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Beyond Motherhood: The Stress Landscape for Working Women in Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract

Among the roles that women are frequently associated with in society are mother, wife, and daughter. However, working women have another role outside the home, and juggling these responsibilities is what working women face. Being a mother and working is not an easy journey. Working women experience mental strain and high levels of stress at home and work. A mixed-method approach was used to investigate the stress landscape for working women in Kuala Lumpur. Two factors were assessed in a study contributing to stress related to one's job: 1) stress at work and 2) stress at home. To represent the population, 34 working mothers as teachers were selected as respondents. According to the study's findings, there are no appreciable variations in the stress factors among participants based on the stress level at home and at work, even though the mean is slightly higher for stress at work rather than at home. The qualitative findings show that the respondents were very stressed from the workload, such as handling students, administrative tasks, guidance, counselling, supervision, and attending to parents. The researcher suggested creating avenues for advancement within every education field as a token of appreciation for their contributions throughout their tenure. This will foster a never-ending sense of hope and an unwavering desire for personal development among the working mothers who are teachers, leading to promotions which will give them a positive view on handling their stress level.

Keywords: working mothers, stress, dual-role, teacher, learning centre

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Introduction

Women are often expected to fulfil traditional roles such as mother, wife, and daughter in society. However, for working women, there is an additional role outside the home that they must balance. Managing the responsibilities of being a mother while working is challenging. It can lead to mental strain and heightened stress levels for working women as they navigate their dual roles at home and in the workplace. According to World Bank Group (2023) data, the labour force participation rate among females in Malaysia is 51.6% and among males is 78% for 2023. The labour force participation rate measures the percentage of individuals aged 15 and above who are actively engaged in the economy. Over the past three decades, there has been a significant rise in the number of women participating in the workforce (Lian & Tam, 2014). Hence, issues of working mothers and stress are still relevant nowadays and require more attention.

Background

Malaysian Department of Statistics (2019) reported that about 6 million women participate in the labour force, making up a sizable portion of the population. In the second quarter of 2019, 49,000 more women joined the workforce, which means that, in the second quarter of 2019, the number of female participants climbed at a faster rate than the number of male participants, which increased by a mere 23,000 (Malaysian Department of Statistics, 2019). The participation of women in the labour force increased from 55.1% in 2018 to 55.7% in 2019. Moreover, 73% of employed Malaysian women are in the prime fertility age range of 25 to 35 (Malaysian Department of Statistics, 2019). Women, especially those living in large cities, need to work to support their families and make ends meet.

Nonetheless, society still expects women to carry out domestic responsibilities (Clark et al., 2021). A fair allocation of duties in managing the families did not offset the rise in roles and responsibilities that women faced due to working from home (Shukla & Yadav, 2022). Women were still expected to prioritise household responsibilities above their jobs, even though they were expected to devote the same amount of time and energy to both (Shukla & Yadav, 2022). No doubt, women were under a lot of pressure in this circumstance, and this causes them stress.

One of the most prevalent sources of stress is teacher workload, but comprehensive knowledge regarding how stress is assessed, how prevalent it is worldwide, what causes stress, and what results in negative outcomes for teachers is lacking. Teaching is not a simple profession as some may believe (Claxton, 1989). Indeed, Claxton (1989) noted that teaching is a career that is constantly difficult and evolving. Previous research has revealed that Malaysian teachers experience some types of stress. According to Jamian et al. (2020), teachers are overworked, vulnerable to stress, and at risk of burnout. A cross-sectional study revealed that teachers had a high prevalence of depressive (43.0%), anxiety (68.0%) and stress (32.3%) symptoms (Othman & Sivasubramaniam, 2019).

Demotivation and a shattered sense of self-consistency might be symptoms of teacher stress. Women who are mothers and work as teachers are especially affected by work-related stress, as per the most recent Health and Safety Executive (HSE, 2023) figures. Mothers who are teachers experience the most strain because of the stress of having too many demands and duties

imposed on them. They also experience the burden of working stress more than males, despite their 'let's get it done' attitude. Mothers frequently experience the effects of job stress (Dugan & Farrell, 2020). Women are more likely to manage several responsibilities, including parenthood, careers, homemaking, and occasionally even serving as the major breadwinner, especially between the ages of 35 and 54. However, stress in both personal life and professional environments can affect their job. Ineffective teaching, poor classroom management, and instructors' unethical and dishonest behaviours are just a few problems that could arise if this stress is not addressed.

Problem Statement

Teachers in a private learning centre in Kuala Lumpur (referred to as "private learning centre" for confidentiality), the main subject of this study, are required to carry out a variety of duties, such as teaching classes, serving as the subject panel's chair and academic counselling to students and parents. Teachers are occasionally obliged to work during holidays at the learning centre to ensure the lesson plan is carried out as intended. They must also demonstrate exceptional customer service to give parents and children a wonderful experience. On top of that, teachers must also help with the registration process to give parents and students a good start. The learning centre expects teachers to give pupils comments and inform parents of their progress as needed. Teachers also need to personalise learning plans for each student based on their objectives and interactions with them. It could be a group class, yet teachers are expected to learn each student's learning method, for example, find out if the student is a visual learner, auditory learner, kinaesthetic learner, or even a logical thinker.

Teaching seems to remain a responsibility or routine, not a passion anymore when the tasks are too packed and even during holidays (Dugan & Farrell, 2020). Additionally, the number of students in the city centre is constantly increasing. Parents always demand that teachers effectively guide their children in education by providing high-quality service. This is a sign that the teachers feel saturated and stressed in carrying out their duties but must carry on with the work because, according to Clark et al. (2021), these days, women, especially those who live in large cities, must work to support their families and make ends meet. However, balancing work and domestic responsibilities is stressful (Clark et al., 2021).

Therefore, the study's objective was to investigate stress among working mothers in one of the private learning centres in Kuala Lumpur; which one is more stressful, work at home or workplace? Specifically, the researcher wanted to identify the factors that cause work pressure among the teachers who are mothers at the private learning centre in Kuala Lumpur and explore how these working mothers handle their stress. At the end of this study, the researcher hoped that the factors of work stress could be identified accurately and be overcome effectively by various parties such as oneself, family, employers, fellow employees and the centre itself.

Literature Review

Women Dual-Role

Women make lots of effort to accomplish their goals and have built their independence, self-autonomy, and personal development. These new jobs are in addition to the conventional ones of having children, raising them, and taking care of the home's needs. Therefore, working women experience higher stress levels while trying to strike a balance. The participation of women in the

labour force increased from 55.1% in 2018 to 55.7% in 2019. Moreover, 73% of employed Malaysian women are in the prime fertility age range of 25 to 35 (Malaysian Department of Statistics, 2019).

It has been customary to describe the "problem" of dual-carrier women as women trying to balance career and family (Spain & Bianchi, 1996; Becker, 1999). Despite being a world of accomplishments, the modern world is stressful (Tyagi & Sen, 2000). All employees experience stress from time to time. As working mothers, women must manage demands at work and at home. Mothers are exhausting themselves to balance demanding jobs, domestic chores, and parental responsibilities. According to Crosbie and Moore (2004), there is insufficient distinction made between paid work and household chores because of the ethnic groups and cultural differences. Empirical research conducted in India has shown that women struggle to balance their personal and professional lives because of gender-specific roles that require them to work double shifts (Bhumika, 2020; Shukla & Yadav, 2022).

Furthermore, according to another empirical study, working women in Britain have turned to "assistant teachers" for their kids. Role conflicts increased due to increased work and family responsibilities (Adisa et al., 2021). Women who play several roles simultaneously in the same setting experience time and energy depletion, increasing the stress of role conflicts. Del Boca et al. (2020) claim that although men's involvement in household chores has increased, there has also been an uneven distribution of work between men and women, as empirical research on Italian women confirms that women carried the brunt of additional work.

Women who play many roles, like wife, mother, and daughter-in-law, feel that those around them do not recognise these roles. They feel underappreciated as a result, and juggling their obligations to their jobs and the home system at the same time and place gets harder and harder. Nonetheless, Adisa et al. (2021) confirm that there has been a role enhancement whereby the women's ability to multitask led to a sense of satisfaction regarding their close relationships and positive outcomes by reviving family values. Therefore, women need support to improve their work-life balance and deal with the difficulties of playing other roles, although role expectations have increased and working conditions are poor.

Challenges in Handling the Behaviour of Students

According to Gunnar (2021), stress results from goals deemed significant to an individual being threatened. While common core concerns have recently created a lot of stress in the education system, dealing with "difficult" students remains the main source of ongoing conflict for many teachers. To achieve academic success, students must have a high-quality student-teacher relationship (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). There is a lot of research on how students' behaviour affect teachers' stress levels (Geving, 2007). Students' behaviour in the classroom may suffer because of teacher stress (Zee et al., 2013). Teachers under stress might not be able to give their students the support they need to succeed in the classroom (Spilt & Koomen, 2022).

It is possible that educators who expressed a lot of stress are not giving their best instruction (Brock & Grady, 2000). It is critical to ascertain whether challenging classroom behaviours exhibited by students and teacher stress are related. Students' negative actions often disrupt class, hinder learning, increase teacher stress, and create a dangerous environment in the school, taking a lot of time to learn what the teacher has taught many times. Stressed-out teachers occasionally take their frustration out on their students, which makes the teacher feel as though they do not

have a good relationship with the students. This cause further stress for everyone involved; redirecting bad behaviours takes a lot of time for teachers and can lead to high-stress levels.

The primary duty of teachers is to impart knowledge to their pupils. On the other hand, school instructors have dual duties: disciplining students and imparting knowledge. Teachers in learning environments may encounter a range of behavioural, emotional, and mental health issues in their students. Teachers may feel a lot of stress dealing with this. It can be exhausting to spend seven or more hours a day with anywhere from twenty to one hundred and sixty children, especially considering the time and effort required to address students' misbehaviour. Teachers need to be aware of the expected behaviours, set and model such behaviours successfully, and respond properly when teaching. Simply put, educators need to exhibit "withitness" all day long. It might be draining to be conscious of the behaviours you must teach and model.

Many pupils not only exhibit "withitness" but also, in their words and deeds, a general lack of respect for their teachers. This can be emotionally draining and stressful. On top of this, there has been a rise in the number of kids with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) enrolled in the centre. As a result, teachers have had to adjust to suit the requirements of these students. The centre also believes that all children with disabilities should receive assistance from associated programmes to better prepare them for the future and free and appropriate education in the least restrictive setting. This expects teachers to possess all the necessary resources and always be in a teaching mode to enhance the learning experience of children with impairments. Due to the variety of needs among autistic children, effective help requires qualified and dedicated teachers. Supporting children with autism presents a challenge for teachers due to the differences in developmental traits. This puts more load on the teacher to learn the techniques to deal with these children nonstop. It is like at home where they have to teach and handle their child's behaviour, and when they return to work, they try to do the same thing as there is no break. On top of this, parents are very sensitive and protective towards their children. Many parents do not want to hear their child having shortcomings in any area. It might feel like an attack on both the parent and the child, and it hurts and is shameful for some parents. It is difficult for some parents to hear about their child's mistakes.

Teachers could encounter circumstances requiring them to talk to parents about delicate subjects, including children's behaviour problems, learning challenges, academic achievement, and private matters. Both sides may find these discussions difficult, stressful, and emotionally charged, so teachers must be prepared and speak clearly. Regarding the delicate subject, teachers must be direct and honest, but they must also talk in a constructive and upbeat manner, emphasising opportunities and solutions rather than shortcomings and issues. Constantly being aware of how and what they talk about can overwhelm the teachers and cause stress.

Challenges in Managing Time

Most mothers feel they do not have enough time because of the care and nurturing that children require and the additional responsibilities of having more people living in the house. Finding the time to both work and be with their children is a problem that working mothers frequently encounter (Clark et al., 2021). Many mothers discover that there are simply not enough hours in the day to accomplish everything they need or would like to do, whether it is not having enough time to do the laundry, play with the kids, spend time alone, or perform various other critical tasks. Working mothers may find it difficult to focus on their work at the office due to frequent interruptions regarding their children, which could affect their performance. This will put more

pressure on working mothers. Besides that, there are new mothers; while they return to work at the learning centre, their obligations and worries at home grow, and they are attempting to find a quiet place to pump before the milk seeps through their shirts. They must find time between classes to pump milk, which is quite rushed. They must be quick as students are always coming in and leaving the learning centre. Other than that, every morning is a rush because mothers must get their kids ready for nursery or school and prepare their belongings, including toys, books and meals. They must finish early in the morning to avoid being late for work. Handling one child takes time, let alone more than one child. Mothers must get up very early, at least 2 hours before they go to work, to prepare all these.

Stress and Working Mothers

Malaysians' traditional family structure and caring philosophy, which maintains that "man is the breadwinner and women are to manage family," broadens the conversation about work-life balance among working women to a new degree of worry. Working mothers face a significant problem in balancing the demands of their jobs with their families, which can result in an imbalance in women's physical and mental wellbeing.

In Malaysia, more women are employed in the education industry than men. According to the Ministry of Education (2018), there were 423 466 teachers enrolled in 2018; 298 237 were female. Even though the education sector is one of the most female-dominated in the world, research suggests that women who work encounter difficulties and experience stress (Clark et al., 2021). Many women who work think they can handle everything, but at the cost of stress and fatigue (Alqahtani, 2020). Work overflow may be the cause of tiredness, which then leads to stress. According to a study by Grice et al. (2011), working mothers who had significant work-related stress experienced issues with their mental health. According to a survey in *The Guardian*, 18% of working mothers have higher stress levels than the general population (Ramasamy, 2019). Additionally, mothers who have two or more children and work full-time have 40% higher levels of stress than other mothers.

Theoretical Framework

Transactional Stress Theory

The theory of Transactional Stress elucidates the mechanisms underlying stress at work (Baker, 2020). These mechanisms include exposure to psychosocial hazards within the organisation, cognitive perception processes involving emotional stress, and the connection between the negative effects of stress on individuals (such as behavioural, psychological, and health issues) and the negative effects of stress on the organisation (such as job turnover, lack of commitment, and so forth).

According to Hazril Izwar Ibrahim and Rogis Baker (2018), Transactional Stress Theory emphasises the cognitive process of coping with work pressure and focuses on the dynamics that exist between employees and the work that is being done. Transactional stress can arise not just within an individual or in an environment but also in the relationship between the two. The stress element describes the influence of emotions on all facets of stress. According to Model Transactional Stress, stress is an assessment brought on by the environment that jeopardises a person's wellbeing.

Nowadays, society takes workplace stress very seriously since it harms workers' health and lowers productivity. Stress at work occurs when, among other things, the necessary is completed in a way that is out of proportion to the capacity available (Baker et al., 2020).

According to Idrus Hanapiah (2019), ongoing change, being fired, or having a disagreement with a co-worker or other concerned parties are additional sources of work-related stress. Workplace conflict between the two personal and professional relationships, inadequate management, organisational culture, trauma, a lack of support system, and job requirements are additional factors that lead to work stress.

In short, Eraman (2021) asserts that interactions between an individual and their surroundings lead to stress. According to Lazarus and Folkman's theory, emotions are influenced by both routine activities and significant life events. This theory focuses on cognitive assessment and coping or managing stress. Different people react differently to stress. These methods include emotions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. The usual cause of this is stress from the outside world. The way a situation is perceived affects how stressed out a person gets.

Person-Environment Fit Theory

Individual surroundings Fit, also called P-E-Fit, is the inextricable bond between a person and their surroundings (Francis, 2021). Here, the person can include their attitude, behaviour, and physiology. To put it simply, P-E-Fit is the relationship between hope and reality. P-E-Fit takes centre stage when an individual realises the gap between expectations and reality. Accordingly, unhappiness, conflict, and output fall short of what the environment would like to see (Francis, 2021). The P-E-Fit theory aids an organisation in considering an individual's character to ensure that the output of their labour is consistent with the organisation's vision and mission.

Person-Job Fit, or P-J Fit for short, refers to the fit between a person and a particular job. It also involves matches between an individual and the demands of the job (demands of suitable abilities) or an individual's needs and interests, and the resources the job provides (appropriate supplies) (Kamri, 2019). Conventional wisdom on personnel selection dates to World War II, when soldiers were chosen for specific roles within the armed forces. It highlighted the significance of employing individuals with the qualifications, abilities, and dispositions needed for a job (Kamri, 2019). As a result, P-J-Fit is defined from an organisational standpoint to ensure that the best candidates are chosen for employment.

Their study offers a model that explains psychosocial stress as the outcome of fit between the objective environment and the objective self, resulting in a contradiction between the subjective environment and the subjective individual (i.e., P-E-Fit fit). Consequently, adjustment is equivalent to the fit. P-E-Fit fit was also evaluated in the original definition of job satisfaction, which emphasised the satisfaction that arises from work fulfilling personal needs. Researchers have distinguished appropriateness (an objective or perceived match that produces results) from job satisfaction (affective outcomes) over time (Hazril et al., 2018). P-E-Fit and job satisfaction, however, are generally found to have a moderately positive relationship because of their close relationship. Additional results linked to P-E-Fit fit include organisational commitment, quitting intention, task performance, and strain.

P-E-Fit Theory goes into detail to explain that an individual must be in alignment with the vision and mission of an organisation for their credibility to be fully realised. This is because the teachers' credibility is enhanced when the management of the learning centre meets all the requirements. Furthermore, a person who can comprehend the significance of his employment opportunities can successfully develop themselves.

Methods

Study Design

The present research used a mixed-method approach. It was a case study among working mothers in a private learning centre in Kuala Lumpur. The quantitative method was used to collect numerical data that can be quantified and statistically analysed. The qualitative approach was employed to gain a deeper understanding of the working mothers' experiences (Hong, 2020), especially since the survey only involved a small number of respondents.

Population and Study Sample

The research was done on working mothers who are teachers at a private learning centre (not the actual name due to secrecy and privacy policy) in Kuala Lumpur. The researcher chose 34 respondents using a convenient sampling method. The researcher's sample includes those of different ages, statuses, different numbers of children and different service periods. This means that the researcher's sample can bring out the study's findings, which is insightful because the backgrounds of each sample are different from those of the other.

Instruments

The research instrument used in this study is a survey, consisting of four (4) sections, i.e., Sections A, B, C, and D.

Part A

Section A consists of 5 questions that focus on information about demographic respondents such as gender, race, age, marital status, number of children and length of service. This section helps the researcher understand the background of the respondents.

Part B

Section B includes questions related to stress at work and at home. The questions consist of stress at home and work pressure of working mothers as teachers from the aspect of task factors, dual role struggles, workplace expectations, handling students one by one, work-family conflict, demographic factors and workplace relationships. A sample of the questions asked includes, "What causes stress at work/ home?" then lists stress to choose from by the respondents. Respondents were asked to select their answers on a 5-point Likert scale where 1-Strongly Agree, 2- Agree, 3-Not Sure, 4- Disagree, and 5- Strongly Disagree. The Cronbach alpha reliability test is 0.882.

Part C

Section C consists of questions related to perceived stress. It was adapted from the existing questionnaire by Cohen (1983). It consists of 10 questions with a selection of answers on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never (0) to very often (5). Sample questions include "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?". The Cronbach alpha reliability test is 0.883.

Part D

Section D consists of structured interview questions. This part is used to answer the qualitative method. Structured interviews were conducted when the researcher wanted more insight from the respondents. The questions are "What's the most stressful situation you've faced at work so far? How did you handle it?", "Can you describe a time when your stress resulted in making errors at work?" and "How do you communicate about stress with your significant other?".

Data collection

The data collection process starts from the first stage, which is getting official permission from the management of the private learning centre to conduct a research study. The second stage covers the process of getting to know relevant members to participate in this segment of the questionnaire. The third stage, the distribution of questionnaires to respondents, was conducted via Google Forms.

The fourth stage is the complete collection of questionnaires from respondents with data from all participants. Even though the questionnaires were distributed online, the respondents answered them in the presence of the researcher; if any questions arose, the researcher directly answered them. The researcher also briefed the study on its purpose and process. Furthermore, structured interview sessions were conducted with a few respondents to gain more insight regarding stress at work and at home.

Data Analysis

The data that has been collected was analysed using SPSS and content analysis based on the structured interviews.

Result

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Descriptive analysis provides information on demographic variables such as gender, race, age, marital status and length of service. The respondents were distributed according to the selected demographic characteristics. Majority of the respondents who took part in this research paper are Chinese with 13 respondents (38.2%), while the rest are Indians with 12 respondents (35.3%), and Malays with nine respondents (26.5%). The age category study was divided into four categories. The highest ranking for the age category is 30 to 39 years old, with 17 respondents. The lowest category is among those aged 50 years and above, with only one respondent. Meanwhile, the total

number of respondents aged 20 - 29 years is 12, and respondents aged between 40 - 49 years old are a total of four respondents.

'Married' status recorded the highest number, which is 32 respondents (94.1%), followed by the 'single' status with 2 respondents. The respondents' service period in this study's learning centre is divided into four periods. For period of service, majority of the respondents has served for 1-2 years, with a total of 14 respondents. Nine respondents served 3 - 4 years while for 5 years and above, there are seven respondents. For less than a year, the fewest respondents who serve are only four respondents.

The total number of respondents with full-time work status recorded is 25, while the total number of respondents with part-time work status is nine. There are two ranks in the current job category: senior teacher and junior teacher. The total number of respondents for senior teachers is 23 respondents, and 11 respondents for junior teachers.

Factors that Cause Stress among Working Mothers

The descriptive analysis using the mean showed that stress at work (no.1) (M=3.86; SD=0.59) is the dominant factor affecting work pressure. The mean for each factor is shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Working mothers at the Learning Centre

Factor	Mean	SD	Result
Work	3.8676	0.59825	1
Home	3.3199	0.78286	2

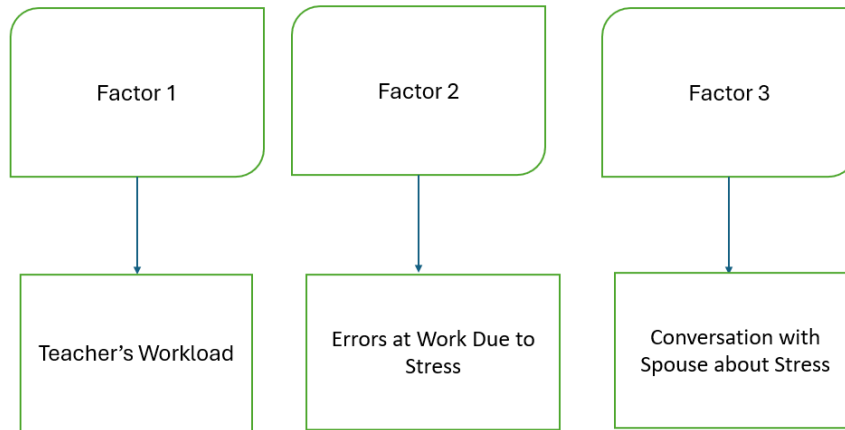
Interview Content Analysis

The researcher conducted structured interviews with the participants in this study to thoroughly examine their feelings and emotions as associates in relationships with the learning centre they work with. In addition to providing insight into candidates' ability to apply their knowledge and skills, these questions can indicate whether they meet a specific job's experience and qualification requirements. While ensuring that the interview does not come across as forced or artificial, the goal is to obtain a deeper understanding and improved comprehension of the participants' experiences. The respondents were asked three main questions: 1) "What's the most stressful situation you've faced at work so far? How did you handle it?" 2) "Can you describe when your stress resulted in making errors at work?" 3) "How do you communicate about stress with your significant other?"

Three main ideas were identified, namely, 1) Teacher's Workload, 2) Errors at Work Due to Stress, and 3) Conversation with Spouse about Stress, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Content analysis



Discussion

From the findings, most teachers in the learning centre are married and have children, making them play dual roles more than single female teachers. According to the American Psychology Association, 2010 married women report higher levels of stress than single women, with one-third (33 per cent) reporting that they have experienced a great deal of stress in the past month (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) compared with one in five (22 per cent) single women. Due to deteriorating physical and psychological health, people are not only more likely to experience work-related stress as they age (Sinha et al., 2021) but also because of the dual roles. Similarly, significantly more married women report that their stress has increased over the past five years.

Of the 34 staff members who participated in the study, only some staff members have worked for more than five years. This is a sign that only those with high endurance can stay. According to Nadialis and Nugrohoseno (2014), the work period is the amount of time an employee commits their abilities and specialised skills to a particular organisation to achieve satisfactory work results. Employees in an organisation tend to feel more secure when they have worked there for a long time. This is because workers have had enough time to become used to their workplace, allowing them to form a connection with their co-workers. The findings also revealed that part-time employees value workplace flexibility and spend less time at work than full-time employees (Herriot & Pemberton, 1996). Part-time workers are less likely than full-time employees to intend to commit to the company over the long term or to be committed to it to a lesser extent (Conway & Briner, 2002). Perhaps future studies could investigate the resilience level or the reasons for staff's endurance in the centres.

Moreover, the results showed that stress at work is the dominant factor affecting work pressure. It is evident from the results that stress at work is the primary factor influencing work pressure, with homecoming in second. The researcher used the mean value to assess the dominant factors influencing work pressure among mothers employed as teachers at the learning centre. It is clear from Table 1 that working mothers experience more stress at work than at home. This may be the case because many respondents are employed mothers who balance work and household responsibilities and parental roles. Work has consistently been identified as a major source of stress in the APA's annual Stress in America survey. A University of Illinois study found that working mothers' stress rates increased with the number of demands placed on them. In contrast to 28% of the general population and 25% of their coworkers without children, 42% of working mothers surveyed in a Harris Poll conducted on behalf of CVS Health reported having the highest stress rate in 2022.

Furthermore, in the quest to obtain a deeper understanding and improved comprehension of the participants' experiences, three questions were asked: 1) "What's the most stressful situation you've faced at work so far? How did you handle it?" 2) "Can you describe when your stress resulted in making errors at work?" 3) "How do you communicate about stress with your significant other?".

Three ideas were identified, namely, 1) Teacher's Workload, 2) Errors at Work Due to Stress, and 3) Conversation with Spouse about Stress.

1) Teacher's Workload

The tasks a person completes at any given time make up their workload. According to Shafie et al. (2017), a teacher's workload comprises the formal and informal duties the school assigns to them, which they must carry out. In addition to teaching, teachers must also handle administrative tasks, guidance, counselling, supervision, and attending to parents. Another aspect of a teacher's workload is dealing with students who bring diverse dynamics and forces to the classroom that could impair their job satisfaction. Teachers work in a stressful environment because of various student dynamics, including differences in ability and personality traits, deviant behaviours like physical confrontations, disrespect for teachers, and a general lack of discipline among students (Hardy et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2019).

Teachers are expected to be adaptable and able to find a way to handle their workload. Teachers must have positive attitudes to balance all these forces and work successfully. This calls for support primarily from administrators and supervisors; if they don't, they experience stress and burnout, which lowers their job satisfaction (Dornyei & Muir, 2019). This is illustrated in the interview with informants #5, #8, #13, #14, #18, #19, and #30 who stated:

"When parents expect quick result out of their kids in a short time, which is very stressful as parents want to talk after every class where there's the time, I need to prepare for the

next class. Sometimes I have to avoid or give a quick talk and rush to prepare for my next class." #5

"Handling younger children. Being patient." #8

"Attending students one by one for the same question paper. Explaining same thing to each one by one. It's stressful. Try to group them up into 2 and explain them in a group, and if still got some kids who don't understand, make the kids who understood explain to them." #13

"Workload ... work it out with boss and teachers" #14

"Handling new child who is very clingy to her mother, being so stubborn, don't want to come to class alone. The mother left while the girl cry and throw things. It was very stressful. The mother expects me the teacher to handle the child and she left. I had to stay calm until the girl calmed herself. I offered toys. After almost an hour, she calmed down." #18

"I'm a senior teacher and am well trained to teach autistic children. But it's very taxing to the mind but I have to stay calm. Calmness over everything" #19

"Handling naughty students who disobey. I have to be very strict with them." #30

In conclusion, it is particularly intriguing, given that 18 out of 34 informants, being the majority, reported facing the same challenge of workload in the classroom as teachers. In a similar vein, Okeke and Mtyuda (2017) found that the main reasons why teachers were very stressed with their jobs were curriculum instruction, oversight of extracurricular activities, student discipline, attending to parents and administrative responsibilities. The study also demonstrated that managing student behaviour problems and overseeing extracurricular activities are demanding for teachers, necessitating their supervisors' understanding and assistance. Teachers overwhelmingly requested greater assistance from the principal in their work.

2) Errors at Work Due to Stress

Though it is normal, making mistakes in one's profession is quite stressful. One becomes more assured in his position as he gains more experience in his field, but he might make some mistakes in the process. In today's fast-paced, high-stress society, feeling overwhelmed is a common occurrence. It is important to recognise that people occasionally encounter stressful situations. The informant interview serves as an illustration of this #6, #8, #10, #12, #13, #18, #19, #26 and #29:

"I've got no time to prepare papers and had to do it while in the class and delayed to start the class." #6

"Was already tired coming to work after handling my children. Came to work. Younger kids screaming in class. Told them many times to stay quiet. None listened. Made me so stressed and lost my cool." #8

"When not feeling well and had to handle many papers and marking children's exercise papers wrongly. Parents checked and complained to the principal." #10

"Too much to be aware at work sometimes will forget the important process of teaching" #12

"Lost my cool at a student who could not understand an answer in the question paper which made me repeat and repeat. Once time's up, I told all the kids to leave." #13

"A boy screamed, cried and started to kick. I could not handle him. I had to hold him tight and said quiet. It was not acceptable. I felt embarrassed over my action. My principal advised me not to do that, instead taught me other methods on how to handle a child when grumpy." #18

"I have a 2 year old toddler who is very clingy. After settling him in the house, with a grumpy mood, I came to work and seeing children screaming and crying at work again, I could not handle it. I ended up breaking down badly in the teacher's room and tore the report papers and couldn't teach my class. Had to ask another teacher to take over my class while I prepare the reports which I tore." #19

"Kids very normal for making noise. But when you're mentally tired, everything can irritate you. I scolded some children. They went and complained to their parents and they reported it to my principal." #26

"Like I said earlier, I became very stressed. I'm human too but parents think we are robots. After hearing the complaint from my principal, I got so upset and stressed. I burst into tears. I took my bag and left. I didn't go back to my class. I felt no point, suppressing my emotions and getting stressed for others. People are still going to complain. I don't want people to see me crying. I went home. Luckily my boss could understand what I was going through. He gave me a few more days off to rest." #29

This conclusion is fascinating because out of the 34 informants, 12 reported that they are more likely to make mistakes under stress because they find it difficult to focus. When something goes wrong, the focus is mostly on finding a solution rather than other tasks. Errors happen in the workplace, but how people handle their mistakes can determine how long the company remains in business and how successful it becomes. Research by Boyer et al. (2009) and Brady, Malone, and Fleming (2009) show that mistake avoidance techniques have advanced significantly. Edmondson (1996) asserts that even highly performing employees are not immune to making mistakes. According to Lazarus and Folkman (2022), when faced with potential stressors, people evaluate their capacity to manage or control the situation secondary.

3) Conversation with Spouse about Stress

Stress, also referred to as a state of physical or emotional strain, can negatively impact relationships in several ways. This includes encouraging less positive communication between partners, increasing the number of arguments, and producing fewer and less fulfilling sex encounters. Relationships also involve stress. When one person experiences higher stress levels, their partner also feels the effects, particularly in our communication patterns.

In a relationship, stress is something that both parties experience, but it can also be managed cooperatively. The four steps of becoming aware, opening, listening with interest, and offering support are helpful strategies for managing stress together. This strategy is based on the couples' coping enhancement programme that Bodenmann and Shantinath (2004) created. When you ask

your partner to open up and recognise they are under stress, you listen intently and offer genuine support. You can ask your partner to listen and provide support if you become conscious of your stress and talk to them about it. By following these guidelines, you and your partner work together to manage the stress you both experience. The informant interview illustrates this: #2, #6, #9, #13, #14, #16, #21 and #29.

"Luckily, my husband is very understanding. But I always burst into tears when my stress level goes beyond my handling level. He will tell me to calm down and take one thing at a time. But being a mom of a baby who only wants her mommy, can be very taxing and it seems stress never goes away." #2

"At night after putting the baby to sleep, I talk to him about things that made me stressed for the day. We try to figure out a way to sort things out" #6

"Very understanding husband. We divide work. He cooks for me. It's probably the only reason that help me to stay sane, I guess" #9

"We always share things over what happened each day before we go to bed." #13

"Have a conversation while going out for a drive or a drink." #14

"We talk. My husband is very understanding. He helps me with housework so, he helps me a lot." #16

"We go out to eat and talk about things that make us feel stressed" #21

"Very understanding husband. He works too. Wherever he can, he takes me out and we talk a lot about things that are stressing us." #29

In conclusion, out of the 34 informants, 21 reported being more likely to talk and share their stress with their significant other. Managing stress is an inevitable aspect of working life. Additionally, a woman must handle both her significant other's stress and her own when she is half a couple working two jobs. Nothing can ever prepare a woman for motherhood, much less motherhood while working. It has been said that becoming a mother is both the most beautiful and challenging experience in life. However, what happens when she must also attend to her work simultaneously? Though working mothers who care for their family and children while also working may appear to be supermoms on the outside, they essentially work nonstop. While they love being working mothers, this does not mean they prioritise self-care last.

Stress faced by the teachers in the centre is also a common issue faced by many working mothers in today's hectic and demanding environment, which is striking a balance between their professional goals and the demands of parenting (Dugan & Farrell, 2020). This dual job frequently results in stress and a never-ending quest for balance. It is critical to acknowledge and resolve the challenges experienced by working mothers to protect their general happiness and wellbeing. Balancing a profession's demands and parenting's obligations requires careful navigation. This is a difficult and frequently overwhelming effort. In the learning centre, teachers are required to help a student learn and develop on all levels – intellectually, physically, and emotionally which is a comparable role that mothers have in education. Like a mother, teachers must assist students in internalising moral principles. The teachers are expected to be kind and worried about their students, much like a mother. If something goes wrong, teachers must correct the students as they

do with their children. Impliedly, the inextricable bond must exist between a person and their surroundings (P-E-Fit Theory) to ensure happiness in whatever task they are doing.

Conclusion

Women's general health and happiness may benefit from maintaining a healthy life balance. Balancing work and family obligations has become a big worry for women. According to the study, working women experience varying degrees of stress. Stress is a necessary component of life. It affects everyone in developed and developing countries equally: rich and poor, literate and illiterate, men and women, young and old. Experts in family studies and employers find that the changing nature of families is a major contributor to stress and role strain at work and home. Women must feel that their work is vital and that they are not sacrificing their children's welfare to serve their own interests. One risk is that working mothers could feel guilty about leaving their children in the care of carers they see daily. Since stress and its effects on people are well known, efforts are made regularly in government and non-government sectors to promote people's wellbeing by planning stress management programmes. Healthcare costs are high, and stress management is one strategy that can help prevent it. For these reasons, stress management has become increasingly important in the twenty-first century.

Following the investigation, the researcher is optimistic that the data analysed in this study will help the learning centre's management to understand the variables that could lead to stress among the members who work in metropolitan areas and the possibility that working mothers as teachers are under controlled-stress because the productivity of the organization shines with there are employees who work hard to ensure that the organization is in good condition.

According to Razak et al. (2014), women with families and careers must thus learn how to prioritise each job, discern which jobs present domestic challenges, and leave work-related issues at work. A variety of strategies can be used to maintain this balance (Sirajunisa & Panchanatham, 2010; Wei et al., 2023), including deep breathing and muscle training relaxation techniques, expanding engaged activity, keeping a positive outlook, and reducing mental stress through exercise (Eksari et al., 2019)

The results of this study can provide information to the learning centre's management on work stress factors among mothers working as teachers based on stress factors at work and home, including age, marital status, and duration of service. At the same time, this modernisation recognises how to control the work pressure they face. This study shows that overloading responsibilities influence stress at home and work due to playing roles - being a mom, and working as a teacher. The mothers who are teachers were interviewed and acknowledged the emotional components at their work and home. However, they also mentioned they hardly have time for themselves in their chaotic daily routine.

These didactic and emotional structures seem to be divided from one another, as though education and feeling were two distinct realms; this emphasises the necessity of deeper research

integration once more. The need for deeper socio-emotional learning in the education field is evident, as it is the realisation that it is best to support this if it is woven into the conversation throughout the entire learning path because social and emotional competencies are an integral part of everyday working life and cannot be isolated from it. Additionally, the results of this study can yield crucial information for creating educational resources and interventions, as well as increase awareness of work-home stress and reduce stress for working mothers. Every worker can benefit from these findings by helping workers understand mothers' stress load. Research on working mothers is critically needed, particularly considering the prevalence and effects of job stress on their mental health.

Limitation

This study focused on investigating the factors affecting working mothers' stress in a private learning centre in Kuala Lumpur. As a cross-sectional study, it collects data concurrently without considering causality. Future research should employ an experimental or longitudinal approach to establish a causal relationship. The study shed light on a few variables that might exacerbate stress at work. Its scope was limited, though, as it only looked at a few factors that might impact this occurrence.

Recommendation for Further Study

Given that the learning centre is in the vast education field, more research is necessary to increase the visibility and impact of stress factors on working mothers on a national and international scale. The researcher hopes this work will be a starting point for future investigations. As far as is known, this study's sample is restricted to a particular learning centre in Kuala Lumpur. There are numerous recommendations for additional research on this subject. A researcher who is a mother and works as a teacher in a major city believes that more research should be done on work stress factors so that the study's conclusions can be applied to the entire nation. The study sample should also include teachers from various backgrounds, learning centres, and even other education fields to enable a more robust comparison of the results.

This is so that future studies can determine the kind and extent of the connection between working mothers' stress levels. The researcher advises taking a close look at various cultural or socioeconomic groups. A further research suggestion is to focus on educators with more than one child. Teachers in this dual role with male administrators as opposed to female administrators could be the subject of a study. Since single-parent households are becoming more prevalent in society, it would also be advantageous to investigate female teachers who are single mothers of small children. Examining participants who have children in school would be another way to use the findings of this research.

Researchers also hope that future studies will be required to conduct an in-depth analysis on working mothers' stress level and management, including strategies for professionally handling work pressure when it is appropriate with the Malaysian Education environment, given

the stress level in playing dual-role and the various work pressures it brings to teachers who are mothers. The researcher also intends to conduct follow-up studies that will refine the level of job satisfaction and overall individual emotional intelligence by utilising the research method's observations, interview techniques and experiments.

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