on the perceived effectiveness of coping strategies. Compared to Bihari teachers, Non Bihari teachers experienced lower levels of stress caused by workload. They evaluated changing behavior, seeking social support,

distancing work at school and emotional coping as less effective coping strategies compared to their Bihari counterparts. In contrast, Non Bihari teachers evaluated seeking help as a more effective coping strategy compared to Bihari teachers. Culture accounts for a substantial amount (43.4%) of the variance in these six variables together.

**Table 4:** Mean, SD and for Stressor Factors and Perceived Effectiveness of Coping Strategies on which Teachers' Culture Exerts Significant Effect

Variable	Bihari (n=203)	SD	Non Bihari (n=222)	SD	2
Stressors					
Workload	3.42	0.80	3.05	0.76	.053
Coping strategies					
Behavioral change	3.98	0.53	3.75	0.78	.028
Seeking help	2.28	0.84	3.04	0.73	.148
Social support	3.86	0.71	3.37	0.70	.108
Distancing work at school	4.10	0.77	3.94	0.80	.010
Emotional control	3.97	0.66	3.61	0.73	.058

## Conclusion

Findings from this study highlight the relationship between teachers' stress levels [caused by various stressor factors] and perceptions of the effectiveness of different coping strategies and their personal and job characteristics. Results also demonstrate the differential effects of personal and job features on teachers' perceptions of various stressors and coping strategies. Among five stress factors, gender exerts a significant effect only on workload indicating that women experience higher levels of stress due to workload. Compared to men, women also evaluated behavioral change, seeking social support and distancing work at school higher. These gender differences can be attributed to different gender roles and social norms regarding different gender-related behaviors.

The results indicating that more experienced teachers, compared to less experienced peers, experience more stress due to students' misbehavior and educational policy can stem from losing tolerance due to burnout. The finding that more experienced teachers value the effectiveness of coping by behavioral change and emotional control more than less experienced teachers can be interpreted as a product of more familiarity with the teaching context and disbelief in their ability to change it. Consequently, compared with less experienced teacher, they perceive coping by working on self as more effective.

Results regarding the effect of school level indicate that student age and other features unique to school level may affect teachers' feelings of stress and their perception of the effectiveness of coping strategies. The finding that workload creates higher levels of stress among primary school teachers, as compared to their middle and high school peers, may be attributed to the fact that work with young children is more demanding than with older students. Furthermore, most primary school teachers in Israel are women who have also family responsibilities on top of their teaching career. The finding indicating that primary and middle school teachers are less stressed by colleagues than high school peers may reflect a less collaborative and more competitive climate in high schools in Israel. Within this context teachers' success is mostly judged on the basis of their students' success in high school matriculation examinations. Consequently, competition among colleagues on higher rates of students passing the high school examinations can impose much stress.

Teachers from different school levels also differ in their perception of the effectiveness of changing behavior and seeking help as coping strategies. Primary school teachers rate the effectiveness of behavioral change as a coping strategy higher than middle school teachers. They also view seeking help as a more effective strategy than secondary school teachers. Also middle school teachers attribute more effectiveness to seeking help as a coping strategy, compared to their high school counterparts. The finding that primary school teachers believe more than other teachers in the effectiveness of behavioral change can be attributed to the fact that most teachers in primary schools are women who believe that changing behavior when dealing with young students is possible and beneficial. As to seeking help, it is reasonable to suggest that primary and middle school teachers seek help with student who exhibit personal and behavioral problems more than high school teachers. Furthermore, secondary school teachers seek less professional help because they tend to be better qualified

than teachers in primary and middle schools.

The effect of culture on feelings of stress and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of coping strategies among teachers is substantial. The Bihari and Non Bihari educational systems in Israel are separate. The language in the Non Bihari schools is Non Bihari while the language in the Bihari schools is Hebrew. The two systems differ in terms of resources allocation and instructional aids. These differences as well as cultural norms, expectations related to teaching, teachers and students may account for part of the differences between the two cultural groups. The findings of the study bear important implications for teacher training and professional development as well as for creating a school climate within which different teachers with different needs can get the required support and tools to enable them to deal effectively with stressful situations. Awareness of teachers' needs and proper interventions that address them are likely to increase their job satisfaction and to reduce the odds of their burnout and attrition.

## References

1. Admiraal K, Wubbles A. Effects of student teachers' coping behavior. *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 2000;7(1):33-52.
2. Chaplain RP. Stress and psychological distress among trainee secondary teachers in England. *Educational psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology* 2008;28(2):195-209.
3. Griffith J, Steptoe A, Cropley M. An investigation of coping strategies associated with job stress in teachers. *British Journal of Psychology* 1999;69:517-513.
4. Jelinek CA. Stress and the pre-service teacher. *The Teacher Educator* 1986;22:2-8.
5. Kaiser JS, Polczynski JJ. Educational stress: Sources reactions, preventions. *Peabody Journal of Education* 1982;59(2):127-136.
6. Kyriacou C. Teacher stress: Directions for future research. *Educational Review*, 2001;53(1):27-35.
7. Kyriacou C, Chien PY. Teacher stress in Taiwanese primary schools. *Journal of Educational Enquiry* 2004;5(2):86-104.
8. Kyriacou C, Kunc R. Beginning teachers' expectation of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 2007;23(8):1246-1257.
9. Lazarus RS, Folkman S. Transactional theory and research on emotions and coping. *European Journal of Personality* 1987;1(3):141-169.
10. Montgomery C, Rupp A. A Meta analysis for exploring the diverse causes and effects of stress in teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education* 2005;28(3):458-486.