

# Why are Teachers Vulnerable to Stress?

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## ABSTRACT

Stress at work is a psychological symptom that has been experienced by everyone, especially teachers. Teachers of Early Childhood Education (ECE) are objects that are prone to stress. In addition to the teacher's function to teach, educate, guide, assess, direct, and evaluate students in teaching and learning activities, they also have responsibility for other job demands that often result in stress. This paper aims to describe the factors that cause the ECE teacher profession to experience stress at work. This study used a qualitative approach with data collection techniques carried out by exploring library research sources. The results of this study indicate that the workload, demands of the parents of students, educational background, work environment, dual roles played, time management, and self-management are among the triggers for stress on teachers. Therefore, it requires a mindfulness-based meditation, relaxation, therapy and training for teachers as a solution in overcoming the stress experienced by teachers in carrying out their profession.

**Keywords:** Teachers of early childhood education, work stress, workload.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Stress commonly experienced by teachers without exception, including; Teachers of Early Childhood Education. Based on Law No. 14 of 2005 it concerns teachers and lecturers which states that "teachers are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, and evaluating students". The teacher plays an important role in the learning process, this is because the teacher has a role as a motivator, inspirator, initiator, demonstrator, mediator, corrector, informatorily, organizer, facilitator, class manager, and supervisor [1]. Therefore, teachers are often referred to as the spearhead of education in which the whole process of learning activities in schools is fully the responsibility of a teacher [2]. The role of teachers in education cannot be replaced by any technological results. There are still too many human elements, attitudes, value systems, feelings, motivations, and habits that must be carried out by a teacher. A teacher will be successful in carrying out tasks if he is a professional in his teaching field. Of the many workloads and roles of teachers that must be carried out as mentioned above, the teaching profession is one of the professions that can trigger stress.

A study conducted by Kelly & Berthelsen [3] and Clipa & Boghean [4] produced a measurement of the level of stress experienced by teachers of early childhood education which included levels of mild, moderate and severe stress with their respective symptoms. Meanwhile, Robert [5] in his research stated that the trigger for stress

is the lack of self-management in the individual. Therefore, the authors are interested in uncovering the factors that cause stress in teachers based on several literature studies through the media of journals, books, theses, and the results of analysis of other sources that are obtained.

## 2. STRESS IN TEACHERS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### 2.1 Recognizing Stress

In Indonesia, the stress of teacher work has not been considered as something serious because teachers must be professional in their fields, but in other countries, such as Australia, the stress of teacher work is a very serious study and has received special attention from the government [6]. Stress can be defined as a condition experienced by a person when the demands received by someone is not in accordance with their abilities [7], [8]. This definition is in line with the opinion put forward by Maramis [9] and Lazarus [10]. Furthermore, Smith [11] stated that "Stress is caused by anything that makes an individual tense, angry, frustrated, or unhappy so that stress can be categorized into two components, namely physical stress and psychological or mental stress [12]. So, it can be concluded that stress is a symptom that occurs both physically and psychologically caused by a person's inability to carry out a claim.

Stuart and Sundeen [13] classified stress into three levels of stress, namely mild stress, moderate stress and

severe stress. Mild stress with symptoms of dizziness, migraines, weakness, muscle pain, palpitations, emotional and sleep disturbances. These symptoms are common in everyday life so that every individual who experiences these symptoms is expected to be alert and begin to prevent various possibilities that occur.

Moderate stress with symptoms that occur such as disorders of the stomach and intestines such as ulcers, irregular bowel movements, muscle tension, disturbed sleep patterns, changes in the menstrual cycle, decreased concentration and memory and so on. In other words, someone who is experiencing stress is more concerned with what is more important and puts others aside.

Severe stress, the symptoms of severe stress have shown various diseases such as panic and anxiety disorders, shortness of breath and so on. This level of stress occurs over a long period of time, which can be a year or two years or even more so that it requires treatment or treatment from a doctor or expert.

Meanwhile, Wijono [14] classifies stress into three aspects, namely psychological, physiological, and behavioral. Psychological changes are characterized by prolonged anxiety, difficulty sleeping, shortness of breath, decreased self-confidence, loss of concentration, and high boredom. Physiological changes are characterized by symptoms such as feeling tired and tired, exhausted, dizzy, and indigestion. Meanwhile, attitude changes such as stubbornness, irritability, dissatisfaction with what has been achieved, and so on. This can affect a person's work stress.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that stress is divided into three levels, namely mild, moderate and severe stress. The level of stress can be seen from the symptoms that appear based on psychological, physiological, and behavioural aspects. Everyone is prone to experiencing stress, even someone who was previously healthy may experience stress with various triggers, one of which is the teaching profession where the teacher is an object that is prone to stress.

## **2.2. Work Stress**

Stress in carrying out public works happens to everyone. Stress can interfere with health, welfare, social life, and work [15]. Stress that comes from within an individual is called intrinsic stress, while stress that arises based on environmental factors is called extrinsic stress which includes social relations and work [16]. This statement is supported by Fraser [17] who states that work stress is only related to events around the work environment such as feelings of anxiety, fear, guilt, anger, sadness, hopelessness and boredom.

There are several categories that cause work stress based on Munandar [18] and Komar [19], namely intrinsic demands in work such as physical demands and

tasks carried out, career development, relationships in the work environment, and relationships and demands experienced from outside the work environment.

However, in general, teachers are at a mild stress level which results in burnout or fatigue. If these symptoms cannot be resolved, it will cause stress which is in moderate symptoms which consequently affects the subject's psychology. In other words, work stress is a condition in which a person experiences psychological or physical problem in dealing with problems in the work environment. The stress experienced by teachers occurs because there are triggers or factors that cause it either from the environment around the work or from within the individual himself. Therefore, if a person experiences mild stress symptom, it must be addressed before it gets worse and increases to moderate and even severe stress levels.

## **2.3. Work Stress in Teachers of Early Childhood Education**

Quoted from CNN Indonesia in 2018, the number of increased work stress in Indonesia is still at a low position in the world. However, this does not mean that it is impossible to increase. Based on the results of research conducted by Rice [20], the number of increased teacher stress in carrying out work in Indonesia increased about 28% each year. This shows that work stress must be considered by all groups, including the government. One of the professions that is prone to stress is the profession as a teacher, this is due to the many demands of work. The teacher profession has a very large responsibility and moral burden as a teacher and educator, which often results in stress or mental stress on the teacher. In addition, the demand for increased performance is that a teacher is required to take part in training related to professional career development, one of which is by following Teacher Professional Education (PPG). Ingarianti [21] adds that when teachers experience work stress, their teaching work is neglected; they often complain and tend to get angry in class or even tend to take it out on students. There are two types of stress experienced by teachers, namely stress which has a positive impact (eustress) and stress which has a negative impact (distress) [22]. However, most stress is often directed against stress that has a negative impact.

## **2.4. Factors that Cause Work Stress for Teachers of Early Childhood Education**

From the results of the literature review conducted by the author, there are several factors that cause stress to the teacher, including excessive workload, lack of expertise in managing time, environmental conditions, income that is not in accordance with the workload obtained and the many demands the teacher receives from the parents of students [23], [24].

Another study states that stress in work or teaching is triggered by educational background [16]. Teachers with a background in early childhood education have lower stress symptoms and vice versa, teachers with non-early childhood education backgrounds are likely to have a higher susceptibility to stress symptoms. This is because the educational background greatly influences the professionalism of teachers in teaching and educational background as the initial capital in determining the learning scheme to be implemented. In other words, if the teacher already understands the situation within the scope of teaching and learning activities, the possibility of experiencing low stress is low. It is just that in this study the number of samples used as the object of the study was not stated. Stress on teachers will arise if there is a poor relationship between students and teachers, insufficient time to prepare for learning and administrative demands that must be borne by the teacher, inadequate work environment conditions, authoritarian school leadership, lack of good relations between fellow teachers. feelings of hopelessness and feelings of inability to do something [25], [26], [27], [28], [29], [30].

The results of a case study research conducted by Mustika [31] stated that the factors that cause teachers of Early Childhood Education to experience stress are based on low self-efficacy where self-efficacy is very important for a teacher because it can affect solving various problems in the work environment. The characteristics of the lack of teacher self-efficacy are the low level of teacher confidence in their abilities towards the difficulty level of the task, the low level of teacher confidence in the ability to carry out their duties in various activities and the low level of strength of belief or teacher expectations of the abilities they have. So that it can trigger a source of stress both psychologically, cognitively, affective and behaviourally which later triggers emotional exhaustion and decreased self-achievement. This symptom occurs due to workload or work overload, so it is very possible for the teacher to be faced with stress that exceeds his endurance and if it lasts for a long time it can cause burnout. This research is quite clear by including the number of samples used as the research object. The results of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Ulfiani [32].

In contrast to the research conducted by Lolita [33] and Khilmayah [34], the result states that what causes the subject to experience stress is the difficulty in managing time when the dual role assignments between at home and at school appear at the same time. So that it causes the physical and psychological condition of the subject to be disturbed. The solution offered here is a program in the form of self-management training to reduce stress on female teachers in full-day school by taking a spiritual approach, time management, and self-regulating emotions. In line with this research, Munandar [18] and Maharani [35] said that one of the efforts that can be made to overcome teacher stress at work is through

meditation, relaxation, therapy and mindfulness-based training. Working conditions that are completely active and dynamic can make teachers feel like they have lost control of themselves and their environment so that these various techniques can help reduce stress experienced by teachers.

### **3. HANDLING STRESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

There are several solutions offered in dealing with stress experienced by teachers, namely through meditation, relaxation, therapy, positive thinking [36], and mindfulness-based training [35]. In addition, self-efficacy is also important in regulating individual self-management and teachers must always think positively about the changes that occur in the world of education that will continue to involve the teaching profession.

According to a study conducted by Rutter [in 35] there are two ways to deal with stress, namely through internal protective and external protective. Internal protection is such as individual skills and orientation, namely social skills, problem solving skills, independence, life goals and a future. Meanwhile, external protection includes support from family members, participation in society, performance at work, and colleagues who care for one another.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

Teachers are one of the professions that are prone to stress, especially teachers of early childhood education. Teachers of early childhood education have a heavy workload, apart from being required to master the material of learning activities, child growth and development, sometimes teachers of early childhood education are also given other additional tasks. So that teachers must be more patient in dealing with various situations that occur in order to remain professional. However, it does not rule out the possibility that this actually triggers stress on the teacher. Some of the triggers for stress are based on the results of research conducted by several researchers, namely workload, lack of self-management and time management, educational background, an unfriendly school environment, inappropriate income and so on. The stress experienced by teachers is divided into three levels, namely mild, moderate and severe stress and can be seen based on changes in physiological and behavioural aspects. However, so far, the stress experienced by the teacher is at mild and moderate stress levels. The solutions offered in overcoming work-induced stress can be done by always thinking positively, meditation, relaxation, self-efficacy, and social support.

The government and the work environment are expected to pay more attention to work stress or workload experienced by teachers. As well as the teachers

themselves have confidence or strength in managing stress management so that teachers can have positive thinking in overcoming the workload carried out in their teaching profession and remain professional in the teaching and learning process. For future research, we hope to reveal more about solutions in overcoming teacher's work stress without exception for teachers of early childhood education.

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