



Occupational stress, anxiety and depression among Egyptian teachers

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 23 March 2017

Received in revised form 13 May 2017

Accepted 17 June 2017

Available online 18 July 2017

Keywords:

Occupational stress

Anxiety

Depression

Egyptian

Teachers

ABSTRACT

Occupational stress (OS) among teachers predispose to depression and anxiety. No study was done to assess these problems among Egyptian teachers. This study aimed to assess the prevalence of OS, depression and anxiety among Egyptian teachers. A cross sectional study was done on 568 Egyptian teachers. The respondents filled a questionnaire on personal data, and the Arabic version of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI), the Arabic validated versions of Taylor manifest anxiety scale and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) were used to assess OS, anxiety and depression respectively. The prevalence of OS, anxiety and depression among teachers was (100%, 67.5% and 23.2%) respectively. OS, anxiety and depression scores were significantly higher among teachers with an age more than 40 years, female teachers, primary school teachers, those with inadequate salary, higher teaching experience, higher qualifications and higher workload. A significant weak positive correlation was found between OS scores and anxiety and depression scores. This study indicated the need for future researches to address risk factors of OS and mental disorders among Egyptian teachers, and the need of periodical medical evaluation of teachers and medical and psychological support for the identified cases.

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1. Introduction

Occupational stress (OS) is the worker's response when facing work demands and pressures not matched to their resources, needs, abilities and knowledge, and overcome their ability to manage [1].

Teaching is a physically and mentally challenging occupation, as the teacher uses a lot of energy in his daily work in the classroom in addition to his personal and familial commitments, which is a continuous source of stress [2]. This was proved by a study done to assess OS across 26 jobs, and found that teaching was one of the most stressful jobs [3].

OS experienced by teachers is attributed to their work load, as they plan lessons, organize activities, develop curriculums, manage extra-curricular activities, supervise classes, provide information,

maintain discipline, provide cover for teacher shortages and absences, maintain records, administer time-tables, evaluate and assess students' performance, in addition to motivation of students by words and actions [4].

OS generally, reduces the quality of life and the overall mental and physical wellbeing of teachers [2]. It also leads to unpleasant emotions as depression and anxiety which impair the teacher's ability to function at work or cope with daily life [5–7].

Excessive pressure from educational institutions, students and parents, community attitude, work overload, students' poor behavior and role conflict make teachers always confused and this predispose to anxiety [8]. In addition, the workload and the adverse psychological environment at work significantly predict depression among them [9]. OS was found to be a risk factor for depression and anxiety among teachers in previous studies [10,11].

In Egypt, the last estimate of the number of pre-university education teachers was 809892 teachers in 2006/2007. And the teacher workload at the primary education level was 24 classes session per week, 21 classes session in preparatory level, and it ranged from 14 to 18 classes sessions in the secondary education level [12].

The Egyptian education system is facing a lot of challenges including low teachers' salaries [13], shortage of resources at schools and poor organizational climate for teachers [13]. Those

Abbreviations: OS, Occupational stress; OSI, Occupational Stress Index; BDI, Beck Depression Inventory; χ^2 , Chi-squared test; SPSS, Statistical Package of Social Science.

Peer review under responsibility of Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jegh.2017.06.002>

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problems were expressed by Egyptian teachers through protests and strikes in the past 5 years. They complained about salaries, work environment, work pressure and lack of involvement and supervisor's support [14].

According to stress among Egyptian teachers, the only published study was done on 325 Egyptian teachers in 2015, and showed that teachers had medium to high levels of stress and medium levels of burnout. The teachers reported high work pressure, less engrossment and supervisors' support, less autonomy, less cooperation with colleagues', less innovation and more physical exhaustion. In addition, a significant correlation was found between work environment characteristics and both stress and burnout levels [15]. This study concluded the importance of carrying out future researches to address the effect of work environment on teacher wellbeing in Egypt.

According to the published data and to our knowledge, no study was done to assess the prevalence of occupational stress among Egyptian teachers. In addition, no study was done to determine the magnitude of the problems of depression and anxiety among them. This study was done to assess the prevalence of OS, depression and anxiety among a sample of Egyptian teachers, and to determine the relationship of these three disorders with some of their personal data.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Study Design and time frame

A cross-sectional study was carried out on a sample of primary, preparatory and secondary school Egyptian teachers in the time frame from January to March 2017.

2.2. Sampling methodology

Using a multistage sampling methodology, we selected the participants as follows: The first stage: Menoufiya governorate was chosen from all Egyptian governorates by simple random sampling methodology. The second stage: from the ten districts of the governorate, Shebeen Alkoomb district was chosen following the same sampling technique, where the school community of Shebeen Alkoomb was the sampling frame. The third stage: following simple random sampling technique, six schools were selected, where one private school was chosen from all private primary schools, and one governmental school from all primary governmental schools. The same technique was followed when choosing the other four schools in the preparatory and secondary educational level. The total number of teachers employed in the selected schools (612) was obtained after contacting every school administration.

Booklets containing the study instruments were distributed to all teachers of the selected schools except those who were absent or refused sharing in the study. The respondent teachers (No. = 568), from primary (n = 236), preparatory (n = 240) and secondary (n = 92) schools returned the questionnaires giving a response rate of 92.8%.

2.3. Study instruments

Teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire to collect personal data about gender, age, qualifications, salary, residence, years of experience, teaching load and the educational stage they teach.

To collect data about OS, the Arabic version of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) was used. It was used in a previous study done in Algeria to assess the occupational stress and its relation to marital adjustment, where its reliability was found to be 0.70 [16]. It is a 46 items scale (28 positive and 18 negative) that were rated on a

5-point Likert scale ranging from 1:(strongly disagree) to 5:(strongly agree). The items are related to relevant components of job conditions that could be sources of stress as work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor colleges' relations, intrinsic impoverishment, and bad working conditions.

According to the scale total scores, the teachers OS was divided into: low level of stress (total score: 46–122), moderate level (total score: 123–155), and high level (total score: 156–230) [17]. The OSI was used in previous studies where it had high reliability and validity [4].

To determine anxiety levels, the Arabic validated version of Taylor manifest anxiety scale was used. It consists of 50 items, and according to its total scores, teacher anxiety level was divided into: normal level (total score: 0–16), mild (17–20), moderate (21–26), severe (27–29), and very severe level (30–50) [18].

To assess levels of the depression among teachers, the Arabic version of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) was used. It is a 21-items scale each item was scored from 0 to 3 according to the symptom severity where the total score ranged from 0 to 63. It was possible to give an answer with a score that ranged from 0 to 3 (absent, mild, moderate and severe), allowing to determine the intensity of the symptom. The patient was diagnosed as normal if having a score less than 26, and the cut-off points used to determine depression levels were as follows: mild depression if the score ranged from (26 to 38), moderate if ranged from (39 to 55) and severe depression if ranged from (56 to 63) [19].

2.4. Ethical considerations

Official approvals were obtained from the ethics committee of the faculty of medicine of Menoufia University and from the directorate of education of the Menoufia governorate, where official letters were sent to the directors of the selected schools to facilitate the researchers' task. All teachers were informed about the aim of the study, the way of answering the study instruments, and their right not to participate. Before sharing in the study, verbal consents were obtained from all participants.

2.5. Data analysis

Data were coded, tabulated and analyzed using [SPSS] version 20 (Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.). Descriptive data was expressed as numbers and percentages, and Chi-squared test (χ^2) was applied to test the relationship between variables. Fisher exact test was used for categorical variables when the expected value was less than 5. Quantitative data was expressed as mean and standard deviation (Mean \pm SD), and student's *t*-test was applied to compare means for groups normally distributed. Mann-Whitney test was used for quantitative non-parametric variables. Correlation analysis was performed by the Spearman's test and a *p*-value of <0.05 was considered as statistically significant

3. Results

In (Table 1), the mean age of the participants was (39.4 \pm 8.7), 58.5% of them were females, 83.1% were married, 87.3% had university education, 59.9% were employed for governmental schools and 52.1% were rural residents. Of the participants, 61.3% had a teaching experience more than 10 years, and 91.5% stated that their salary is inadequate.

The prevalence of mild, moderate and severe depressive symptoms among studied teachers was (19.7%, 2.8% and 0.7%) respectively, and the prevalence of little, mild, severe and very severe anxiety was (17.6%, 23.2%, 7.0% and 19.7%) respectively. Regarding

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