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Mental Health Awareness: A Study on Urban Secondary School Teachers in Selangor

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Abstract

Teachers are known to be resilient to stress, anxiety, and depression; hence were unable to relate themselves to mental health issues, let alone having anxiety. Even though the symptoms were obvious, most teachers think their mental health issues are controllable. These were the case with 20 urban secondary school teachers from 13 schools in Selangor. Due to the rising number of teachers suffering from stress, anxiety, and depression in Malaysia, the state of Selangor was chosen since it has the highest number of urban secondary schools. This study uses a mixed-method design, combining the quantitative method (DASS-21 Screening Test) and the qualitative method (interviews). The use of DASS-21 is to understand their mental health level before the qualitative phase. While this study would like to understand the informants' mental health awareness from the social marketing point of view, the result showed that most informants do not know where to start as they do not realise they have mental health issues. Hence, publications and information were undistributed to this cohort as they could not relate to having one.

Keywords: Teachers, Mental Health Awareness, Stress, Anxiety, Depression, DASS21.

Introduction

Could it be that teachers worldwide are battling mental health issues without realizing it as it runs in the job description or simply because teachers have to be resilient to it? The National Foundation for Educational Research showed that in the U.K. workforce, demonstrates that teachers experience more job-related stress than other professionals (Worth, 2019). A survey found that American teachers experience more workplace stress than employees in other industries nationwide, and 40% of working-class people said they frequently experience stress at work compared to 78% of teachers (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Teachers worldwide have many things on their plates with so little time for themselves. It is a wonder if they understand their mental health level since every day is a battle for them. Do they have time for themselves?

Hence, although this study looks into mental health issues, it does not wish to seek from the medical point of view but rather from the social marketing perspective; it would like to delve into the informants' mental health awareness as its objective.

Literature Review

Mental Health Issues

“There was no more urgent task than fighting for the physical and mental health of the human community, which was only just emerging from the most painful crisis of its whole history ~ WHO, 1948.”

The World Health Organization has been addressing mental health issues for ages, but stigma towards people with mental health issues is still a battle for the organization is nothing new. WHO has emphasized that this is heavily influenced by how planners and professionals were trained, what they believed their social responsibility is, and ultimately, what society expected of them because the community is still reluctant to discuss mental health issues publicly (WHO, 2004). The organization highlighted that people experiencing mental health issues are often stigmatized, shunned, discriminated against, and denied their rights, including access to essential care (WHO, 2013). Unfortunately, disclosing mental health status to others may put one at a disadvantage. According to a study by the organization in 2021, stigma is still a barrier for people with mental health issues. As a result of stigma and discrimination, people with mental health issues frequently have their human rights violated, and many are denied economic, social, and cultural rights, with restrictions on the rights to work and education, as well as reproductive rights and the right to the highest attainable standard of health (WHO, 2021). Why is the stigma still thick in society even when campaigns have been around for ages? Is it still taboo to discuss it openly? Are we still in denial?

Teachers Worldwide & Mental Health Issues

Estimation before the COVID-19 pandemic was that close to a billion people suffer from mental health issues, but only a fraction of those in need has access to timely, cost-efficient, and high-quality care. People with mental health issues frequently face stigma, discrimination, and human rights breaches in local communities and treatment systems worldwide (WHO, 2022). Battling the stigma was never easy, as it delays people with mental health issues seeking help (WHO, 2021). While most people are reluctant to seek help due to their mental health issues, we should be concerned with teachers having the same reluctance too. But are the teachers willing to acknowledge that they are having mental health issues? What are the factors that contribute to it? Stress, anxiety and depression might portray the same symptoms, but which one has the highest score in being the cause? Do they know where to begin? All these questions yet, so little time. The percentage of teachers suffering from burnout, low job satisfaction and demoralization is eyebrow-raising and is increasing, which could lead to stress, anxiety, and depression.

Mental health is important not only for the impact it has on teachers, but also due to the impact it has on students and schools. Furthermore, it is crucial to protect teachers' emotional wellbeing because, as a recent study by De la Fuente et al (2020) points out, teacher-student relationships can also be stressful for students, and teachers' behaviour affects how emotionally healthy and committed their students are, both of which are crucial for lowering stress levels.

MacIntyre et al (2020) discovered that teachers had high levels of stress, with workload and family health being the main contributors. The fact that 77% of school teachers in the U.K.

experienced at least one symptom that showed poor mental health due to work in 2021 and an increase of 3% from 2020 is worth the ponder. The Teacher Wellbeing Index (2021) added that 38% of their school teachers had mental health issues in the previous year, 44% believed they could be a sign of anxiety, and 28% of respondents said these might be depressive symptoms. A study in Hong Kong saw a moderately positive relationship between music teachers' fears of COVID-19 and anxiety symptoms (Cheng & Lam, 2021). Adding to this, Italian teachers exhibited a comparable level of anxiety and somewhat higher rates of depression than the general population (Truzoli et al., 2021), and in a similar case in Thailand, 3.2% of teachers had severe to extremely severe depression, 11.2% had severe to extremely severe anxiety, and 6.0% had severe to extremely severe stress. This are reluctant to report psychological distress because of the stigma associated with mental health; they are more likely to report somatic symptoms than psychological symptoms in contrast to Westerners (Ratanasiripong et al., 2022). And with the advent of working from home, teachers worldwide were forced to manage their personal lives and professional obligations. Many believed their lives had become too stressful due to work (The World Bank, UNESCO & UNICEF, 2021).

Malaysian Teachers & Mental Health Issues

Looking at what is happening worldwide, studies have shown that Malaysian teachers are going through a similar pattern. Like many countries in the world, this issue has been a long dilemma for teachers in Malaysia. Rohaidah (2015) stated that teachers in Malaysia have experienced work-related stress for many reasons and can experience stress at work and low job satisfaction. Stressed people will often experience effects like anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, lack of concentration, and an inability to control their anger in stressful situations, which could result in physical and mental health issues and behavioural changes (Yaribeygi et al., 2017). A study involving secondary school teachers in Malaysia found that 13% of the sample population had significant anxiety, and 3% had severe depression and stress. Other setbacks include the potential for teachers with poor mental health also have poor physical health, including lower back stiffness. In a vicious cycle, stress and anxiety among teachers can be made worse by poor physical health (Zamri et al., 2017). People who work in positions involving interactions with the community, such as psychologists, nurses, and teachers, are more likely to experience burnout or mental and physical exhaustion (Turtulla, 2017).

The Ministry of Education Malaysia in Star Online on 23rd July 2018 (Musa, 2018) stated that stress could also be brought on by management, workload, feeling unappreciated, and a lack of stress management skills. It is also reported that, due to rising numbers of students in urban areas such as Johor and Selangor, the states have a shortage of teachers. On the same note, The Star Online dated 12 October 2018 NUTP added that in some cases a teacher needs to handle 60 students per class and is burdened with administrative workloads. These cases are not to be taken lightly especially when studies have shown that 44% of teachers in Malaysia are suffering from stress and depression. The Ministry also recommends hiring additional counsellors to assist instructors and raise awareness of stress management techniques. This is crucial as the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP, 2018) reported that they receive between 30 to 50 cases of stressed teachers monthly. The union have listed registering students' attendance online and in their physical logbook, reporting the school's level of cleanliness and safety are among the untreated stress reason. They have also cited The Ministry of Education on the issue of teachers having to do redundant work.

Teachers in Malaysia today are responsible for a variety of extracurricular activities, parent relations, and administrative tasks in addition to their obligations in the classroom (Othman & Sivasubramanian, 2019). While anger, anxiety, frustration, and despair are associated with teaching duties and are referred to as work stress in the education industry, the teachers had to adapt to the new norm before and after the pandemic, which added to the extensive list of duties they already had. Another challenge added to the teachers was when the Ministry initiated the *Program Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran Di Rumah PdPR* or the Home-based teaching and learning programme. Amri et al (2020) stated the Covid -19 epidemic outbreak has resulted in increased teacher stress due to a lack of digital technology skills and a lack of devices (gadgets), workload, social support, and family conflict. According to Gaming, Hassan, and Hamzah (2020), there are seven sources of stress, including (1) intrinsic factors in the workplace like the work environment, repetitive tasks, role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility towards others, lack of responsibility, and lack of management support, (2) lack of participation in decision-making processes, and dealing with rapid technological change. (3) Workplace connections, (4) career advancement, (5) organisational structure and atmosphere, and (6) external sources of work stress, such as family issues, life crises, monetary issues, workplace conflicts, and stress from the family.

Having said that, teachers worldwide have reported many factors influencing the severity of mental health issues they suffer. Most teachers experience stress due to time management, too many ad hoc tasks, and work-related issues (Pau et al., 2022). However, in comparison to other countries, Malaysian teachers have limited knowledge of counselling and treatment, when to raise their hands for help, and when to shut down from work. Also, due to the nature of their work, teachers have regular interactions with students during critical periods of development; as a result, teacher well-being affects student well-being in ways that affect the course of the future generation's mental health.

Method

Research Design

This study uses a mixed-method approach which employs a quantitative approach as the first phase with a questionnaire based on the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) psychological test distributed earlier via Google Forms. The DASS-21 test is used in this study to understand the participants' mental health levels of anxiety and depression and to screen which participants suit the study's criteria. Fullan and Hargreaves (1993) claimed that questionnaires are suitable for obtaining information related to work stress.

Meanwhile, the second phase is a qualitative method that uses interviews to investigate and comprehend the study's objectives in depth for the sample. Qualitative method research is to gain phrases and informational concepts rather than numbers (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Qualitative research can provide a detailed and comprehensive explanation of a person's experience and understanding (Merriam, 2015).

Informants

According to the Ministry of Education, Selangor and Johor have a teacher shortage, particularly in urban areas (Musa, 2018). Figures from the Ministry of Education Malaysia show that Selangor has the most urban secondary schools in Malaysia. As stated in Table 1, Selangor had 156 urban secondary schools with 222,353 students and 16,152 teachers in 2018. As a result of population increase and demands, the number of secondary schools in Selangor has risen to 221 urban schools with 328,294 students and 22,365 teachers in 2019

and 2020, 221 urban schools. The school was operating with 326,308 students and 22,456 teachers. Since Selangor had the highest number of urban schools in Malaysia and considering the teacher shortage issue, this study chose the state's teachers from urban secondary schools as its sample.

Table 1

Urban Secondary schools in Selangor

Year	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
2018	156	222,353	16,152
2019	222	328,504	22,881
2020	221	326,308	22,456

Source: EMIS, APDM, e-OPERASI 2021

And also, taking into consideration The National Union of the Teaching Profession (NTUP) posting in 2018 that remarked that a teacher occasionally has to manage 60 students in a class while also carrying a heavy administrative workload, this study selects schools with over 1800 schools as its sample. Upon discussions and approval from the Ministry of Education (KPM.600-3/2/3-eras (11622)) and the State Education Department (JPNS.SPD.600-1/1/2 JLD.18 (57)), there were 59 urban secondary schools with over 1800 pupils selected. Table 2 shows the details.

Table 2

Urban Secondary schools with above 1800 students in Selangor

Year	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
2018	37	83,527	5,400
2019	62	143,822	9,079
2020	59	138,187	8,583

Source: EMIS, APDM, e-OPERASI 2021

Concerned that the interview would spread the COVID-19 pandemic, the Education Ministry granted permission on the condition that informants must be interviewed online rather than in person. Following this, consent letters, invitations and questionnaires were sent to the school principals online. As a result, 13 schools responded to the invitations. Based on several criteria, the informants were filtered by looking at their DASS21 results. They should have at least mild stress, anxiety, or depression. They must be a secondary school teacher and volunteered to participate in this study. And they must be free of severe psychopathology and severe mental health problems (i.e., schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, hallucinations, active psychosis, suicidal). Later, 25 informants who met the criteria were contacted and agreed to participate. However, the number of informants has turned to 20 since five were reluctant to be interviewed. The informants preferred to be interviewed via a telephone call since most of them were uncomfortable using video calls.

Instrument

The instruments used in this study are a mix of quantitative and qualitative. For quantitative data, a set of questionnaires (Google Form) with two parts: (1) Part A (Demographic Information): six items such as gender, race, teaching class level, age, and

whether they have taken the DASS21 test, and (2) Part B (DASS-21): 21 items with three self-reports designed to measure emotional states such as depression, anxiety, and stress. Each DASS-21 test's three scales comprise seven items separated into sub-scales with comparable material. The depression scale will evaluate dysphasia, hopelessness, life devaluation, self-declination, lack of interest and involvement, anhedonia, and inertia. The anxiety scale evaluates autonomic stimuli, skeletal muscle effects, state anxiety, and subjective experiences caused by anxiety. The stress scale is responsive to chronic non-specific stressors. It assesses difficulty relaxing, nerve stimulation, being quickly upset/anxious, being readily upset/more reactive, and being impatient. For depression, anxiety, and stress, the scoring procedure is to add the scores of each item included. The DASS-21 test has translated and validated the Malay, with 21 items (Ramli et al., 2007). Each item was assessed using a scale of four answer choices: Indirect/Never (0), Rarely (1), Often (2), and Very Often (3). The following formula was used to calculate DASS-21 test scores: Depression = [S3+S5+S10+S13+S16+S17+S21], Anxiety = [S2+S4+S7+S9+S15+S19+S20], Stress = [S1+S6+S8+S11+S12+S14+S18] = Stress Level.

For qualitative data, a set of interview protocols to identify the theme of issues related to the study. Qualitative research is inductive by nature, and the researcher often examines meanings and insights in a specific context (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Levitt et al., 2017). The information obtained is more detailed, involves small size informants and is more focused on the issues in line with the objective of the study. Where else for qualitative, a set of interview protocol to identify the theme of issues related to the study.

The study was divided into two parts: descriptive analysis including data from Part A (Demographics) and Part B. (DASS-21 Test). Microsoft Excel 2019 was used to evaluate quantitative data. While qualitative data from the interview process and interview transcript were evaluated concurrently.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Data

There were a total of 20 informants for this study. The breakdown by race was two male teachers and 18 female teachers. 17 Malay teachers, one Chinese teaches, and two Indian teachers and by age was 20-29 (1), 30-39 (5), 40-49 (8), and 50-59 (6). Out of the 20 informants, only three have taken the DASS21 test and are well aware of it, while the rest have not heard of it before. Details of information for all informants are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3
Demographic Profile of informants (N = 20)

Pseudo	Gender	Race	Class	Age	DASS	Stress	Anxiety	Depression
Mas	Female	Malay	4	59	No	Normal	Mild	Normal
Ani	Female	Malay	6	58	No	Normal	Moderate	Mild
Lis	Female	Malay	3, 4	57	No	Normal	Mild	Normal
Wong	Female	Chinese	4,5	55	No	Ext Severe	Ext Severe	Ext Severe
Fiza	Female	Malay	1, 2	53	No	Normal	Mild	Normal
Jamal	Male	Malay	1,2	50	No	Moderate	Ext Severe	Moderate
Zana	Female	Malay	4,5	49	No	Mild	Ext Severe	Moderate
Haya	Female	Malay	1,2	47	No	Normal	Moderate	Normal

Nur	Female	Malay	4,5	46	No	Mild	Severe	Mild
Wati	Female	Malay	3,4,5	46	No	Normal	Mild	Normal
Rani	Female	Indian	1,2	46	No	Ext Severe	Severe	Ext Severe
Pushpa	Female	Indian	PPKI	41	No	Normal	Mild	Normal
Hakim	Male	Malay	3,4,5	41	No	Normal	Moderate	Normal
Aida	Female	Malay	PPKI	40	No	Severe	Ext Severe	Ext Severe
Aisyah	Female	Malay	PPKI	39	No	Normal	Mild	Normal
Iza	Female	Malay	PPKI	38	No	Mild	Mild	Normal
Nisa	Female	Malay	3,5	37	Yes	Severe	Ext Severe	Moderate
Farah	Female	Malay	4,5	37	Yes	Mild	Severe	Moderate
Eli	Female	Malay	3,4,5	36	No	Normal	Mild	Mild
Azza	Female	Malay	3,4,5	26	Yes	Normal	Mild	Moderate

Informants' Depression, Anxiety and Stress Levels Result

DASS-21 test on 20 informants of the study answered the first objective of the study which is to understand the informants' nature of work that could contribute their stress, anxiety and depression as indicated in Table 4.

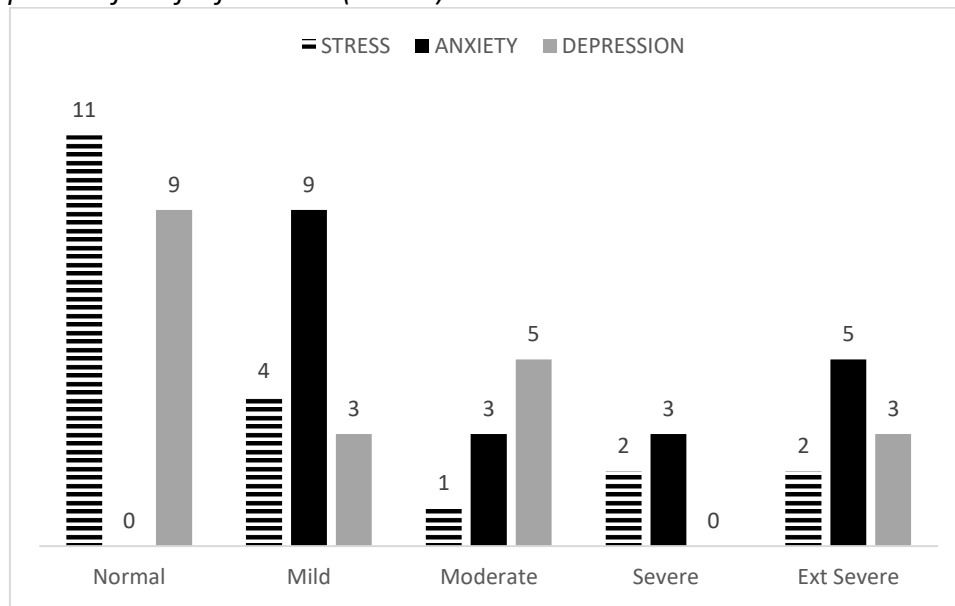
Table 4
Demographic Profile of informants (N = 20)

DASS Score	Stress (#)	Anxiety (#)	Depression (#)
Normal	11	0	9
Mild	4	9	3
Moderate	1	3	5
Severe	2	3	0
Extremely Severe	2	5	3

Based on the DASS-21 test results Table 5, most of the informants have normal level of stress, which is 11 out of 20, 4 with mild stress, 1 for each moderate, 2 severe, and 2 extremely severe. As for depression, 9 out of 20 informants have normal depression, 3 mild, 5 moderate while 3 informants are having extremely severe depression. Whereas for anxiety result, none of the informants have normal anxiety. 9 out of 20 is experiencing mild anxiety, 3 for both moderate and severe anxiety while 5 out of 20 are experiencing extremely severe anxiety.

Table 5

Demographic Profile of informants (N = 20)



Following the quantitative result from DASS21, further interview was done to understand the informants' mental health awareness after they have received their DASS21 results. A theme and subtheme was produced as detailed in Table 6.

Table 6

Theme and sub-theme emerged from qualitative interviews with informants

Theme	Subtheme
What is your understanding about mental health issues?	Don't know where to start
	Don't realize that they are having mental health issue
	Can't relate to mental health issues

Most of the informants never knew about DASS21 and how easy it was to monitor their mental health status online. Only three out of 20 informants knew and have taken the DASS21 test before. The rest of the informants were unable to relate as in their eyes, they are healthy. Although the symptoms such as sweaty palms, palpitations, difficulty controlling feelings of worry, sleep problems or difficulty falling or staying asleep (WHO, 2020) were obvious, they thought it was due to work. And although enlightening information was in the media about Mental Health Awareness, they are still in denial. Seeking early treatment is out of the question for most of them as they thought that it is controllable and that they can manage it.

"We don't know which platform to check. I sincerely think that there should be a talk to us teacher about knowing our mental health level" (Ani, 57 Female)

"Although there are some tests given to us before, I don't know what is it for and we don't get the results. So, I would not know what is the purpose I took the test" (Wong, 55 Female)

"Yes, I have seen it in October if I am not mistaken. There was an awareness month. I got the link, so I pass it around to those who needed it. I did not take the test though. Why? Because I don't see the need" (Mas, 59 Female)

"So far, I have never heard of DASS21. Or is it because I don't look for it? Or simply because I don't feel the need. We can feel ourselves you see; we can sense that we are stressed tired or restless. So not need to take tests, we just rest" (Fiza, 53 Female)

"I don't know what is DASS21. This is the first time I took the test, and this is the first time I heard of it. Although my results are normal, now I know I have moderate anxiety. Maybe it is time for me to look for more information about anxiety" (Haya, 47 Female)

"I know I have high blood pressure and I know where to go to check but for mental health, I don't know which platform to go. I sincerely think that there should be a talk to us teachers about knowing our mental health level" (Rani, 46 Female)

Most of the informants have raised the concerns that seeking treatments is time-consuming and they might have to miss their classes; thus, they would rather sleep their problems away.

"I have seen it somewhere but since I am ok, I can't relate to it. Why waste my time? I don't think it is necessary to take the test. When asked to be responded to this questionnaire, I questioned my administrator as to why I should take this test. I don't have any mental health problem" (Wati, 46 Female)

"I think going for these treatments will take time. Most of us feel that it would be a hassle and time-consuming. Classes will be missed, and pending jobs will stack up." (Nur, 46, female)

It is heartbreaking to understand that they have ignored their symptoms due to work commitments. Upon receiving their mental health status via DASS21, the informants finally admitted that their anxiety was caused by many issues.

"O gosh, I did not realize that my DASS21 results were this bad until you showed me. I mean, I know I have fatigue, and I know I could not sleep at night, but it can't be this bad. Sigh... but I have too many things to do. But I don't tell just anybody about myself. My experience taught me well. Because of that, I have trust issues. Then again, if I go for an appointment, it will take up a day. It is so time-consuming. This means I am unable to come to my class." (Rani, 46, female)

"Sometimes I wonder why I am doing this (clerical job). I am a teacher, not a clerical staff. Why is it we are troubled by this ya? This has been going on and on for quite some time already. The system has changed many times, but this... stays like forever. I am tired of it" (Nisa, 37 female)

"I would have to admit that I am tired of these clerical things, administrative, online things especially PdPR, reports and all are making me lose my passion. I am no longer motivated, and I can assure you that most of the teachers as just waiting for their early retirement" (Haya, 47 female)

They have highlighted that there were no guidelines as to know that they are having mental health issues and they do not know where to start. They do not want anyone else to know their mental health status, thus; they find that DASS21 helped them to understand further.

The fact that they do not even know they are suffering from mental health issues is rather worrying. This study found out that due to this, many have sorted to take early retirement. Sitheravellu's post on April 23, 2022, in *New Straits Times Online* stated that there is a need to address this issue of teachers' retiring early. This is relatable with the National Union of Teachers' announcement that approximately 10,000 teachers had applied for early retirement for the past few years. Senior Education Minister Datuk Dr Radzi Jidin revealed that the number of teachers who had opted for early retirement was almost equal to those on compulsory retirement.

"I am just waiting for my pension. Teaching is not what it used to be. There is too much admin work, online forms, parents interfering, and no respect for teachers. What will happen to our future society?" (Lis, 57 female).

"I have to admit that I am tired of these clerical things, administrative, online things, especially PdPR, reports, and all this is making me lose my passion. I am no longer motivated, and I can assure you that most teachers are just waiting for their early retirement" (Haya, 47 female).

"Either we are not prepared for this, or society isn't. With low participation, lack of cooperation, and too much stuff on my plate... even the strongest would feel inferior. I keep telling myself, just a few more years to go" (Nur, 46 female).

"I don't know what will happen in the future; I just do my job. They give me a task; I try to finish it. I know it is a long way to go, but I think I want to enrol for an early pension" (Pushpa, 41 female).

"We have no choice but to adapt it." I mean... times like these, with the current economy, you'd feel ungrateful to complain. Like it or not, it is going to be the norm now since the pandemic is staying. Just be grateful that you still have a job. But sometimes you get tired of trying so hard to motivate yourself, right? It's okay. I just have a few more years, then I can rest" (Wati, 46 female).

Some informants even mentioned that they are demoralized and have low job satisfaction due to work-stress dilemmas.

*"This is a difficult time to be a teacher. Not only do I have to take my administrative job home because I can't finish it at school, but meetings are scheduled after working hours. Sometimes online meetings can finish late at night. I have children of my own who need my attention too. I come home and I see these faces who want to tell their stories and what they have been through at school. But then again, I often felt tired attending to their needs... *takes a deep breath. You know, I make sure my job is done, I make sure I take care of other people's children, but I don't have time for my children. I felt like I was a bad mother. I am serious when I put up my name for the application to retire early"* (Aida, 40, female).

"No, there is no satisfaction in teaching now. There is just no soul in it. Try teaching online and try asking the students back what they have learnt. I could picture their blurry faces even when they switched off their cameras. I am so tired, I wish I could go off early" (Nisa, 37 female).

"Administrative loads are getting from bearable to ridiculously crazy. I can't even focus on teaching due to the workload. It keeps on coming. Most of the time, I have to bring it home to finish it. I have no choice; it was given to me, and I have to finish it. Come to think of it, I don't even have time for myself. (Long sigh) I am signing up early. I must" (Nur, 46 female).

Excessive workloads, a shortage of teaching personnel, a subpar classroom environment, and a lack of administrative and technical support from the ministry and state education department, according to Ahmad's post in the New Straits Times Online on May 5th, 2022, may influence a teacher's decision to quit. Furthermore, parental and societal pressure, inadequate facilities, and a lack of financial support for their teaching endeavours all affect their decision to resign early. According to studies, teacher stress has contributed to turnover (i.e., mobility and attrition), which is critical given teacher shortage concerns and the links between turnover and student achievement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kaufman & Diliberti, 2020; Ryan et al., 2017; Singer, 2021; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Similarly, the teacher shortage appeared to be putting Malaysia in the same boat as other countries around the world. On May 16, 2022, Abdullah posted in the New Straits Times

Online that the Ministry has successfully recruited and deployed 13,770 individuals to schools with teacher shortages. This is based on the Ministry of Education's declaration in 2021 of a one-time teacher intake of 18,702 Education Officers for grade DG41. Nonetheless, the Ministry should address the causes that led to the teachers' early retirement in the first place. Because prevention is better than cure, it is ideal to identify the underlying cause and address it as soon as possible. This study suggests enlightening the teachers' mental health awareness for a start. This initiative is as crucial as lessening their administrative tasks as well as adding work-life balance to their job.

Limitation and Strength

One of the limitations of this study is communication and obtaining approval from the schools. Getting to speak to the person in charge is a challenge but getting them to start distributing the google form is another. As mentioned earlier, since the interviews took place during the pandemic, the Ministry of Education has given the condition that all correspondents must be online. Thus, the result of this study could only rely on the informants that took part and fit the criteria regardless of their gender, race, teaching class level and age. Another limitation was stigma; most teachers did not want to be an informant as they did not want others to know their mental health status. Many times this was mentioned by the school's administrator or principal declined the interview sessions. The strength of this study is that the interviews were rich data. The in-depth interviews were done successfully, and the informants were very cooperative and attentive. What was thought to be a half an hour interview turned out to be an average of an hour for each informant. They would like more teachers to be enlightened and understand their mental health level too. Moreover, according to the informants, most mental health talks were to educate the students, and there was no guideline to help the teachers to understand theirs.

Conclusions

Our findings indicated that urban secondary school teachers in Selangor require more awareness of how important it is to take care of their mental health issues. This study showed that most informants have mild anxiety, and some have shown results higher than severe anxiety and depression. They should be aware that many health problems begin with unsettled stress, and stress appears to worsen or raise the risk of illnesses such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, depression, gastrointestinal issues, and asthma (WHO, 2020). This study showed that while enlightening society on mental health massively done, the need to enlighten our teachers from preschool, primary or secondary schools on what steps they should take concerning their mental health is crucial. They should be encouraged to seek early treatments and not shun their issues away. And, because teaching applies not only to schools but also to higher education, this study recommends that future research be undertaken by involving educators as a whole. The DASS-21 may be a tool used globally to evaluate the signs of common mental health issues, but it is just basics and self-diagnose is not recommended. Therefore, the informants were encouraged to seek further checkups with their local doctors to address their symptoms before ending every interview. There is a chain reaction to this - Every teacher is passionate about their profession, by giving them clear guidelines to care for their mental health issues could make them happier. Happier teachers could lead to a positive environment for students. Now, doesn't that makes the future sound more beautiful to you?

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