

Teresa Mendonça McIntyre, Scott E. McIntyre, and David J. Francis (eds.): Educator Stress: An Occupational Health Perspective

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Mehdi Haseli Songhori¹ · Behzad Ghonsooly²

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Stress in teachers and the teaching profession is an epidemic and an internationally recognized phenomenon (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Although over the past decades mainstream research in education and educational psychology has witnessed an exponential growth in the literature on teacher stress, there seems to be a lacuna in coming up with effective intervention strategies to alleviate this ubiquitous problem. *Educator Stress: An Occupational Health Perspective* is a state of the art volume which nicely deals with the problem of educator stress by drawing upon the theories from three disciplines, namely education, psychology, and occupational health to bring forth “an integrated and comprehensive review of theory, research, methodology, and intervention on the topic of stress in educators” (xii).

This book is divided into four parts with each part discussing an aspect of educator stress such as defining what the problem of educator stress is, conceptualizing and understanding its nature, introducing intervention strategies to tackle the problem, and discussing what future research should address in relation to educator stress. Part I, the longest part of the book, provides a thorough description of the epidemic of stress, its sources, and fallout. This part

comprises seven chapters covering topics including the role of schools and educational systems in educators’ well-being and mental health (Chapter 1 by Collie, Perry, and Martin). The nature, causes, and prevalence of stress in teachers, their clients, and society at large (Chapter 2 by Travers), the relationship between job stressors on teachers’ self-efficacy (Chapter 3 by Schonfeld, Bianchi, and Luehring-Jones; and Chapter 5 by Skaalvik and Skaalvik), the biological vulnerabilities associated with stressful contexts like schools (Chapter 4 by Bellingrath and Kudielka), the impact of stress on turnover in charter schools in the USA (Chapter 6 by Cano, Flores, Claeys, and Sass), and the role of culture, policy, autonomy, and school-related factors in educator stress (Chapter 7 by McCarthy, Lineback, Fitchett, Lambert, Eyal, and Boyle). This comprehensive part is emblematic of the plethora of literature on educator stress and zeros in on the fact that stress inherent in the teaching profession “merits immediate attention by school administrators and policy makers” (1).

Utilizing the occupational health (OH) models, the five chapters in part II endeavor to bring together “educator-based and organizational-based models of work stress ... to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of educator stress” (179). Theoretical–empirical model of educator stress presented by Montgomery (Chapter 8) focuses on the interplay between the teaching environment and the teacher stress, coping, and burnout. The next three chapters deal specifically with occupational health models used in understanding educator stress. In chapter 9, van der Deof and Verhoeven employ the Job Demand–Control–Support (JDCS) model to elucidate its application in researching stress. Effort–Reward Imbalance model’s contribution to educator stress and well-being is the topic of chapter 10 by Siegrist. This model is concerned with “stressful features of the work contract, with a selective

✉ Mehdi Haseli Songhori
m.haseli@iauzah.ac.ir

Behzad Ghonsooly
ghonsooly@um.ac.ir

¹ Department of English, College of Sciences, Zahedan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zahedan, Iran

² Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

focus on the analytic notion of social reciprocity in costly transaction” (224). By emphasizing social reciprocity, this chapter proposes ways to design and implement school-level intervention strategies in coping with teacher stress. The next OH model presented in chapter 11 is Job Demands–Resources (JDR) model. In this chapter, Taris, Leisink, and Schaufeli characterize various versions of JDR model. Moreover, they review the findings of previous scholarly articles that have applied this model in relation to educator stress, well-being, and motivation. Chapter 12 by McIntyre, McIntyre, Barr, Francis, and Durand puts forth the Dynamic Integrative Teacher Stress (DITS) model which combines existing theoretical models in education and OH psychology. This chapter also attempts to validate the DITS model in predicting “real-time emotional strain in teachers” (263). The five chapters in this part provide us with models from OH discipline to broaden our understanding of the nature of educator stress and its antecedents. In the meantime, these models inform research that aims to develop intervention strategies to address the problem of educator stress.

Part III of this volume includes five promising chapters with regard to the types of interventions which can be developed, implemented, and validated for the purpose of managing and mitigating teacher stress. All the chapters in this part aptly describe the interventions such as stress management through meditation and relaxation (individual interventions) and controlling and reducing the sources of stress through enhancing autonomy in teachers, tweaking practices vis-à-vis leadership, and improving school policies (school-level and organization-based interventions). In chapter 13, Sinclair, Cheung, and Cox utilize an OH psychology model with educator stress. Their model aims at improving work organization through behavioral science, the ultimate goal of which is the improvement of well-being, safety, and health of workers in organizations. This chapter focuses on interventions at organizational level to remove dangers related to workplace to enhance positive work atmosphere. Chapter 14 by Jennings and DeMauro reviews individual level intervention approaches used in reducing teacher stress and improving job performance. This review encompasses both traditional intervention approaches and more recent ones in stress reduction such as Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques in Education (SMART) and Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE for teachers). Randall and Travers (Chapter 15) discuss a wide range of interventions to address educator stress. Their main focus is on Individual Organizational Interface (IOI) interventions which aim at the betterment of the relation between the teachers’ resources and their work demands. In chapter 16, Landsbergis, Zoeckler, Rivera, Alexander, Bahruth, and Hord provide an overview of organizational interventions to

reduce sources of teachers’ occupational stress. They systematically review 27 empirical studies published between 1990 and 2015. They come to the conclusion that there are a few empirical evidences “linking these [organizational] interventions to a reduction in stress or improvement in teacher health” (369). The last chapter in this part, chapter 17, by Cox, Marczak, Teoh, and Hassard addresses one of the serious challenges that have afflicted scores of students and teachers due to improper use of social media in school settings: cyberbullying. This chapter, which defines cyberbullying, provides information vis-à-vis its consequences for students and teachers, and offers suggestions for managing and preventing cyberbullying in schools. Taken together, the chapters in part III offer a comprehensive and modern overview of the types of interventions that can be applied to educator stress. The five chapters call for more research in regard to validating interventions and putting research into practice so as to buttress teachers and quality education.

Based on the knowledge provided by previous parts on educator stress and despite the little research on the implementation of policies and educational practices to reduce this stress, the three chapters in part IV hope to pave the way for future research on this critical topic. In chapter 18, Francis, Barr, Benoit, and McIntyre provide a review of the statistical challenges that are linked with multilevel field studies. Then, they scrutinize the developments in statistics and advanced measurement that have informed the research on educator stress. Chapter 19 by McCardle takes on the issue of employing the existing knowledge on teacher stress in order to change education policies and practices. By referring to the information presented in this volume, this chapter makes an effort to address how this information can be in training and developing teachers as well as in education policies. The last chapter (chapter 20) by McIntyre, McIntyre, and Francis comments on the benefits of the application of OH psychology to inform research and education practices and policies whose objective is to mitigate stress in teachers and improve teachers’ health and well-being. Part IV paves the way for us to better understand the significant information and knowledge present in the previous three parts. It also enables us to identify and appreciate future research on educator stress and to use new methodological advances to investigate and answer future stimulating questions regarding stress in teachers.

This volume brings together scholars from different disciplines and contexts to present their most recent findings and practices on the critical issue of educator stress. Drawing on different researchers’ perspectives from various fields and cultural contexts is one of the unique characteristics of this book which is indicative of the fact that the topic of educator stress is a global concern which

requires focused attention on the part of teachers, principals, school administrators, and policy makers.

Another outstanding feature of the book is that it adopts an occupational health perspective to study educator stress. Occupational health perspective offers new ideas and conceptual models to help the reader better understand the sources of teacher stress and possible interventions that can be employed to prevent or mitigate it, the result of which will be the improvements in educators' self-efficacy, their relationship with pupils and colleagues, and their mental and physical health. Occupational health perspective, therefore, advocates the establishment and development of health school contexts and promotes policies and practices that prioritize teachers' health and well-being. Occupational health frameworks are very useful in many work situations, but teachers work in contexts totally different from other professions. These contexts, which are schools, restrict teachers in their autonomy and demand a lot from them with little reward. For this reason Jones (2016) calls teaching as an *impossible occupation*. Therefore, we think

that it will be difficult to put intervention strategies offered by occupational health models into practice to prevent or reduce teachers' stress in every context.

All in all, this ground-breaking book opens new doors to the world of research on educators' psychological, physiological, and social well-being. We hope that the knowledge presented in this volume breaks new ground for researching teachers' needs and stress in a global context and will provide an agenda for future science.

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