

## Sources of Occupational Stress Experienced by Primary School English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in Shaanxi Province

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### Abstract

Teaching is a challenging and stressful occupation for teachers teaching English as a Foreign Language in a primary school in Shaanxi Province in China. When teachers are stressed, they suffer from a variety of health issues. Such issues will affect their teaching performance in a negative way. As a result, the students' academic performance will naturally be affected. This main aim of this study is to investigate the sources of occupational stress experienced by primary school EFL teachers in Shanxi Province teaching English as a Foreign Language. The research design employed in this study is qualitative in nature. Twelve teachers were selected using purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve teachers in the school. The interviews were recorded and transcribed manually. Data collected were reviewed meticulously to develop themes and codes. Thematic analysis was used for data analysis. Findings showed that the sources of stress experienced by primary school EFL teachers in Shaanxi Province were workload, external demands, maintaining classroom order, availability of resources, additional duties outside of teaching, and individual circumstances. The findings from this study have demonstrated that teachers need the social support that serves as a safeguard for them against stress in a broad sense.

**Keywords:** Occupational Stress, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers, Experience

### Introduction

The education field, specifically, the teaching profession is universally acknowledged as an intensively stressful and demanding occupation, and this is especially accurate and true for primary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in China (Yang et al., 2020). The demands and pressure exerted on these teachers are substantial, as they must not only teach language skills to their students, but also manage the linguistic and dynamic cultural challenges intrinsic to teaching English as a Foreign Language.

The COVID-19 pandemic has merely worsened the occupational stress encountered by these teachers, as they have been compelled to swiftly adjust to virtual teaching methods,

frequently sufficient support or training (MacIntyre et al., 2020). The abrupt transition to online teaching has brought about a range of new pressures and stressors, encompassing technology-linked problems and challenges, heightened workloads, and problems in sustaining motivation and student engagement (Kotowski et al., 2022; Robinson et al., 2022).

Furthermore, these teachers must address with the usual pressures and demands of the teaching profession, including inadequate resources, heightened workload, and the requirement to regularly revise their curriculum and teaching methods to fulfil the changing needs and requirement of their students (Ji et al., 2021). The amalgamation of these stressors can result in considerable burnout and reduced well-being, which may eventually affect the quality of teaching and learning and student academic results (Kotowski et al., 2022).

The teaching profession is frequently defined by elevated levels of stress, and this is specifically apparent for primary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Shaanxi province. The aforementioned teachers encounter a spectrum of difficulties and challenges, encompassing heightened workloads, issues with student behaviour, and insufficient support from school management and the larger community (Yang et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic had additionally aggravated these stressors because teachers have had to swiftly adjust to online and blended learning models whilst also handling their personal and familial duties (Robinson et al., 2022).

Previous researches have shown that language teachers experienced stress related to their job (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Yet, little information is given about the aforementioned sources of stress encountered by primary EFL school teachers in Shaanxi Province. To know better the sources and reasons of stress is vital. This will assist in coming up with better strategies to help the teachers to sustain their well-being as educators.

## **Literature Review**

### **Teacher Stress**

Teacher stress is defined by Kyriacou (2001) as situations that make a teacher feel uneasy or nervous while carrying out their regular tasks and obligations. Teachers' obligations might cause them to feel frustrated, angry, or depressed. Their sense of security or confidence may also be threatened by these sensations (Kyriacou, 2001). Stress has a significant impact on teachers' physical health, burnout and attrition rates, feeling of effectiveness, capacity to engage students, and work satisfaction (Shernoff et al., 2011).

### **Stress**

Stress refers to the psychological strain experienced by an individual in their daily life. Stress not only affects an individual's physical well-being, but also impacts their emotional state and cognitive processes. Stress, as defined by Barone et al (2001), refers to the feeling of uneasiness, load, or strain. Stress is the psychological and physiological response to increased expectations and demands placed on an individual by others (Niehouse, 1984).

### **Occupational Stress**

Occupational stress is defined as the destructive physical and emotional responses that happen when the needs of the job do not align with the resources, capabilities, or needs of the employee (Li et al., 2019). Teachers, in specific, are prone to heightened levels of occupational

stress because of factors including insufficient support, heavy workloads, and difficult student behaviours. In the setting of teaching English as a foreign language in primary schools, the demands or pressure exerted on teachers might be even more evident, as they manage cultured diversity, language and communication barriers, and the dynamic requirements of young students.

Past studies have revealed that occupational stress is widespread among teachers worldwide (Li et al., 2019). An examination of teachers in Egypt showed that all respondents faced a minimum of a moderate level of occupational stress, with 76.6% indicating high levels (E et al., 2009). Past studies in China have investigated the sources of stress for secondary school teachers Yang et al (2022) and pre-school teachers (Yang et al., 2022), but there is less of information on the particular experiences and encounters of primary school EFL teachers.

The sparse research on primary school EFL teachers indicates that they encounter distinct difficulties that add to their work-related stress. Past studies on rural secondary and primary schools in Zhejiang province reported that male teachers encountered elevated levels of stress in aspects of workload, job expectations, and self-development in contrast to their female colleagues, and also found worse mental health outcomes (Ji et al., 2021). One more study conducted among Australian teachers accentuated the significance of both environmental and intrapersonal factors in exacerbating stress and burnout (Carroll et al., 2022).

In general, the current research indicates that primary school EFL teachers in China may encounter a spectrum of stressors, such as insufficient of professional development prospects, heightened workloads, and difficulties linked to teaching a foreign language to primary school students. Additional studies are required to better comprehend the particular sources of occupational stress experienced by these aforementioned primary school teachers.

### **Sources of Stress**

The main factors contributing to stress include conflicting roles and excessive demands, disengaged students, accountability, limited autonomy for teachers, time constraints, insufficient support from managers and peers, constant supervision, limited resources, oppressive working conditions, and lack of organizational support (Aydin & Kaya, 2016; Mearns & Cain, 2003). The global phenomenon of teachers' stress can have significant adverse impacts on educators, instructional quality, and the educator-learner connection. According to Liu and Onwuegbuzie (2012), this might result in unfavorable academic and interpersonal consequences for students. Some writers recognize educator stress as an undesirable emotional experience resulting from teaching obligations. It is characterized by sentiments such as animosity, tension, disappointment, or depression (Collie et al., 2012). Extended periods of adverse experiences can result in emotional fatigue and a sense of inadequacy across several domains (Alonso et al., 2020; Mariani et al., 2020).

Work overload is a situation when employees are burdened with a large number of responsibilities. Work overload is the condition in which individuals are confronted with an excessive number of expectations and activities that need to be completed within a particular timeframe (Ito et al., 2014). Work overload can occur when employees are expected to complete several tasks within a restricted time constraint (Devi & Sharma, 2013). Insufficient

allocation of responsibilities can result in employees facing increased levels of stress, especially when there is a high demand and hectic work schedules (Karimi et al., 2014). Likewise, primary school teachers may experience similar levels of stress when they are obligated to manage several responsibilities related to students and school management. An individual may encounter tension and a feeling of being inundated when they are perceived as an expert in their domain (Qureshi et al., 2013). Work overload may also occur when an individual is unable to decline extra responsibilities from someone who is insisting on their completion during a time of high demand (Risham & Kaur, 2016).

### **Methodology**

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology, especially employing a case study technique. Creswell (2007) describes qualitative technique as a research approach that focuses on gathering descriptive data about people's speech and behavior. It is primarily concerned with understanding the meaning individuals attribute to various aspects of their life. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the human experience by exploring the thoughts and emotions of participants. It aims to explain the phenomena from the participants' perspective (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) defines a case study as a method used to gain a thorough and diverse grasp of a complex issue in its actual real-life context. The investigation was conducted at a primary school in Shaanxi Province, China. The chosen primary school provides a representative sample of primary school teachers in the province, which is crucial for understanding occupational stress in a specific educational setting. The province of Shaanxi offered a diverse socioeconomic and demographic setting, providing a comprehensive study of several aspects contributing to teachers' occupational stress. This leads to the findings being further applicable throughout the province. Hence, the researchers were intrigued by the prospect of thoroughly investigating the origins of occupational stress encountered by primary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in Shanxi Province.

### **Participants**

The researchers used purposive sampling to choose participants from a single school located in the Shaanxi Province of China. Purposeful sampling was employed to provide comprehensive research aimed at comprehending the phenomena, since the ability to reach individuals and locations is crucial for a qualitative inquiry. Purposeful sampling is essential because it allows the researcher to carefully pick a sample that will provide the most valuable information and insights (Merriam, 2009, p. 61). The selection of teachers was based on three primary criteria: their voluntary participation in the study, their teaching experience of at least four years for novice teachers and more than five years for experienced teachers, and their proficiency in teaching English as a foreign language. A total of twelve primary school teachers who specialize in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) took part in this study.

### **Data Collection**

The researchers conducted interviews with all twelve of the EFL teachers. The researchers devised an interview methodology to collect further data on the origins of occupational stress encountered by primary school EFL instructors in Shanxi Province who teach English as a Foreign Language. Before commencing both the pilot project and the real study, the researcher obtained written consent from both the participants and the participating schools. The participants were instructed to volunteer promptly after the researcher had

authorization from both the participating schools and the study participants. Afterwards, the researcher arranged and supervised the instructor interview. The teachers were interviewed in person within the classrooms.

### **Data Analysis**

Complete verbatim transcriptions of all interviews with participants were created and documented. Once the material has been transcribed, it undergoes coding, analysis, interpretation, and confirmation. The process of identifying categories that build a link between stress and coping is conducted, with these categories being categorized into primary and secondary themes. The examination of significant and insignificant subjects is carried out within the framework of the current body of literature. Once the transcript data has been categorized, the obtained material is meticulously scrutinized and validated to ensure its completeness. To uncover recurring themes in the materials, the teacher's interviews underwent thematic analysis. Ely (1997) describes this as a commonly used methodological analysis in qualitative research.

### **Findings**

Answers to these questions are based on data collected from the interviews with the participants and their self-reflection reports.

What are the sources of stress experienced by EFL primary school teachers in Shaanxi Province?

To accurately determine the origins of stress, it is crucial for the participants to have a clear understanding of the notion of 'stress' and its connection to their work environment.

#### *Sources of stress*

The examination of the interviews with the participants unveiled six stressors that impacted the teachers. They are classified according to the following subjects: The elements that contribute to the challenges faced by teachers include: (1) Workload, (2) External demands, (3) Maintaining classroom order, (4) Availability of resources, (5) Additional duties outside of teaching, and (6) Individual circumstances. Each individual cause of stress can be further expanded upon to provide a more detailed explanation of the specific factors involved.

#### *1. Workload*

The inevitability of workload is inherent in all professions. Nevertheless, within the realm of education, instructors have a common responsibility of captivating the attention and managing the conduct of their students. An issue frequently encountered by educators is the lack of homogeneity in the academic aptitude of their students. This issue leads to further challenges in the classroom, ultimately resulting in an increased workload for teachers. The issue described presents a comparable situation among the educators at a primary educational institution in Shaanxi Province, China.

The majority of teachers at this school ascribed the substantial workload to the responsibilities of teaching. Prior arrangements needed to be completed prior to the commencement of a course. The classes have to be meticulously designed to cater to both the students' requirements and the curriculum. The educators were required to create instructional materials and pedagogical approaches in order to carry out their teaching. Frequently, they encountered time limitations.

In addition to course preparations, the teachers were also responsible for managing evaluations and test preparations. The teachers themselves administered the assessments and exams. Evaluating assignments and evaluations added an additional burden to the instructors who were required to fulfill deadlines. Teacher 3 acknowledged that *"teachers experience substantial work-related pressure, necessitating extended amounts of time for preparing lessons, grading assignments, and providing student support, resulting in physical exhaustion and mental strain"*.

Teacher 5 characterized the task as an onerous strain. She expounded upon her position *"the job of a teacher involves preparing lesson, giving lectures, correcting homework, managing students, attending meetings, etc. the tasks are heavy and long-lasting"*.

Teacher 6 elucidated the teachers' heavy workload in the following way: *"teachers often have to manage multiples classes, prepare lessons, grade assignments and exams, and handle administrative tasks. The workload can be quite demanding and time-consuming"*.

Teacher 7 explained her workload as *"planning lesson, creating materials, grading assignments, attending meetings, and handling administrative tasks"*. According to her she had to sacrifice her rest time *"to do extra work to meet the demands of the school"*.

The teachers' burden is clearly expressed by Teacher 8. She explained that the teachers *"are responsible for managing classrooms, handling discipline, creating lesson plans, grading assignments, and dealing with parental involvement, among other things"*. These obligations can augment the strain and burden on instructors, resulting in heightened stress levels.

Teacher 9 provides an overview that reveals a summary of the workload that instructors bear. In conclusion, she encapsulated her thoughts by stating *"teaching English as a foreign language involves additional challenge such as language barriers, cultural differences, adapting to diverse learning styles, and creating effective language instruction strategies"*.

The teachers' burden of work is further expressed by Teacher 11 who described the teachers' work as *"in addition to attending classes, teachers also need to constantly prepare lessons, prepare PowerPoint presentations, courseware, and class materials"*. Simultaneously, a substantial array of extracurricular activities is also necessary to direct pupils in their involvement in many contests and activities.

## 2. External demands

The instructors' anxious state was exacerbated by external pressure. The teachers were aware of the pressure that parents may exert on them. The parents' apprehension over their children's success in the examination occasionally led to conflict among the teachers.

The societal pressure associated with teacher stress rendered the instructors vulnerable to criticism. This appeared to be the prevalent external pressure that afflicted the professors. Teacher 1 exemplified the strain in question *"increased expectation or pressure from external stakeholders, such as before parent-teacher meetings"*. Teacher 2 complained of *"external factor like societal expectations, parental pressure, and administrative demands can also contribute to teacher stress"*. She was very concerned about the well-being of her students *"perform poorly in the final school examination and fail to meet the requirements of parents or school"*.

One teacher, referred to as teacher 4, conveyed her thoughts with great vividness: Currently, parents of students typically hold lofty aspirations for their children, and this mindset of desiring their children to achieve great success unavoidably influences instructors.



They also impose high and unreasonable expectations on instructors, presenting nearly stringent and excessive demands. The influence exerted by parents should not be underestimated. Conversely, certain parents of pupils display excessive enthusiasm for their teachers, treating them as esteemed guests and presenting them with presents. Indeed, the essence of being intoxicated does not lie just in drink; conversely, there exist parents who exhibit impolite and sardonic behavior towards educators. When teachers make little errors in their work, it typically leads to significant discontent from parents of kids. They frequently employ public persecution or media exposure as a means of addressing minor incidents involving their children, and may even physically confront instructors. The severity and censure from the parents of pupils have emerged as the primary source of psychological stress for me.

Teacher 5 disclosed that the most intense levels of stress typically arise during periods of heightened expectations or pressure from external parties, such as prior to parent-teacher meetings, school assessments, or when working on significant projects with strict deadlines. This stress is particularly driven by parents' aspirations for their children to achieve high scores in exams. During the final teaching summary conference, instructors who have received bad grades may experience significant strain, particularly psychological pressure, when confronted with inquiries and self-evaluation from supervisors.

Teacher 9 argues that the societal demands and expectations placed upon teachers are in conflict with their social standing, since they are expected to uphold high moral values and exhibit selfless devotion. Teachers, like anybody else, have their own desires and aspirations. They strive for a secure, stable, and reasonably privileged existence. However, their societal positions do not align with their personal lives. The combination of demanding expectations and a low quality of life creates hesitation among teachers. Additionally, the traditional perception that teachers are the ultimate authority figure in the profession can lead to feelings of inferiority. This, in turn, causes teachers to unconsciously develop a self-protective mindset, occasionally resulting in a distant and aloof demeanor similar to that of hedgehogs. Consequently, teachers often face constant criticism from others. Teacher 11 provided an instance of societal pressure, specifically the excessive expectations placed on pupils by their parents, which caused her significant stress.

### 3. Maintaining classroom order

Teachers are often recognized as being responsible for educating children who attend school. Irrespective of the student population in a classroom, it is the responsibility of the instructor to instil many sorts of values in the pupils. The situation remains unchanged in schools in China.

Teacher 8 evidently depicted the situation, “teachers have the responsibility of overseeing classes, maintaining discipline, developing lesson plans, evaluating assignments, and addressing parental engagement, among several other tasks”.

The teachers encountered several challenges and difficulties in managing the classroom. The issues and intricacy of the challenges differed among teachers. Teacher 7 identified handling large class sizes as one of the issues. Teacher 1 ascribed stress to the task of managing big classrooms. Teacher 12 supplied an explanation stating that *‘EFL teachers frequently have the difficulty of managing big classrooms, which might hinder their ability to give particular attention and assistance to each student’*.

Maintaining classroom order, According to Teacher 6, maintaining discipline and regulating conduct in the classroom may cause tremendous stress for instructors. Managing disruptive pupils or resolving disagreements among students introduces an additional level of stress that is exclusive to the teaching profession. In addition to instructing, the teachers were responsible for overseeing student conduct. The assignment was rather challenging, particularly when dealing with troublesome children, as Teacher 9 expressed it, *“teachers are trembling, especially students who encounter problems, and their hearts are filled with worry and fear”*.

Teacher 3 believes that instructors have a responsibility to not only teach information, but also to develop students' moral character and literacy, and to foster the growth of talented individuals in society. As part of classroom management, the teacher is responsible for providing academic and personal advice to the students, supporting their learning and general development (Teacher 10).

Teacher 1 had high levels of stress in her profession due to the challenge of engaging young pupils with poor attention spans. Teacher 1 found it difficult to keep the students involved and attentive throughout sessions while also ensuring their attention and energy levels were properly managed.

Classroom management also include the task of accommodating pupils with diverse requirements and learning preferences. Teacher 2 succinctly described her arduous encounter in this situation as follows. At times, I must take into account the perspectives and requirements of many individuals. Additionally, I must allocate a significant amount of time to engage in individual conversations with them and obtain feedback. Ensuring personalized attention and adjusting my instructional strategies necessitates meticulous preparation and ongoing evaluation. It is crucial for me to listen to them. Occasionally, I am required to listen to them and adjust my behaviour accordingly. *“This portion can occasionally be arduous and challenging for me as well,”* the teacher stated.

Teacher 1 encountered challenges similar to those of Teacher 2. To Teacher 1, *“teaching English as a foreign language involves additional challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, adapting to diverse learning styles, and creating effective language instructional strategies. EFL teachers often face the pressure of meeting language proficiency goals while ensuring students feel comfortable and motivated to use English in the classroom”*. Apart from the problems mentioned regarding classroom management, Teacher 7 pointed out that there was also the *“need to maintain high levels of student engagement and participation in a foreign language learning environment”* and the teachers *“may also encounter challenges related to managing diverse language proficiency levels within a single classroom”*.

#### 4. Availability of resources

In the context of this study, resources are defined as educational materials and the amount of time available. In this study, the instructors expressed their concern about the insufficient teaching materials available for conducting English sessions. Consequently, the teachers were required to create their own instructional materials. One of the factors contributing to stress, as identified by Teacher 1, is *“limited instructional resources”*. Teacher 10 explained that *“teachers need to select and prepare suitable textbooks and resources for the course”*. The materials would include PowerPoint presentations, or multimedia materials.



Teacher 7 felt that “time management is most important: Effective time management can reduce stress levels”. Teacher 7 recommended the practice of premeditating teachings and activities, giving importance to assignments, and assigning specified time intervals for various activities.

#### 5. Additional duties outside of teaching

The challenges encountered by the teachers were exacerbated by duties that were not directly associated with the process of teaching and learning. The teachers were required to perform assignments and research activities within specified timeframes. The professors were obligated to finish these responsibilities within the designated timeframe. The increasing workload placed a burden on the instructors' instructional efforts, leading to increased stress. Teacher 2's narrative exemplifies the profound impact of non-teaching duties on the well-being of instructors. She claimed, “recalling the year when I was an EFL teacher, there was not much time left for my teaching and research, and non-teaching time accounted for the vast majority. It was these seemingly trivial but often overloaded tasks that *“crushed me”*. At the end of term, the tedious work of the class combined with large-scale school activities, and *I collapsed last semester”*.

From the report by Teacher 3, that *“teachers have a high social status and role, requiring higher professional competence”*, it is not a wonder that they were also subject to *“high pressure for further education”*.

Teacher 4 revealed that schools and educational institutions frequently impose additional responsibilities on instructors, including overseeing student affairs, engaging in community service, and coordinating events. While these activities hold significance, they should not constitute the primary obligations of instructors. If teachers are burdened with excessive non-teaching responsibilities, it will be challenging to provide adequate time and energy for lesson preparation and teaching, thereby impacting the students' learning effectiveness. She expressed dissatisfaction with the overwhelming number of extracurricular events, contests, and research obligations, stating that they had caused physical and mental exhaustion for herself and her coworkers. She expressed her dissatisfaction with the fact that she had to consistently lead a team to partake in several tournaments each semester. Additionally, she mentioned that the school assigns job objectives and my compensation is closely correlated with the quality of my grades. I am under significant strain. *Some weeks, I even have to work overtime continuously, and the daily working hours even exceed 12 hours, which my body can't bear “*.

Teacher 5 expressed her viewpoint on the additional responsibilities assigned to teachers that are not related to teaching. She said that a major source of stress in her profession is the significant amount of time she spends on non-teaching chores. She believes that for every teacher, completing numerous forms and participating in school contests is a universally burdensome activity. Despite the implementation of rules by the Municipal Department of Education to alleviate the workload of teachers, schools continue to abuse instructors in order to achieve high rankings during the yearly evaluation, resulting in significant physical and emotional exhaustion among many teachers. She is cognizant of the adverse repercussions of bearing a substantial non-teaching workload. She asserted that it has a significant impact on regular teaching and job routines, diminishes productivity, and hampers teaching effectiveness. In addition to the tasks teachers had to perform, Teacher 5 claimed that they also had to *“continuously learn and improve their professional level to meet the needs of*

*educational reform and development. At the same time, they also need to face the pressure of promotion and career development”.*

One teacher, Teacher 6 claimed that “unexpected situations or last-minute changes can bring about high levels of stress”. She cited an example, “if a school suddenly notifies a scientific research task or competition task that needs to be completed within the specified time, the time left is limited, which can cause huge pressure on people”.

Teacher 7 had the burden of managing non-teaching responsibilities. She said that in addition to fulfilling the educational objectives of her pupils, she was also responsible for engaging in extracurricular activities such as English-speaking competitions and providing tutoring to her students.

Teacher 10 states that instructors are responsible for not just teaching jobs but also non-teaching tasks, which include attending teachers' meetings, interacting with parents, and aiding in arranging school events. These supplementary duties will also consume the teacher's time and energy.

The teacher 8's nervousness about her job is evident in the way she expresses her emotions. She disclosed that a specific feature of the job that she finds notably burdensome is the demand to promptly complete important activities, such as competing or publishing articles, as directed by superiors. Every teacher may encounter this type of issue as it is directly related to their compensation and advancement prospects.

According to Teacher 9, *“teachers usually have heavy final tasks, not only teaching tasks, but also competition and research tasks, which can be described as a mountain of pressure”.*

## 6. Individual Circumstances

Individual actors also contribute to exacerbating the instructors' unease in carrying out their responsibilities at school. The instructors' foray into the teaching profession exposed them to a distinct realm in contrast to their domestic sphere. Consequently, the trauma, if it occurred, originated from the inherent characteristics of the persons involved. The consequences were experienced on a physical, emotional, psychological, and mental level. Tr. 3's perspective is that instructors possess distinct unique psychological attributes that might influence their reaction to stress.

Teacher 1 explained that extended exposure to elevated levels of stress as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructor can result in negative outcomes. Furthermore, apart from the previously stated physical symptoms like headaches and exhaustion, EFL instructors may also encounter emotional health concerns such as worry, burnout, and a sense of being overwhelmed.

To Teacher 2, the presence of stress has a notable effect on her overall state of being. She asserted that it frequently results in symptoms such as headaches, weariness, and reduced motivation. Feelings of frustration and anger may arise when handling the demands of the work. She also admitted that her body occasionally became overwhelmed owing to an excessive workload. I desire to obtain a satisfactory period of relaxation and a reduction in the amount of additional non-instructional tasks. I am experiencing a lack of happiness, to be completely honest. Occasionally, the intensity of the situation causes me to struggle for air, particularly when participating in school contests or meetings. I believe I have lost the enjoyment and enthusiasm for instructing and enlightening individuals.

Financial difficulties might also result in work-related stress. The problem is strongly shown by the experience of Teacher 3. She had the most intense amount of stress at the conclusion of every month. She disclosed that the reason for her stress is the need to settle her mortgage

every month, despite her monthly wage being only 5000 yuan. She stated that the compensation level in Xian is not substantial, and the income of instructors is rather little. The high cost of living and pricing create a significant amount of strain.

Teacher 11 said, *"My primary issue may be my tendency to have a volatile temperament and become impatient when faced with high-pressure work." External pressure can heighten individuals' susceptibility to anger, which might be seen as a psychological coping technique.*

### **Discussion**

The findings obtained from this study are in line with studies carried out by (Tsubono & Mitoku, 2023; Liao, Wang et al., 2023; Canli & Karadag, 2021). The sources of stress identified in this study through the teachers are: (1) Workload, (2) External demands, (3) Maintaining classroom order, (4) Availability of resources, (5) Additional duties outside of teaching, and (6) Individual circumstances. Each discrete source of stress can be further elaborated upon to offer a more comprehensive elucidation of the particular elements involved. Research conducted by Tsubono and Mitoku (2023) reveals that among every five of teachers, one teacher acknowledges experiencing the maximum amounts of stress in their homework. Liao, Wang, and Wang (2023) found that nearly every school, regardless of its educational level, has at least one teacher experiencing severe and demanding occupational stress. Additionally, for every six teachers, there is one who also experiences this stress. Psychologists have shown that the cognitive exertion exerted by a teacher during one hour of instructions is comparable to the exertion exerted by workers in other professions over the course of more than one day (Canli & Karadağ, 2021). Previous research has demonstrated that teachers globally have a high prevalence of occupational stress (Li et al., 2019). A study conducted in Egypt found that all participants had at least a moderate degree of professional stress, with 76.6% reporting high levels (王 et al., 2009). Prior research conducted in China has examined the origins of stress among secondary school teachers (Yang et al., 2022) and pre-school teachers (Yang et al., 2022). However, there is a dearth of knowledge on the specific experiences and challenges faced by primary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Based on the information provided, it is evident that school teachers in the Shaanxi Province are encountering similar challenges and difficulties in their teaching profession. They are experiencing increased occupational burdens and psychological stress. Teachers in schools are tasked with the responsibility of imparting education to students. Teaching has presented various challenges for them, including planning and preparing meaningful lessons using current teaching methodologies to the internet for all students. Consequently, teachers have experienced psychological stress as a result. The tension had an impact on their drive to succeed.

### **Conclusion**

Given the accounts of their work experiences, it is certain that the teachers were very committed in carrying out their duties. Despite facing several stresses, the teachers did not view them as impossible to overcome. The findings from this study have demonstrated that teachers need the social support that serves as a safeguard for them against stress in a broad sense. Establishing a network of reliable individuals, mentors, and highly supportive companions serves as a safeguard against the negative effects of stress. Teachers commonly cope with stress by relying on their social connections and support from friends and family. The stress-reduction method most frequently stated was positive peer interactions. Research has demonstrated that some characteristics, such as being accessible, supportive, and

cooperative, as well as maintaining a positive perspective, engaging in direct, regular, and unambiguous communication, and practicing attentive listening, might potentially protect individuals from experiencing stress.

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