STRESS RELATED CHALLENGES FACED BY PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RURAL MUNICIPALITY IN EASTERN CAPE

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a global phenomenon that affects everyone, regardless of gender, resources and environment. Although this phenomenon is well researched, teachers' experiences of stress remain a worrying challenge particularly to schools' effectiveness. Managing teachers' stress in schools is one of the fundamentals in the improvement of academic performance of primary school learners. This study sought to investigate challenges that contribute to stress among primary school teachers in Rural Municipality in Eastern Cape. A quantitative research approach was chosen with a survey research design, employing a questionnaire as the suitable data collection tool. The investigation focused on ten primary schools and sampling of forty-eight teachers in ten schools. Data were analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed that the main challenges contributing to stress among primary school teachers are ill-disciplined learners The study recommended that the school disciplinary committee should be trained in various disciplinary measures that may be implemented in the school to curb learner ill-discipline and lack of commitment.

Keywords: School Teachers, Rural Municipality in Eastern Cape, Resources and Environment.

INTRODUCTION

In developing countries like South Africa, quality education goals have not yet been attained fully, hence the need to address challenges within their education systems such as teachers' stress to provide quality education to all for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2008). Researchers need to explore reasons behind teachers' stress. Siddiqui (2012) in a study on occupational stress in teachers: a comparative study of public and private schools in Hyderabad city in India, found that teachers working in public schools lack resources like advanced technologies, compared to those working in private schools. Somehow, this could be considered a contributing factor in their stress levels. Bickford (2005) reveals that stress is an ever-present issue in the majority of Canadians. According to results from the 2001 Canadian Mental Health Survey, 500 Canadians were asked the question: thinking about stress in your life, how often do you feel really stressed?… all the time, a few times a week, about once a month, a few times a year, once a year or less often, or never. In response, 9% of Canadians said they felt really stressed all the time, 43% felt really stressed a few times a week, while 24% felt really stressed about once month, which shows stress as an ever present part in daily lives of human beings. In Finland, teaching was linked to burnout and ill-health of teachers, whereas motivation and teachers' well-being was linked to feeling engaged and supported by the organisation (Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeldi, 2006).

Student teachers also experience stress associated with job demands when they attend schools for practice teaching, as found in a UK study with secondary school student teachers

(Chaplain, 2008). In that study, 38% of student-teachers were psychologically stressed following their practicum experience. They identified behaviour management, workload and lack of support as significant professional demands affecting their stress levels. Overall, student teachers felt that their teaching experience had been extremely stressful. The practicum was not directly associated with stress. German student-teachers did not have a practicum, but 44% reported mental health issues (Zimmermann et al., 2008).

Research into stress among school teachers has become popular in the last 20 years. A great deal of research in Africa continent has been carried out and results indicate the negative effects of teacher stress (Mapfumo et al., 2008). Mapfumo et al. (2008) found stress levels among teachers in Zimbabwe have become a great concern. The main causes of stress include, among others, problems with difficult learners, low salaries, heavy workload and shortage of teaching and learning materials, supervision-related matters and the effect of home responsibilities (Mapfumo & Chitsiko, 2012). Soon after attainment of independence in 1980, the new government prioritized provision of education on an unmatched scale in the history of third world countries. This phenomenal growth precipitated a myriad of challenges for teachers, such as overcrowded classes, hot seating sessions, poor teacher accommodation, use of unexperienced supervisors and a general decline in the conditions of service (Chireshe & Chireshe, 2010).

Teacher stress affects various aspects of teacher health and may influence the performance of teachers in the classroom, with potential repercussions on teaching and learning (Kokkins, 2007). Stress may contribute to lateness at work, failure to meet deadlines, violent behaviour on pupils, failure as well as general frustration with life (Chan & Hui, 2009). In some instances, research found that stress may lead to serious health problems, leading to loss of confidence and performance anxiety. Alemu et al. (2014) in their study on experience of stress among student teachers enrolled in Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching: the case of Haramaya University cluster centres, Ethiopia, concluded that many practicing student-teachers report high levels of stress.

Similarly, teachers may experience health problems such as increased blood pressure, rapid heartbeat and depression, leading to alcoholism (Ngidi & Siyaba, 2011). This situation results teachers spending more time seeking medical attention at the expense of teaching children. In order for teachers to perform to their maximum, they need to be in sound physical and mental health so as not to deprive children of their learning time. It is on account of this information that this study set out to explore causes of work related stress and its effect on performance of teachers in Eastern Cape schools.

Stress levels among teachers in South Africa have become a great cause for concern (Mapfumo et al., 2008). For South African teachers, stress is the result of the rapid democratic changes, which transpired in 1994. Ngidi and Siyaba (2012) agree that rapid changes cause stress. Democracy in South Africa was an attempt by the post-apartheid government to redress the legacy of apartheid (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2004). The main causes of stress include, among others, problems with difficult learners, low salaries, heavy workload, shortage of teaching and learning materials, supervision-related matters and the effect of home responsibilities (Mapfumo & Chitsiko, 2012). To add, travelling long distances to and from schools by teachers daily causes stress, changing of the curriculum by the government, syllabus coverage disturbed by activities of the school, large numbers of learners in one class and work pressure coming from the department.

Specifically, with regard to education, democracy brought about an inequitable allocation of resources and other severe educational changes. Many South African schools are still ill-

equipped (Milner & Khoza, 2008) and struggle to cope with these changes. Consequently, teachers struggle to cope due to inadequate resources and develop severe stress. Internal educational changes include, amongst others, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which necessitated the enrolment of learners from grades 0 to 12 the change to an inclusive education system, which allowed for the inclusion of learners with special needs at schools (Engelbrecht, et al., 2001); the National Qualifications Forum (NQF), Curriculum 2005 now known as Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which focused on continuous assessment of learners' progress without emphasis on passing or failing them (Ngidi & Siyaba, 2012); the National Qualifications Authority Act (SAQA) of 1995 and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) prior to the Norms and Standards for Teacher Education. Training and Development in the year 2000, which set out additional roles and responsibilities for teachers and the abolishment of corporal punishment which necessitated the implementation of different methods of enforcing leaner discipline.

Many South Africans struggle to balance work and family life (Oosthuizen & Van der Bijl, 2007). Women have taken up the role of the provider while men acquired more responsibilities at home, and often their family responsibilities clash with their responsibilities at work. Consequently, they experience work-home conflict, where work interferes with family life or family-work conflict where family interferes with work. Both these situations impact negatively on the quality of the individual's life and can cause stress (Nelson & Quick, 2014). In South Africa, both situations can apply due to changes in family structures such as single parents and dual career couples. Females struggle to cope and have difficulty to balance work which can culminate in less life satisfaction, anxiety and work stress. Difficulties which families encounter in effecting such transitions, especially unexpected ones, such as retrenchment, may result in psychological and interpersonal conflicts or confusion and threaten family security, stability, quality of life, status and the very identity that work provides for the individual as well as family (Wentzel, 2009). However, South African teachers' working environment causes exhaustion and threatens the status, economic stability, self-esteem, basic beliefs and loved ones, which causes stress (Hobfoll, 1989).

In Eastern Cape, teaching overcrowded classrooms creates an enormous challenge in producing productive learning classroom environments where effective teaching and assessment strategies are crucial (Nomtshonwana, 2014). Teachers cannot practice a variety of methods, such as higher-order questioning and active learning approaches. In fact, teachers are confined to the 'chalk and talk' instructional method (Opoku-Asare et al., 2014) widely practiced in South African schools. For example, some schools in the Eastern Cape have more than 130 learners squeezed into one classroom, and teachers are obliged to present lessons with their backs pressed up against the blackboard.

The disruptive, counterproductive effect of overcrowding is explained as follows: Teachers do not have time to grade each paper. Instead; they just check off whether the student completed the task and overlook whether they did not work the right. Such wrong ideas then remain in the learners' minds, and are, in all probability, never corrected. This could be one explanation for poor matriculation results. Furthermore, in overcrowded classrooms, teachers cannot pay attention to all the learners and are unable to share their attention amongst learners. This is affirmed by Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) who argue that teachers cannot persuade all learners to participate and tend to ignore those who are passive.

Statement of the Problem

Significant numbers of teachers leaving the teaching profession before retirement age, most complain about the demanding situations they face in their schools. Buka (2011) also maintain that teachers' work is suffering under demanding conditions, with prevalence of vandalism, school violence and drug abuse. Teachers perceive that conditions under which they work are not conducive at all to a satisfactory environment and feel frustrated with lack of control over their stressful work situation.

Numerous studies have been done on stress among teachers in a different dimension, for example, Sabherwal and Ahuja (2015) found in secondary schools, teachers shows that determinants of stress among teachers are numerous and varied, with a compilation of results, time pressures, lack of infrastructure, student indiscipline and poor pay prospects as very high ranked stressors.

Previous research has shown that teaching professionals experience high levels of work stress. Significant proportions of studies on stress have taken place in developed economies, such as Australia (Haynes & Love (2004), the United Kingdom (UK) (Djebani, 1996), Hong Kong (Leung et al., 2007; 2008); however, none of these studies focused on stress related challenges among primary school teachers in Mthatha in Rural Primary school in Eastern Cape, South Africa. Thus, this study fills the gap in the literature. The objective of this study was to determine the stress challenges faced by teachers in schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jepson and Forrest (2006) define stress as a general term used for pressure that people are exposed to in life, as the individual harmony effort that the person displays against a stimulant which has excessive psychological and physical pressure on the person. Olivier and Venter (2003) believe that the word *stress* has been derived from a Latin word "*strictus*", which means *rigid* or *stiff*. Stress is defined as a condition of anxiety that arises from a real or perceived demand that calls for a change or adaptive behaviour (Olson et al., 1990). Oliver and Venter, (2003) that stress is a psychological term that directly affects the physical condition. This type of response is seen when accomplishment of some goal is directed to do specific tasks. Sometimes the environment also leads towards few acts for the survival.

Decenzo and Robbins (2006) state that stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (2008) define stress as an unpleasant emotion, which arises when people worry that they cannot cope with excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them.

Factors that Contribute to Stress among Teachers

A plethora of authors (Haynes & Love, 2004; Mubarak, 2014; Sabherwal & Ahuja, 2015) have conducted research on stress among teachers in different dimensions. For example, Sabherwal & Ahuja (2015) found in secondary schools, determinants of stress among the teachers are numerous and varied, with results, time pressures, lack of infrastructure, student indiscipline and poor pay prospects, as a high ranked stressor. In the Eastern Cape in Ngqeleni

(2018), learners burnt a school because they were complaining about long-term service period of the School Governing Board Members, and not focusing on their studies; this reflects students' indiscipline, which lead to poor learner performance and contribute to stress among teachers.

Along with that, findings also revealed that teachers experienced, on average, a low to moderate level of stress, and this negatively affected their performance. The leadership style of principals may also stress the teachers. In a similar vein, Roffey's (2012) study examined school experiences whereby a negative leadership style of principals stresses teachers and affects academic performance of the learners. Roffey (2012) found that encouraging positive leadership style of a principal builds quality relationships between the principal and teachers. This assists learning, promotes discipline and eliminates stress among teachers. Thus, a positive relationship between the principal and teachers can meaningfully transform the school situation. Therefore, looking at Roffye (2012) the researcher is of the view that principals, as school leaders, should be encouraged to enhance educational excellence and genuine wellbeing of learners.

In another related study, Mubarak (2014) stated that absenteeism reflected poor individual performance as well as a breach of an implicit contract between learner and teacher. Absenteeism is an indicator of psychological, medical or social adjustment to work (ibid). Findings of Quick (2008) show that frequent absence from school may be indicative of a sick building syndrome that leads to poor learner performance. This leads to even greater absenteeism and reduced productivity among teachers who try to work while ill.

Qadimi and Praveena (2013) found that teachers in higher age groups had higher burnout scores; however, the study shows that there were no significant differences between age groups of school teachers with reference to their occupational stress. Furthermore, a comparative study on occupational stress of secondary school teachers in relation to demographic variables such as gender, types of school and locality was conducted (Ritu, 2011). The objective was to compare occupational stress of male and female secondary school teachers. Results showed no significant difference in the occupational stress of secondary school teachers on gender, type of school and locality basis.

Similar studies between Ritu (2011) revealed that the majority of university teachers experienced moderate to high levels of occupational stress while 86% had professional burnout. Therefore, based the aforementioned studies, the researcher believes that there is strong support for hypotheses that there is a positive relationship between occupational stress and professional burnout of teachers.

Rauna (2016) complained about many qualified teachers leaving the teaching profession, thus contributing to the shortage of teachers. This leaves learners with teachers who lack competence in some subjects (ibid). Korthagen (2004) adds that professional competence is a core issue in all discussions of what makes a good teacher. Insights into why teachers show different levels of professional competence can be expected to inform both teacher education and recruitment of more suitable candidates as teaching professionals (Korthagen, 2004). In line with Korthagen (2004), the researcher asserts that teacher competence and teacher education reveal two main lines of argument, each resting on different ideals of why teachers differ as individuals. The researcher also noted that different perceptions on professional competence may be caused either by different individual aptitudes or different qualifications, that is, the outcome of teacher education.

Roberts and DelVecchio (2000) emphasize that individual aptitude for teaching assumes that differences in teachers' success in the profession are the result of certain stable personality characteristics that teachers bring to their careers or training programs. Findings revealed that

formal and informal learning opportunities are of primary importance in the development of teachers' professional competence. Pre-service teacher education, which in Germany consists of the university base phase and subsequent induction program, provides teaching candidates with opportunities for formal learning (Cochron-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

Cochron-Smith and Zeichner (2005) clarify that attaining formal qualifications builds up competence in the context of university courses and consolidating knowledge through classroom teaching practise in the induction phase. The researcher presumes that teachers' professional knowledge as well as their beliefs about teaching and the teaching profession is shaped, to a substantial degree, by this formal training. Failing to go through those channels would render a teacher lacking in competence to teach, leading to poor performance of learners.

Kahttoon (2018) reveal that most secondary school teachers experience less stress towards their job while males display more occupational stress towards the job than the females. Moreover, trained graduate teachers are found to have higher occupational stress than postgraduate and untrained teachers (ibid). Teachers with an experience of 6-10 years face occupational stress the most and those of 0-5 years, the least. In other related studies, Kumar and Deo (2011) explored different aspects of work life of college teachers to find out differences in perception of male and female, as well as junior and senior teachers with regard to stress. Findings revealed that junior college teachers experienced significantly more stress on most dimensions of stress in comparison to senior teachers. However, female teachers experienced more role overload and inter-role distance stress, compared to their male counterparts.

In a comparative analysis of male and female teachers, Sang and Ved (2013) reported that female teachers experienced significantly higher levels of work-family conflict and lower levels of job satisfaction and higher turnover intention than their male counterparts. The research suggests that female teacher professionals experience higher levels of work stress than their male peers. Djebarni (1996) believes that experience plays an important role in work stress and associated with low levels of work performance in teaching.

In Australia, Haynes and Love (2004) identified workload, long hours and insufficient time with family as three most significant stressors experienced by teachers. However, there is evidence that work stress is experienced varying to degrees, depending on the nature of employment in education. Haynes and Love (2004) report that teaching professionals, who are working as teachers, experience low levels of stress and higher levels of workplace support than principal professionals. Similarly, Lingard and Francis (2004) found that teacher professionals worked longer hours and experienced higher levels of burnout

In Europe and USA, Rajendran (2015) revealed that in many countries, teaching is often considered as one of the most stressful professions. In the last two decades, intensive research has been conducted on sources and symptoms of teachers' professional stress. Studies in the field of teacher stress show that stress is associated with the rapid pace of changes in education, particularly in 1980s and 1990s. The teaching profession is generally considered as a noble profession with lots of expectations from parents towards their children's education and development of their personalities. These expectations may also contribute, as a source of stress. Present studies attempt to identify sources of stress and its relation to certain demographic variables such as job demands or conditions at work that surpass professional knowledge and abilities, which challenge the ability to cope. Rajendran (2015) states that these demands and conditions are usually called *stressors*. Ballou and Podgursky (1997) found that inadequate salary for teachers causes stress. They found that in order to attract more capable persons into the profession, salaries needed to be raised. Over and again, it was pointed out that teachers' salaries

ranked below those of most occupations requiring a college degree. Moreover, while teaching had never been regarded as a well-paid career, during the 1970s, teachers lost ground.

As state legislature and local school districts responded to recommendations of commissions, a few dissenting voices questioned the accuracy of the diagnosis and efficacy of the cure. It was argued that teachers were not as poorly paid as alleged. Thus teacher salaries had been understated.

In addition, most inter-occupational comparisons of salaries omit fringe benefits. Since teachers, like other public sector employees, receive more generous benefits than most private sector workers, this omission led to an understatement of their relative compensation. Finally, teachers also work shorter years than most other Americans; earnings during summer vacations (or the value of leisure) further increase teachers' total income. More important, there has been no analysis of the teacher labour market to support recommended salary increases. No one seems to have any idea of either how much additional teacher talent would be attracted by increases in teacher compensation, or how much students would learn if teachers were paid more (Lieberman, 1986). Indeed, the notion that increasing spending on schools would improve educational outcomes was (and remains) a contentious one, with a substantial body of research failing to detect a strong relationship between per-pupil expenditures and student achievement (Hanushek, 1986).

Adding to the notion are voices of those who believe that teacher salaries are still too low, that we have not done enough to make the profession attractive, and of their opponents who see no point in providing additional funds to an educational system that has demonstrably failed the nation's children and wonder why many of our school systems must now spend more per pupil when many private schools cost substantially less. Teachers are stressed because of inadequate salaries they receive from the department.

Teachers strongly believe that schools could seek motivational speakers from different organisations like love life, health and police to eliminate stress (Hanushek, 1986). According to Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory proposed, many scholars have considered the duality of motivators and hygiene factors. Others have drawn different conclusions, for example, Halsey (1992) found that core motivators are critical for job satisfaction, but not as core factors.

Tytherleigh and Copper (2005) found that factors related to work conditions such as job security, resources, workload, rewards and recognition are core factors for job satisfaction. When work conditions are better than they are currently, teachers' job satisfaction might be mainly related to motivators; however, work conditions are core motivators in determining job satisfaction in the current work environment where work conditions such as salary and rewards are low compared to other jobs, as reflected by Parker and Jary (1995).

Nevertheless, national studies of teachers' stress show that teachers are satisfied with their jobs Perspectives on teachers' stress are explained by two different dimensions of central motivation and external work conditions, borrowing a theoretical concept from Herzberg (1959) motivational and hygiene factors. According to this study, central motivation is related to the job itself and is a cause of job satisfaction. On the one hand, work conditions are related to the work environment, which can be a cause of job dissatisfaction. National studies explain the nature of teachers' jobs where teachers are satisfied with the job itself, but that the work environment is getting less favourable under the managerial reforms (Fredman & Doughney, 2012). The researcher agrees with this theory of motivation by Herzberg that it can work for teachers to eliminate job stress. On the other hand, stress to teachers is due to lack of support from learners' parents. Parent involvement in schools has been identified as a priority in the United States'

educational system (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2001). Efforts to increase parent participation in schools have been largely unsuccessful and lead to stress among teachers. The researcher agrees that many parents are not routinely involved in their children's schooling, but it would be both unsound and unfair to conclude that they do not value education.

Some parents are very committed to their children's education but are restricted by language and culture barriers (Denessen, et al., 2007), thus resulting in stress. Other parents are reluctant to involve themselves too closely in their child's schooling due to feelings of incompetence. That is to say, some parents believe teachers are professionals and better suited to make decisions concerning their children's education. Still, other parents would like to be more involved at school and at home, but feel schools only encourage their passive support and "*Ought not to interfere with the job of teaching school curricula (Smekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001)*". The researcher believes that parents must support their children's schooling to reduce stress from teachers.

Crozier (2001) found that causes of parents not fully supporting their children's education were: the inability to meet the needs of ethnic minority children, low expectations of Black children, unwillingness to test Black children for either learning disabilities or accelerated education programs, parents' voices silenced, concerns overlooked and involvement criticized. Crozier argues that lack of support from parents can stress teachers but also presents parents as a homogenous, undifferentiated group. Ill-disciplined learners cause stress to teachers. Findings shows that despite having commendable teaching experience of more than five years, some teachers seem to have lost hope in instilling discipline in their learners. People would expect that teachers with extensive teaching experience have better strategies to cope with ill-discipline and lack of respect in their classrooms. Singh (2014) also found that learners have arrogant attitudes towards their teachers, are disrespectful and lack moral and values. Learners also tease and disrespect one another (Singh, 2014). This being the case, Harmse (2013) reported that some teachers feel that there are not sufficient sanctions to deal with anti-social behaviour and disciplinary problems in schools. These incidents are proof that there is lack of respect among learners, not only for their teachers, but also for each other. Important rights, such as the right to humanity or dignity and the right to a safe environment at schools, are not respected. Moreover, it seems that teachers are unable to instil necessary morals and values to enhance good self-discipline amongst learners.

Teachers complain about unsafe schools because learners these days are behaving badly, so teachers believe that there is a need of security in schools. Kristin (2004) revealed that schools need security to avoid violence and stress to teachers. Ill-disciplined learners with inappropriate behaviour can stress teachers, so school safety action needs to be taken (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Mayer and Leone (1999) concurred by adding that an unwelcoming and uninspected school environment leads to more school misconduct. They also agree that security measures can eliminate stress in teachers. Hyman and Perone (1998) add that not only is there dependence on security systems, but there is also an increased dependence on law enforcement in schools.

They fear that if schools become over-dependent on the police, they will be less likely to create educational programs to deal with less severe violent and disruptive behaviour. Over-dependence on law enforcement could also impact on learners' attitudes toward teachers; learners may view teachers as less of an authority and may be more likely to act out in the absence of the police (Hyman & Perone, 1998). Skiba and Peterson (2000) agree that corporal punishment also has been ineffective at reducing school violence and believe it models societal violence. They continue saying harsh, callous punishment and disciplinary policies have not been

shown to be effective when trying to promote a school atmosphere conducive to preventing school violence. Therefore, it is important to turn attention to more effective techniques. An effective school discipline model prevents both the extremes of a lax environment and a prison-like setting.

Research has shown that a school discipline program must be comprehensive, sustained, and include: preventive strategies that develop responsible behaviour; corrective strategies that deal with unacceptable behaviour and programs that handle chronic behavioural problems. These strategies and programs should be directed toward learners' thoughts, actions and feelings. The relationships between learners, teachers, parents and the community while the classroom environment and curriculum need to be taken into consideration in the development of disciplinary programs (Bear, 2005).

The most successful discipline plans have clear, fair and unbiased rules (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Mayer and Leone (1999) found that greater awareness of school rules and consequences, as well as an understanding of the degree to which rules are enforced leads to less school disorder. Methods of discipline should always be positive and communicated plainly. When negative consequences are used, they should always be followed with an explanation and positive ways in which socially acceptable behaviour can be used (Hyman & Perone, 1998). To most effectively target violence in schools, preventative focus needs to be established, with early responses and comprehensive planning (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). The researcher is in agreement with the statement that there is need for security in schools to minimize violence that may lead to stress in teachers.

Previous research has shown that teaching professionals experience high levels of work stress. Such research has almost always taken place in developed economies such as Australia (Lingard & Francis, 2009; Haynes & Love 2010), the United Kingdom (UK) (Djebani, 1996). Recently, the extent to which findings apply in developing countries such as South Africa is unknown, hence this study. Therefore, it is important to investigate factors that contribute to stress among primary school teachers in Rural Municipality in Eastern Cape, South Africa. In order to achieve this objective, it is vital to explore how: teachers' stress affect learners' performance, teachers' stress affects learners' performance, establish how monitoring and management by Department of Education assists teachers to cope with stress challenges, schools address stress challenges among teachers, and variables such as gender, age and experience play a role in perceived levels of stress.

Monitoring and Management by Department of Education that May Assist Teachers to Cope With Stress Challenges

One of plans that may assist teachers to cope with stress is that of KwaZulu Natal because it concentrates on curriculum, which has an impact on teacher stress. Jika iMfundo is a campaign of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education piloted in 2015–2017 in 1 200 public schools in two districts (King Cetshwayo and Pinetown). The model was tested on scale and lessons learned before being rolled out across the province from 2018. The implementation of Jika iMfundo is supported by the Programme to Improve Learning Outcomes (PILO) and funded by the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT).

The management focus is on all Circuit Managers and Subject Advisers at district level and on all the School Management Teams at school level. Teacher focus is on providing curriculum support materials to teachers from Grades 1–12. Jika iMfundo seeks to provide district officials, teachers and School Management Teams with tools and training needed to have professional,

supportive conversations about curriculum coverage based on evidence so that problems of curriculum coverage are identified, solved and learning outcomes improve across the system. It achieves this with a set of interventions at school and district levels. It works from foundation phase to the FET phase by building routines and patterns of support within and to schools that will have a long-term and sustained impact on learning outcomes.

The overarching strategic objective is to improve learning outcomes. Their theory is that the quality of curriculum coverage improves, then learning outcomes will improve. In order for curriculum coverage to improve, the following behaviour associated with curriculum coverage must improve: monitoring curriculum coverage, reporting this at the level where action can be taken and providing supportive responses to solve problems associated with curriculum coverage. These are lead indicators that must change before getting change in the lag indicators of curriculum coverage and learning. The goal is to make behaviour supportive of quality curriculum coverage routine (embedded and sustained) practices in the system.

A good relationship and motivational workshops between the department, principal and teachers can eliminate stress to teachers, whereby views of teachers are observed by the principal and Department of Education; likewise, views of the department and the principal are being accepted by the teachers (Gyimah, 2013). The author adds that a good relationship exists where the Department of Education constantly meets with the teachers, and teachers feel free to meet with the principal and their department to improve performance of learners at school.

It is in the researchers' opinion that, if the teachers find it difficult to contact the principal and their department when there is a problem or the principal and department of education find it difficult to contact teachers when there is a problem, then the relationship is not the best. The researcher believes that to eliminate stress among teachers, the Department of Education must have motivational workshops.

Dunn and Goodnight (2011) found that seeking help from experienced colleagues can eliminate stress. They add that no one person is responsible for everything. Furthermore, no-one knows everything, so every person needs the support and advice of others to help in a specific task or activity. The level and type of support varies depending on the request. All teachers require different types, levels and intensity of support in their workplaces. This support may come from a variety of people and resources. The Department of Education provides support to teachers and offers them a wealth of resources during the normal course of business. The person providing the support is called the *provider* and the person asking for support as the *recipient*. Experienced colleagues can help others colleagues at work to eliminate stress.

Another way found to eliminate stress in teachers was to join sport. In a development context, the definition of sport usually includes a broad and inclusive spectrum of activities in which people of all ages and abilities can participate, with an emphasis on the positive values of sport. The United Nations (UN) Inter Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (2008) defined sport as "*All forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organised or competitive sport and indigenous sports and games*".

According to the Charter of the Council of European Sports: "*Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels*"

Findings show that governments worldwide increasingly use sport for development purposes. This includes programmes in support such as: "*sport for peace*"; a "*green*"

environment; fighting poverty and crime and substance abuse; awareness around issues of HIV and Aids; women, children and people with disabilities; and as a strategy to eliminate stress among people or teachers. Sport works primarily by bridging relationships across social, economic and cultural divides within society, and by building a sense of shared identity and fellowship among groups that might otherwise be inclined to threaten each other with distrust, hostility or violence. By sharing sports experiences, sports participants from conflicting groups increasingly grow to feel that they are alike, rather than different.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research is classified as, primarily, interactive field research or non-interactive document research (Cohen and Manion, 1989). The quantitative research approach was used to collect data. Quantitative research approach was used for this study because data collection using this approach is relatively quick, and data analysis is less time consuming; the quantitative method is useful for studying large numbers of people

Population and Sampling Technique

A population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the result of the study. For this study, the population comprised teachers of primary schools in Rural Municipality in Eastern Cape School. From these schools, some teachers were selected as respondents. The population under study included rural and urban primary school teachers selected because they fit into the specific criteria to the study.   Random sampling method refers to situations whereby each element in the population has equal and independent chance of selection in the sample Tengco (2007). In order to have a random selection method, set up a procedure that ensures that the different units in the population have equal probabilities of being chosen. The 10 schools were selected randomly from 21 schools in Mthatha. Forty eight (48) teachers were randomly selected from the ten (10) schools, where between five (5) teachers (respondents) were randomly selected from eight (8) schools and four (4) teachers were selected from two schools.

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was used in this study to obtain information. The researcher distributed questionnaires to school teachers personally and gave them two days to respond and collected these. Some of the questionnaires were incomplete because respondents did not understand the questions, so the researcher went back to the schools, translated the questionnaires to respondents and updated their copies. The researcher adopted a "wait and collect method". The reason for adopting this was to make sure all the respondents responded to all questions in the questionnaire.

Data were analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), which made it easy to analyse data; data were presented in graphs, tables and charts. One of the reasons for selecting SPSS is that it is convenient for both novice and professionals or experienced researchers (Buka & Molepo 2016); The analysed data was then presented by means of tables and bar graph.

Demographic Information of Teachers

The respondents for this study were teachers between the ages of 23 to 65 years.

Table 1 AGE GROUP				
	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
23-33 Years	9	18.8	18.8	18.8
33-44 Years	23	47.9	47.9	66.7
45-55 Years	11	22.9	22.9	89.6
56-65 Years	5	10.4	10.4	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows the age group of the teachers who answered the questionnaire. Nine (18.8 %) teachers were between 23 to 33 years. Twenty three (47.9 %) teachers were between the ages of 34 to 44. Eleven (22.9%) teachers were between the ages of 45 to 55. Five (10.4%) teachers were between the ages of 56 to 65. Therefore, most teachers were in the age range of 33-44 years.

Table 2 GENDER OF TEACHERS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	30	62.5	62.5	62.5
	Male	18	37.5	37.5	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows the gender of teachers who responded. Female teachers who responded were 30 (62.5%) while male teachers were 18(37.5%). Therefore, the majority of teachers were females.

Table 3 Work experience of teachers				
Number of years as teacher		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-5	34	70.8	70.8	70.8
	6-10	9	18.8	18.8	89.6
	11-15	5	10.4	10.4	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 shows the work experience in years as a teacher. Thus, 34 (70.8%) teachers with 0-5 years' experience participated in the study; nine (18.8%) teachers had 6-10 while 5 (10.4%) teachers had 11-15 years' experience. Therefore, the majority of respondents were teachers with 0-5 years' working experience.

The data in the following table and interpretations thereof is on stress challenges faced by teachers in the selected schools.

Table 3
LEADERSHIP STYLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL STRESSES TEACHERS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	45	93.8	93.8	93.8
	No	3	6.3	6.3	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 shows that the majority 45 (93.8%) of teachers believe that leadership style of school principals stresses teachers. Only 3 (6.3%) teachers said *no* to the above notion.

Table 4
LACK OF SUPPORT FROM LEARNERS' PARENTS CAN CAUSE STRESS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	37	77.1	77.1	77.1
	No	11	22.9	22.9	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 above indicates that 37(77.1%) teachers agree with the notion that lack of support from parents causes stress to teachers while only 11(22.9%) do not agree with the above question.

Table 5
SHORTAGE OF LEARNING MATERIAL IN OUR SCHOOLS CAN STRESS TEACHERS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	39	81.3	81.3	81.3
	No	9	18.8	18.8	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 shows that 39 (81.3%) of teachers agree that shortage of learning material in schools can stress teachers. Only 9(18.8%) teachers disagree that shortage of learning material in our schools can stress teachers.

Table 6
STRESS CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN SCHOOL: OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS CONTRIBUTE TO TEACHERS' STRESS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	43	89.6	89.6	89.6
	No	5	10.4	10.4	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 above indicates that 43(89.6%) teachers believed that overcrowded classrooms contribute to teachers' stress. Only 5(10.4%) did not believe that overcrowded classrooms contribute to teachers' stress.

Table 7
OTHER CAUSES OF TEACHER STRESS, LACK OF LEARNERS' DISCIPLINE AND LACK OF SECURITY

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Changing of curriculum by education heads now and then	14	29.2	29.2	29.2
Lack of learners' discipline and lack of security	2	4.2	4.2	33.3
Drug abuse and threats by learners to teachers	3	6.3	6.3	39.6
Lack of school resources	3	6.3	6.3	45.8
Late comers and lack of lecture halls	3	6.3	6.3	52.1
Learners come with guns or drugs	3	6.3	6.3	58.3
Long distance from home to schools and low salary	3	6.3	6.3	64.6
Long distance to and from school	3	6.3	6.3	70.8
Low salaries	3	6.3	6.3	77.1
Personal issues like divorce	2	4.2	4.2	81.3
Lack of school resources can cause stress among teachers	3	6.3	6.3	87.5
Thugs within students	3	6.3	6.3	93.8
Unfenced schools cause learners to move out of the school anytime	3	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 shows that the majority of teachers 14(29%) said changing of curriculum by education heads now and then causes stress among teachers, other causes as per the table, reflect 4.2% and 6.3% responses, respectively.

The Following Tables Indicated the Most Dominant Stressors Affecting Teachers:

Table 8
LEARNER DISCIPLINE PROBLEM

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	48	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 8 shows 48 (100%) of teachers confirm that learners' discipline is a problem.

Table 9
INADEQUATE SALARY FOR THE WORK TEACHERS DO

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	31	64.6	64.6	64.6
	No	17	35.4	35.4	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 indicate that 31(64.6%) of teachers agree that inadequate salary for the work teachers do were the most dominant stressors affecting teachers, while 17(35.4%) of teachers disagree to the above notion.

Table 10
LACK OF PROMOTION OR ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	42	87.5	87.5	87.5
	No	6	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 10 indicate that 42(87.5%) of teachers agree that lack of promotion or advancement opportunity is the most dominant stressor affecting teachers. Only 6(12.5%) disagree that lack of promotion or advancement opportunity is the most dominant stressor affecting teachers.

Table 11
POOR PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	45	93.8	93.8	93.8
	No	3	6.3	6.3	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 11 indicates that 45(93.8%) teachers believe that the most dominant stressor affecting teachers were poor performance of learners, while 3 (6.3%) teachers do not believe that the most dominant stressor affecting teachers were poor performance of learners.

Table 12
FREQUENT CHANGES IN THE CURRICULUM

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	42	87.5	87.5	87.5
	No	6	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 12 indicates that the majority of teachers 42(87.5%) agree that the most dominant stressor affecting teachers is frequent changes in the curriculum. The lowest percentage of teachers 6(12.5%) disagree with the above notion.

Table 13
OTHER STRESSORS ARE LONG DISTANCE TO AND FROM SCHOOL

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		16	33.3	33.3	33.3
	absenteeism of learners	2	4.2	4.2	37.5
	heavy loads and subject allocation not based on qualifications	3	6.3	6.3	43.8
	lack of communication between teachers and parents	3	6.3	6.3	50.0
	lack of support from parents	3	6.3	6.3	56.3
	leadership styles	3	6.3	6.3	62.5
	long distance to and from school	3	6.3	6.3	68.8
	low salary	3	6.3	6.3	75.0
	overloading of teachers with work	3	6.3	6.3	81.3
	poor communication between teachers and Department of Education	3	6.3	6.3	87.5
	shortage of teachers	3	6.3	6.3	93.8
	slow learners	3	6.3	6.3	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 13 shows that 2(4.2%) teachers agree that absenteeism of learners is a stressor to teachers, while 3(6.3.8%) teachers complain about many causes of stress, as already mentioned in the table. The majority of teachers 16 (33.3%) also agree that long distance to and from school are stressor to teachers.

Table 14 ABSENCE OF TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM AFFECTS LEARNER PERFORMANCE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	6	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Disagree	3	6.3	6.3	18.8
	Agree	20	41.7	41.7	60.4
	strongly agree	19	39.6	39.6	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 14 indicate that 6 (12.5%) of teachers strongly disagree that teachers' stress may affect learners' performance for example, absent of teacher in classroom affect learner performance. The lowest percentage of teachers 3 (6.3%) disagree to the above notion, while the majority of teachers 20(41.7%) agree that teachers' stress can affect learners' performance for example, absent of teacher in classroom affect learner performance.

Table 15 TEACHERS WHO ARE WORKING UNDER POOR LEADERSHIP OF A PRINCIPAL MAY AFFECT LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	6	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Disagree	9	18.8	18.8	31.3
	Undecided	12	25.0	25.0	56.3
	Agree	19	39.6	39.6	95.8
	strongly agree	2	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 15 indicate that the lowest percentage 6(12.5%) of teachers strongly disagree that teachers' stress affect learners' performance for example teachers that are working under poor leadership of principal can affect learners' performance. Some teachers 9(18.8%) disagree to the above notion, while 12(25.0%) undecided that teachers' stress affect learners' performance for example teachers that are working under poor leadership of principal can affect learners' performance. Teachers agree to the above notion were at the percentage of 19(39.9%) and only 2 (4.2%) strongly agree that teachers' stress affect learners' performance for example teachers that are working under poor leadership of principal can affect learners' performance.

Table 16 MOTIVATIONAL WORKSHOPS BY THE DEPARTMENT MAY ELIMINATE STRESS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	11	22.9	22.9	22.9
	Undecided	8	16.7	16.7	39.6
	Agree	17	35.4	35.4	75.0
	strongly agree	12	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 16 indicates that teachers 11(22.9%) disagree that motivational workshops by the department can eliminate stress, while the lowest number 8(16.7%) of teachers undecided to the

above notion. The highest number 17 (35.4%) of teachers agree that motivational workshops by the department can eliminate stress, while some teachers 12 (25%) strongly agree to the above notion.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Table 17 OTHER MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS DONE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ASSIST TEACHERS TO COPE WITH STRESS CHALLENGES, AS MENTION BY TEACHERS				
Attendance register for teachers is a monitoring tool and can assist management	19	39.6	39.6	39.6
Provision of security in our schools can be one of monitoring tool for safety of teachers and learners.	3	6.3	6.3	45.8
end year parties	3	6.3	6.3	52.1
open discussions for teachers	5	10.4	10.4	62.5
support teachers with resources and infrastructure	3	6.3	6.3	68.8
training from district Department of Basic Education can assist teachers	3	6.3	6.3	75.0
visiting schools	3	6.3	6.3	81.3
Motivational workshops by the department can eliminate stress	3	6.3	6.3	87.5
Rewards from the District Department of basic Education can eliminate stress to teachers	6	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 17 indicates that the majority of teachers, 19(39.6%), believe that the attendance register for teachers is a monitoring tool and can assist management to monitor teachers in terms of absenteeism caused by stress. Other teachers, 6 (12.5%) believe that rewards from the District Department of Basic Education can be a management mechanism used to eliminate stress on teachers. Lastly, 3 (6.3%) teachers mentioned some solutions to eliminate stress among teachers as reflected in the table.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that factors contributing to stress among primary school teachers are, among others, ill-disciplined learners, lack of resources, inadequate school buildings with broken windows, learner absenteeism, shortage of learning and teaching materials, conditions that are not conducive for teaching and learning, huge workload, increased workload and job overload resulting in low performance of learners, some learners carry dangerous weapons to school that could promote a threatening and unsafe environment that ultimately leads to poor academic performance of learners, use of drugs and alcohol by learners in schools frustrating teachers and affecting learners' performance. These are some of the recommendations elicited from the study: the school disciplinary committee should be trained in various disciplinary measures that may be implemented in the school to curb learner ill-discipline and lack of commitment; a working relationship should be built between schools and the Department of Basic Education; motivational speakers and educational counsellors should meet with all learners on a regular basis to motivate them to have high desire for and interest in education and to build their self-confidence in the classroom; providing all the schools with a healthy environment in classrooms; provision of learning and teaching materials to all schools; setting up an effective

school-parents partnership in order to promote a safe drug and alcohol-free environment; employing enough teachers in all secondary schools; and the Department of Basic Education at district level should make room for stress management workshops for teachers.

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