ISSN: 4556-3489
Arab Journal of Advanced Research and Development (AJARD)
المجلة العربية للبحوث المتقدمة والتنمية
Vol. 2, No. (9) oct. 2026

Teacher Stress in Libyan Secondary Schools: Sources, Effects, and Management Strategies from Students' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at the causes and impacts of teacher stress in secondary schools and also at ways to manage that stress from the viewpoint of students. The researchers used a design giving questionnaires to 26 secondary school students – 11 males and 15 females – from three schools in Al-Marj city, Libya. The results showed that students named noise, inattention, disrespect and negligence as the stressors for teachers. The data also showed that teachers cause negative feelings in students than students do to teachers with frowning and reprimanding being the strongest teacher behaviors. The study also found that teachers can recover from stress by using strategies, such, as taking short breaks and keeping a balanced view of student behavior. These findings suggest that we should create stress management programs that fit the educational environment. The study recommends setting up institutional support systems and teacher training programs that focus on techniques to reduce stress.

Keywords: teacher stress, Libyan secondary education, student perspectives, teacher-student relationships, stress management

الإجهاد المهني لدى المعلمين في المدارس الثانوية الليبية: المصادر والآثار واستراتيجيات الإدارة من وجهة نظر الطلاب

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الملخص(ABSTRACT)

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على أسباب الإجهاد المهني لدى المعلمين في المدارس الثانوية وآثاره، بالإضافة إلى استكشاف سبل إدارته والتعامل معه من وجهة نظر الطلاب.

استخدم الباحثون المنهج الوصفي من خلال توزيع استبيانات على عينة مكونة من 26 طالباً وطالبة من طلاب المرحلة الثانوية، بواقع 11 ذكراً و15 أنثى، من ثلاث مدارس بمدينة المرج في ليبيا.

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ISSN: 4556-3489
Arab Journal of Advanced Research and Development (AJARD)
المجلة العربية للبحوث المتقدمة والتنمية
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أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب حددوا الضوضاء، وعدم الانتباه، وقلة الاحترام، والإهمال بوصفها أبرز العوامل المسببة للإجهاد لدى المعلمين. كما كشفت البيانات أن سلوكيات المعلمين تتسبب في إثارة مشاعر سلبية لدى الطلاب بدرجة أكبر من المشاعر التي يتسبب فيها الطلاب لدى المعلمين، حيث كان العبوس والتوبيخ من أبرز السلوكيات التي يمارسها المعلمون تجاه الطلاب.

وأوضحت الدراسة أيضاً أن المعلمين يمكنهم التعافي من آثار الإجهاد من خلال اتباع مجموعة من الاستراتيجيات، مثل أخذ فترات راحة قصيرة، والحفاظ على نظرة متوازنة تجاه سلوكيات الطلاب.

وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أهمية إنشاء برامج لإدارة الإجهاد تتناسب مع طبيعة البيئة التعليمية. كما توصي الدراسة بإنشاء أنظمة دعم مؤسسي، وتنفيذ برامج تدريبية للمعلمين تركز على أساليب وتقنيات الحد من الإجهاد المهني والتعامل معه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإجهاد المهني لدى المعلمين، التعليم الثانوي الليبي، وجهات نظر الطلاب، العلاقات بين المعلم والط

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Teaching is widely seen as a job that can take a heavy psychological toll on those who do it. Beers (2012) said that stress in the classroom can wear down a teacher's motivation and interest making it harder for them to support students. Over time this can lead to burnout. This problem is not unique to any one country—teacher stress is an issue.. How it shows up can be very different depending on the place. In Libya for example teachers face challenges. The education system there has been affected by unrest changes in what is taught and a lack of basic resources. These conditions make teacher stress more serious. Still while many Libyan teachers likely feel stressed, not much research has looked at this issue through the eyes of students. Students spend their days in classrooms so they see how stress affects teachers every day. They notice changes in mood, behavior or energy. Also student actions—, like behavior or lack of attention—can increase teacher stress. Understanding this link might help teachers and students work together better. It could lead to communication, less tension and a more positive learning environment.

1.2 Research Questions and Aims

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

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ISSN: 4556-3489
Arab Journal of Advanced Research and Development (AJARD)
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1. What do students perceive as the primary causes of stress for their teachers?
2. How do teachers and students influence each other's behavior in the classroom?
3. What strategies do Libyan students suggest for managing teacher stress?

The study aimed to examine the sources leading to teacher stress in Libyan secondary schools, investigate the reciprocal influence between students' and teachers' behaviors, and identify potential solutions to alleviate teacher stress.

1.3 Methodology Overview

This study employed a quantitative research design utilizing questionnaires as the primary data collection instrument. The research focused on students as key informants regarding their teachers' experiences of stress. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to examine relationships between relevant variables.

1.4 Scope and Significance

This study looked at secondary school students who attended three schools in Al-Marj city, Libya and who were in either the first or second year of secondary school. The results from this study might not apply everywhere. Still this study can help teachers by giving them ideas for stress-management programs. It can also help students by raising their awareness of how their own behaviour might affect teachers. Moreover this study can help institutions by giving them solid evidence, for creating new interventions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sources of Teacher Stress

The sources of teacher stress depend on the situation. Happen when teachers feel their hard work is not properly acknowledged (Antoniou et al., 2013). When stress lasts for a time it can cause serious problems. Kendi (2012) called stress "a killer" because it quietly harms a teacher’s health and job satisfaction.

Student behavior is one of the reasons teachers feel stressed. Beers (2012) found that student misbehavior is the factor linked to teacher anxiety and stress in many studies. Teachers often worry about discipline problems students missing school, violent actions

and difficulties managing students who come from situations. Srozynski (2013) said that teachers stress and negative feelings are closely tied to student misbehavior and rule-breaking showing that teacher stress and student actions can affect each other.

Changes in policy also add to teacher stress. When curriculum rules keep changing teachers must adjust their teaching methods quickly while still delivering lessons. Kendall (2012) pointed out that schools and teachers are often asked to deal with social problems without being given enough time or support. This leads to gaps, in what students learn in important skills and knowledge.

2.2 Teacher Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy, which means believing in one's ability to carry out teaching tasks well is very important for protecting teachers from work stress. The link between teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout is influenced by job stress. When teachers feel a lot of stress teacher self-efficacy can drop (Schwarzer & Hallum 2008). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2001) found that teachers with teacher self-efficacy are less harsh on students when students make mistakes and teachers with higher teacher self-efficacy keep working with struggling students for longer.

2.3 Personal Differences and Coping Strategies

People's personality traits strongly shape how teachers react to stress. Studies show that Type A people—who are energetic, aggressive and ambitious—are more likely to suffer health problems from stress than Type B people—who're calm, relaxed and easygoing (Kendi, 2012). The ways that teachers handle stress have an impact on their well-being. Antoniou and colleagues (2013) said that when teachers face situations the way teachers respond is key to how much tension they feel. Good ways to cope with stress are problem-focused methods, emotion-focused methods and asking for support.

2.4 Stress Management Programs

Many different programs have been created to help teachers deal with job stress. Harris and colleagues (2016) studied the Community Approach to Learning Mindfully (CALM) a program that helps teachers lower stress, with short daily sessions. In the way Roeser and colleagues (2013) studied mindfulness training arguing that "by coping more effectively and being more resilient... Teachers conserve physical and mental energies

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Arab Journal of Advanced Research and Development (AJARD)
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that are then available to invest in effectively managing relating to, motivating and teaching students" (p. 2).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Target Context and Participants

The study took place in Al-Marj city, which lies in Libya about 100 kilometers away from Benghazi. We gathered participants from three schools: a public school named Mohammad Asal and two private schools called Al-Morouj Al-Momayyaza and Al-Fasel Al-Shaabi. In total 26 students joined the study. Among them 11 were male and 15 were female. All participants were between 15 and 17 years old with an age of 16. They came from both year and second-year secondary classes.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

We used a research design. The questionnaires were made for this study and each question came straight from the three research questions. Students answered a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions. These questions aimed to learn how students see teacher stress how teachers and students affect each other. What ways students think could help manage teacher stress.

3.3 Data Analysis

We analysed the data with techniques. First we used statistics to show how many students chose each answer giving frequencies and percentages for the closed-ended questions. For the questions we performed thematic analysis to spot repeated patterns. Finally we ran a correlation analysis to see if any relationships existed between the variables we were interested in.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Students' Perceptions of Teacher Stressors

When students were asked how often teachers feel stressed most of them – 88% (23 students) – said teachers feel stressed "sometimes." One student, which is 4% thought teachers are stressed "always " and two students, 8% thought teachers are never stressed. When students talked about where teacher stress comes from 15 students said it happens

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inside the classroom. Three students said it happens outside the classroom. Eight students said it depends on the situation mentioning things, like teacher personality and specific contexts as factors that matter.

Perceived Causes of Teacher Stress revealed multiple factors, with the following most frequently mentioned:

- Noise (majority of participants)
- Student inattention
- Disrespect
- Student negligence
- Negative working environment
- Interruptions (from administrators, colleagues, or students)
- Student questions on subject matter
- Repeated student failure
- Social matters
- School inspector visits (cited by 4 students)

4.2 Reciprocal Influence Between Teachers and Students

The majority of participants (65%, n=17) believed that teachers affect students, while only 15% (n=4) believed students affect teachers. The remaining 15% expressed more nuanced perspectives, suggesting bidirectional influence depending on teacher personality.

Teacher Behaviors Affecting Students:

- Frowning and not smiling: 46% (n=12)
- Reprimanding students publicly: 19% (n=5)
- Excessive homework: 4% (n=1)
- Multiple selections: 2 participants

Student Behaviors Affecting Teachers:

- Negligence: 35% (n=9)
- Noise: 31% (n=8)
- Inattention: 27% (n=7)
- Multiple selections: 2 participants

4.3 Stress Management Strategies

When asked whether teachers calm down after experiencing stress:

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- Yes: 38% (n=10)
- No: 8% (n=2)
- It depends: 54% (n=14), attributed to teacher personality, situational factors, and how teachers deal with the situation

Strategies for Calming Down identified by students included:

- Changing positions (sitting down, leaving the classroom temporarily)
- Taking time alone
- Practicing patience
- Forgiving students
- Forcing a smile
- Having a student make a joke to lighten the mood

One notable response emphasized: "They need to stay by their own for a while and remember that they are just kids or teenagers and that's normal."

When asked whether teachers return to their normal state after being relieved of stress:

- Yes: 58% (n=15)
- No: 8% (n=2)
- It depends: 35% (n=9), attributed to teacher character and specific situations

Recommendations for Managing Teacher Stress:

- Teachers should calm down and stay relaxed
- Teachers should instruct students to be quiet
- Teachers should leave the classroom for 5 minutes to regain composure
- Teachers should avoid reacting immediately when stressed
- Teachers should remember that students are young and full of energy

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Sources of Teacher Stress

The results show that students see reasons why teachers feel stressed. The common reasons are loud noises, not paying attention being disrespectful and not taking things seriously. These results match studies, especially one by Beers in 2012 who said that student actions are one of the biggest reasons teachers feel stressed. Another study by Srozynski in 2013 found that when students act badly it makes teachers feel stressed and unhappy.

When students act badly it is one of the reasons teachers feel stressed. This matches the ideas of Lazarus and Folkman from 1984. Their theory says that stress comes from how teachers and the classroom environment interact. When teachers feel that student actions are hurting their job they get stressed. Students also said that other things like the classroom setup being interrupted and people checking on them are also stressors. This matches a study by Antoniou et al. In 2013, which found that many things in the school setting can make teachers feel stressed.

5.2 Reciprocal Influence Between Teachers and Students

One important result is that students think teachers influence them more than students influence teachers. This was a bit surprising because previous research shows that student behavior is a cause of teacher stress.. This might be because students see things from their own point of view. They notice how teachers feel more than how they act. This result is important because it suggests that how teachers feel and act can affect how students feel and do in class.

The teacher actions that students said are the worst are. Yelling at students in front of others. These actions show how teachers can affect students. They might make students feel bad feel anxious or feel like they don't belong. On the hand the actions students said are the most stressful are making noise not paying attention and not trying hard. These actions make it hard for teachers to keep things under control and help students learn. The way these things work together suggests there could be a cycle. When students act badly teachers get stressed and then teachers act in ways that make students feel worse.

5.3 Stress Management Strategies

The fact that many students think teachers can calm down after a stressful time is news. It shows that students don't think stress is always there or never goes away. The ways students said teachers can calm down—like taking a break being patient forgiving students and thinking about things in a way—match what is known about stress management.

One idea students had was that teachers should remember that students are kids or teenagers and that it is normal for them to act that way. This shows that students understand that some actions are just part of growing up. The idea that teachers should not react away to stressful moments matches research on how people control their feelings and act. The ideas students had, like leaving the classroom for a time are the same as what is suggested in stress management research.

The fact that students had answers about whether teachers can go back to normal after stress shows that how teachers recover from stress depends on many things. This matches what Schwarzer and Hallum said in 2008 about how confident teachers feel in their job and what Kendi said in 2012 about how people're different.

5.4 Implications

The results have things to say about how schools work. First if student behavior is a reason teachers feel stressed then schools should help teachers learn how to manage a classroom especially for new teachers. Second since teachers and students affect each other programs should help both sides. The idea that yelling at students is bad supports the need to make sure students are treated with respect when they do something wrong. Third the ways students said teachers can handle stress—like taking time off thinking clearly and not reacting away—could help create simple stress programs that schools with few resources can use.

5.5 Contribution to Existing Knowledge

This study adds information by looking at a place that hasn't been studied much like Libya. It is one of the studies that looked at teacher stress from the student point of view giving new ideas about how teachers feel and how that affects classroom life. The fact that what students said matches what other studies found about teachers shows that students can be trusted to say what they see. This study also found some things that are especially important, in Libya like people coming to check on teachers and the idea that students should respect teachers.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of Findings

This study looked at teacher stress in secondary schools from the perspective of students. The results show that students see reasons why teachers get stressed. The common reasons are student behavior such as noise, not paying attention being disrespectful and not taking things seriously. Other reasons include the work environment, interruptions students failing, issues and visits from inspectors.

The study also found that teachers have an effect on students than students have on teachers. Frowning and scolding in front of everyone are the important behaviors teachers use. On the hand noise, not paying attention and being careless are the student

ISSN: 4556-3489
Arab Journal of Advanced Research and Development (AJARD)
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behaviors that cause the most stress for teachers. These results show that there is a two-way relationship where bad behavior from both sides leads to stress and negative feelings.

The results show that teachers can get over stress by taking time off being patient and thinking about student behavior in a way. Most students thought teachers could calm down after a situation. However the way teachers recover was seen as depending on their personality. What is happening at the time.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the results the following suggestions are made:

1. Teacher training: Schools should offer training for teachers in managing the classroom and handling stress. This should cover ways to stop behavior before it happens and ways to deal with stress when it happens.
2. Student awareness: Students should learn about how their actions affect teachers well-being. This can lead to behavior in the classroom.
3. Stress management programs: Schools should. Use stress management programs that fit the situation in Libya. These should include the ideas that students have.
4. Support: School leaders should make the work environment better for teachers. This includes reducing things that're not necessary giving teachers what they need and making sure that evaluation is fair.
5. Policy considerations: Those who make education policies should think about how their changes affect teachers. When new things are added to the curriculum they should be done slowly. With enough help for teachers.
6. Research: More study is needed to look at teacher stress in Libya. This should include points of view such as what teachers say and what is seen in the classroom.

6.3 Limitations

This study has some things that limit what can be learned. The group of students was 26 from three schools in Al-Marj city. This means the results may not apply to all places. The study used students to talk about teacher stress. This gives a point of view but students may not know all the reasons why teachers feel stressed. The way the study was done did not let people look deeply into what the students said. Finally this study was done in 2020, a time with its problems. Future studies should check if teacher stress has changed as conditions, in Libya have changed.

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ISSN: 4556-3489
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