

Coping Strategies for Dealing with Depression among School Teachers in Penang

¹Manak A/L Ek Klai, ^{*2}Farhana Kamarul Bahrin

¹*School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia, manakcg@gmail.com*

²*Social Work Programme, School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia, farhanabahrin@usm.my*

Abstract

The education system is an accelerator for a country's developers. Due to the success of education system, it will be increasing the number of communities with knowledge and maintain the community well-being. However, the individual's mental health problem refers to the welfare of individuals who can recognize their ability, and able to overcome the pressure at the workplace. Positively, mental health problem is a fundamental health to maintain the welfare of individuals and works effectively against the community's well-being. With coping strategies, individuals may reduce the risk of depression and maintain their social harmony and community well-being. This research used a qualitative research and thematic analysis was applied as a tool to interpret the data collected. The ten (10) respondents were interviewed among the teachers from SMKA Al-Mashoor Perempuan, Pulau Pinang, which consisting of subject teachers involved in Malaysia public examination. The results were analysed manually using content analysis techniques, and the result showed that social support and religious aspects could help the teacher dealing with their depression. Therefore, we believe that a school social worker needs to be placed in school.

Keywords: Coping Strategies, Depression, School Teacher.

INTRODUCTION

The education system is a catalyst for national development. This is said so because an efficient education system will produce a knowledgeable and moral society and in turn can produce human capital that has a first -class mindset (Lee, Udin, & Abdul Aziz, 2012). To achieve this goal, educators consisting of teachers need to show a high productivity, efficient, active, and enterprising attitude to produce excellent quality education (Sipon, 2010). Therefore, the government has introduced various policies and programs or interventions to realize these aspirations, among them is the Education Development Master Plan 2006-2010 or the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2013-2025. Therefore, the role and responsibilities as a

teacher are now increasingly complex and challenging as they need to constantly equip themselves with a wide range of knowledge, a wide range of skills, and need to be constantly prepared for every change that will occur in the field of education.

Nowadays, the job as a teacher is not just to teach, instead they also must manage the continuity of operations in the school. Among them are clerical duties, student discipline and because of other teacher colleagues in the school (Lee, et al., 2012). There are researchers who state that the field of teaching profession is a very stressful field of work, and this problem has been highlighted as a problem that needs to be discussed at the world level (Kyriacou, (n.d) in Ahmad, 1999). In addition, the burden of

these teachers will increase according to the changes in standards made by the ministry. Therefore, if these teachers are not able to overcome the challenges and changes that occur in the field of education will result in these teachers are vulnerable to stress and in turn will result in teachers' depression. This is said to be so because the problem of stress and extreme stress will affect the work productivity of teachers and in turn will also affect the physical as well as psychological of teachers (Sipon, 2010). Teachers are now the focus of a society that is sensitive to issues about education. In previous studies it has been stated that the teaching profession is a career field that faces high work pressure (Ahmad, 1998). Among the main causes of teachers receiving high work stress are student attitudes, stress on time, atmosphere in the school environment, and relationships between staff (Boyle, Borg, Falzon, & Baglioni, 1995).

Mental health refers to the state of well-being of an individual being aware of his or her abilities, being able to cope with normal stresses in life, being able to work productively and in turn being able to contribute to the individual's community (Froese-Germain & Riel, 2012). Depression or depression can be divided into three (3) types of namely minor depression, major depression and manic depression (World Federation for Mental Health, 2010). Depression is a serious medical condition that affects an individual's body, thoughts, and behavior (World Federation for Mental Health, 2010). It affects the way an individual eats and sleeps, the way an individual thinks about himself, and the way an individual thinks about things. Nevertheless, depressive symptoms can come in a variety of forms, symptoms, and even experiences according to the individual who has been diagnosed with depression (World Federation for Mental Health, 2010). Based on previous studies explained that the problem of depression will affect individuals at all levels regardless of geographical location, demographics, or social position of individuals (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017). Depression is a disorder that occurs in the brain of individuals (World Federation for Mental

Health, 2010). Therefore, the disease can happen to anyone regardless of gender or occupation of the individual. However, the disease has no cure to cure it, but there are a variety of effective treatments, among which include the use of medications and psychotherapy (World Federation for Mental Health, 2010). Individuals with depression, will be more vulnerable to the risk of other disorders, such as drug abuse, anxiety disorders, heart disease, stroke, HIV and AIDS, and even diabetes. This depressive problem also has a high risk of being prone to suicide cases (World Federation for Mental Health, 2010). Therefore, researchers believe that the importance of the need for teachers to know about the problem of depression so that this problem can be avoided.

Coping Strategies for Dealing with Depression

Coping strategies are one of the solutions to manage stress problems in individuals (Othman & Sivasubramaniam, 2019). This strategy also refers to the diversity of individual ways of thinking and behaviors taken to deal with an internal as well as external pressure (Abdullah, Sipon, Baharudin, & Sawai, 2011). According to Kahn and Cooper in (Bullare@Bahari, Ismail, Madlan@Endalan, & Lajuma, 2015) states that this coping strategy is used by a person to play its role in reducing or moderating the relationship between inherent stress variables with tension. According to Lazarus and Folkman have defined this strategy as a form of individual response to a stressful situation he has faced. Therefore, the use of this coping strategy can address the problem of depression faced by teachers, if this strategy is not used properly in stressful situations will cause the individual to be prone to depression problems (Bullare@Bahari et al., 2015).

Now this strategy is one of the medical alternatives that can be used by social workers in dealing with mental health problems in the community. According to Votta and Manion (2003) argue that if an individual is faced with a problem and fails to use this coping strategy will cause the individual to have a higher chance of experiencing depression. In previous studies conducted on firefighters also showed

that the need for this coping strategy can address the problem of depression. Among the coping strategies applied is personal coping where these firefighters have practiced positive coping (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017). This action requires the individual to have positive thinking to cope with stress. In addition, in this study also used coping strategies in a way of leisure time together with family and friends. Respondents in this study thought that spending time with the closest people will make them laugh and at the same time forget the problem of stress (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017). According to a previous study of university students found that social support should be provided by the university to help students who suffer from extreme stress. This is because, with good social support will help this group build a more positive coping strategy in the face of their stress (Mohamad & Ibrahim, 2018). According to the researcher assumes that the use of this strategy is appropriate for the target group in his study. This is because, firefighters and teachers are professions that have been said to have high work stress. With this it can be concluded that with the application of coping strategies in dealing with stressful problems faced by individuals can reduce the risk of the individual to face the problem of depression.

The Relationship between Teachers and Depression

Teachers are the driving force in determining the quality of national education whether it is good or bad. Therefore, the determination of the quality of education in this country is largely dependent on high productivity among educators for example teachers in schools (Sipon, n.d.). In realizing this target, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has launched the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025 (PPPM) in line with the National Education Philosophy. Among the shifts in PPPM is to transform the teaching profession. Similarly, the achievement of Vision 2020 which requires a competitive, efficient, active, and highly productive human resource (Sipon, n.d.). To achieve this goal, the environment around teachers must be conducive and not accept too high challenges

and pressures. workplace. This is because, too high a challenge and pressure will cause the teacher to experience extreme stress and it will invite to the occurrence of depression in teachers. The educating task performed by the teacher is a physically and mentally challenging job of the teacher himself (Desouky & Allam, 2017). This is because, teachers use a lot of energy in their daily lives to teach in the classroom and take care of their personal life, as well as their commitment to the family. This is an ongoing contributor to the problem of stress in teachers (Desouky & Allam, 2017).

The aspects of depression and teachers are indeed closely related. This is because, the problem of depression will cause the productivity of teachers towards their essential responsibilities to decrease. This is indirectly the desire of Ministry of Education cannot be realized. This situation is in line with the views of Zhong, You, Gan, Zhang & Lu (2009) who stated that teachers' workload has a correlation with teachers' physical health condition. There are also results of past studies that have found that teacher workload can lead to depressive problems (Ahola, Honkonen, & Isometsa, 2005; Iacovides, Fountoulakis, Kaprinis, & Kaprinis, 2003). Excessive teacher workload will cause these teachers to experience extreme emotional stress that disrupts the teaching and learning sessions in the classroom. Extreme stress among these teachers will put them more than four times the risk of getting a critical illness and in turn lead to serious mental illness (Lee et al., 2012). Mental health is important, as it will lead to well-being, happiness, as well as the individual's ability to face challenges, accept the existing surroundings openly and have a positive nature in oneself (Mohamad & Ibrahim, 2018). Researchers agree with previous studies stating that this mental illness does not occur by itself instead it is caused by factors that are around it (Mohamad & Ibrahim, 2018). This clearly proves that the field of duty of the teacher indeed has a close relationship with the problem of depression. There are also previous studies proving that this field of education is at high risk in experiencing stress problems (Mohamad & Ibrahim, 2018). Past

research evidence on stress problems suggests that these problems will have a significant impact in the field of education as well as the field of health itself.

Research Methodology and Location

In this study, researchers have chosen to use a qualitative study design to obtain respondents' information. The purpose of selecting a qualitative approach in conducting this study was aimed at data collection. Therefore, data collection techniques through in-depth interviews were performed on teachers working at SMKA Al-Mashoor Perempuan, Pulau Pinang. The reference of the interview questions was directed to the respondents' knowledge of depression. Researchers have selected study respondents based on purposive sampling technique. This is because, the sampling technique to select study respondents based on the researcher's judgment in selecting the most appropriate study sample and meet the requirements of the purpose of this study. Although the sample size for this study could not be determined at an early stage because it occurs in conjunction with continuous data analysis until saturation is reached, but overall, the researcher has managed to interview ten (10) respondents consisting of teachers. The respondents were individuals involved in the teaching and learning of classes involved with public examinations, namely PT3, SPM, and STPM. The selection of this school is based on the factor of its status of excellence in the

academic field and has indirectly attracted the interest of researchers to know the commitment of teachers to their work stress. In this study, it can also be seen that researchers also use secondary data in their research process. These secondary data refer to reference sources from official websites such as ministries, academic books, research abstracts, articles, journals, as well as statistical data reports of government bodies as well as non-governmental bodies (Bahrin, 2018).

Research Findings

Coping strategies among teachers to overcome depression

In this study shows that teachers' satisfaction with the scope of work of teachers is less satisfactory. This is because, the average teacher thinks that the responsibilities of a teacher have deviated from the essential duties of the teaching profession. This can be explained through the 12 Initiatives of the Ministry of Education Malaysia which focus on reducing the burden of teachers, especially in the aspect of clerical work. Respondents involved in this study have revealed related to the way they cope with the problem of internal stress to avoid the occurrence of depression. It can be concluded that, respondents agreed that the presence of social support from people around will help teachers in overcoming work stress. The interview excerpt below can illustrate this situation.

Table 1.0 Respondents feedback

Responden	Interview Excerpts
Responden1	<i>The way I'm happy is, where can we finish, solve, where can't we ask people's views, maybe our friends have experience with the same problem.</i>
Responden4	<i>... it must express. Got to talk. We can't keep our problems in our hearts, our own monologue. So that we know one thing is right. If I were you, I would have to chat with the right people? For example, we have a subject problem, we chat with people who are diligent, do not look for people who are lazy. Because if with a diligent person he will share ideas with us, he will share our motivation we.</i>

Responden5

We must quickly solve what our problem is. If we want to feel love for ourselves, we must have other people who can help, maybe friends, peers for us to tell stories, chat for us.

Responden 7

He is unaware that their views are very important. People with depression need words our spirit, not to be judgmental.

Responden 8

Yes, need. If we don't give them support, there will be many bad things.

Discussion

In general, there are various coping strategies that have been applied by respondents in overcoming depression. Through the interview sessions, it can be concluded that the action strategy used by the teachers is social support. Social support plays an important role in helping individuals with depression. This is because, this social support will act in helping and providing stimuli and attention, whether through words, deeds or material assistance from individuals who have a direct or indirect relationship (Jalil, 2017). This social support can be referred to an experience of being valued, feeling respected, cared for, and loved by another individual (Gurung, 2006). This form of social support is considered to help individuals in reducing the stress they experience (Singh, 2015). This form of social support is either in the form of advice, encouragement, help or attention from people around the teacher who suffer from depression. This is clearly stated by respondents who on average have acquaintances or close people who suffer from depression. Most respondents thought that it was necessary to provide support to individuals suffering from depression. This is because, depression is one of the dangerous health problems because it will lead to a more serious incident that is suicide. With positive social support around them, depression can be dealt with well. In the results of this study, it has been shown that the respondents will choose individuals they trust or individuals who understand their situation to express problem stress. Indirectly with the presence of social support from the community, the

problem of depression will be reduced and in turn reduce the rate of suicide caused by the problem of depression. Therefore, researchers agree with the view of Roberto and Mancini (2009) who view that social support is divided into two forms, namely formal and informal. Formal social support involves the government, non-governmental organizations and agencies involved, while informal support refers to family members, neighbors, religious aspects, colleagues, and the surrounding community (Singh, 2015). However, in this study most respondents only associated informal social support. Therefore, researchers hope that future studies can link these two forms of social support to further clarify this question and in turn be able to see the effectiveness of existing social support systems.

In addition, religious coping strategies also play an important role in managing this problem of depression. Most respondents in SMKA Al-Mashoor Women are of the opinion that by getting closer to religion, and God is the main key in overcoming this mental health problem. This is in line with the view of Patel, Shah, Peterson, & Kimmel (2002) who stated that the involvement of spiritual elements and aspects of religious beliefs can be associated with a reduction in the rate depression. According to Danial Zainal Abidin in the journal Nor Azab Abdul Aziz (2011), states that the problem of stress faced by individuals can be overcome with the nature of prayer. This is because, prayer contains remembrance, and the state of remembrance with devotion will be able to reconcile the individual heart. With this prayer worship can eliminate all the stress on the individual when there is a change in movement in prayer on a constant basis (Aziz, 2011). In

addition, prayer is one of the psychological therapies that can help the individual's soul to become calmer and thus relieve emotional stress. This is because, the practice of prayer is a field in finding peace in human beings (Azizan & Sa'ari, 2009). Therefore, teachers who experience extreme stress need to find peace in their souls so that they are not exposed to higher -risk depressive problems. Similarly, previous research has agreed that prayer can produce a state of calm in the individual brain (Ibrahim, Abas, & Cheok, 2008). In addition, the Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) has also proposed Method 10B to deal with stress, namely calm down, breathe deeply, say, worship, talk to other individuals, massage, relax and listen to music, worship, exercise and think positively. (Aziz, 2011). There are various ways to overcome this problem of depression, however, teachers are more likely to adopt the path of Islam as their mainstay in overcoming this problem of depression. This is because, it can benefit the mental and physical health of individuals and can deal with their stress problems (Aziz, 2011). This is also in line with previous studies stating that doing activities through a spiritual and religious approach can treat individuals with depression (Braunholtz, Davidson, & King, 2004).

Conclusion

Lack of knowledge about depression among teachers will leave them vulnerable to more serious depressive problems. Therefore, researchers suggest that social work interventions should be created in the field of Education by creating school social workers. This is because, school social workers not only provide counseling, but they will act as educators, enablers, facilitators, or brokers. The need for social work interventions can indeed act more collectively and the diversity of these interventions can help solve a social problem and in turn restore the social functionality of teachers. Apart from this, social workers also need to focus on teachers because this group is a group that is prone to depression. Therefore, with the proposed social work intervention can help in reducing the rate of depression among

teachers and will indirectly help achieve the target of the National Philosophy of Education.

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