

Causes of Stress among Pre-school Educators in the East London Education District

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KEYWORDS Early Childhood. Educator Stress. Demographics. Pre-school. Psychosocial Wellbeing

ABSTRACT This paper investigates the causes of stress among pre-school educators. A survey research design was employed. While 133 pre-school educators were randomly selected. Data was obtained using the Teacher Work Stimulated Stress Questionnaire (TWSSQ). The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that the major causes of stress include teaching pupils without enough support as well as too many duties and responsibilities for the teachers. Results also suggest that teaching pupils who do not seem motivated, feeling of constant pressure of being accountable, pupils' indiscipline, doing schoolwork at home and little time to relax were among the major stressors affecting preschool educators. The study concludes that the causes of stress are too alarming that urgent attention is essential to reduce the effect of stress that appear to impact the psychosocial wellbeing of the educators teachers. Some recommendations have been made.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a tendency to regard teaching as a stress-free profession especially by the outsiders of the profession (Abbas et al. 2012; ETUCE/CSEE 2012; Okeke et al. 2014; Okeke et al. 2015; Sotuku et al. 2016). However, studies suggest that teaching can be a major source of occupational stress the world over (Bashir et al. 2013; Okeke and Dlamini 2013). Within the early childhood education sector, studies appear to suggest that stress can have a significant effect on the relationship between the teacher and his or her pupils (DoE 1996, 2001; Aftab and Khatoon 2012). For some two decades, there has been a growing interest on the early childhood development (ECD) sector in South Africa. Such growing interests provide the current researchers with the impetus to assess some of the causes of stress among educators of early childhood education (ECE). According to the Department of Education (2001, 2005), which has been corroborated by Okeke et al. (2014), Okeke et al. (2015), and Sotuku et al. (2016), ECE refers to the center-based services and programs that offer developmentally important educational motivation to groups of young children mainly between the ages of 0 to 6 years in preparation for formal schooling.

Given the nature of children within this age category (Hoy et al. 2002; Hines and Paulson

2006; Hung 2011), the researchers assume that teacher stress can have significant impact on the level of teacher preparedness to work with such children. This assumption is plausible given the correlation between teachers' psychosocial state and the quality of the relationship such teachers will provide to children at particular centers (ETUCE/CSEE 2007; Gold 2010; Hung 2011; Lewis 2011; Dlamini et al. 2014). Research appears to suggest that children learn best when they feel psychologically safe and secure within a given environment (Coetzee et al. 2009; Mondal et al. 2011; Bharti and Sidana 2012; Brown 2012). On the contrary, a threat to the safety and security of children in a particular environment can have a permanent damage on their cognitive, affective and psychomotor reflexes to emotional, educational and other situational events.

Having said that, the researchers can then argue that the quality of the relationship pre-school teachers will provide to the children under their care will be a function of the teachers' psychosocial state or wellbeing. It is therefore the argument of the present authors that educators whose psychosocial state is in congruence with the principles of positive and effective mental equilibrium will almost certainly provide children with better care, while those educators experiencing psychosocial disequilibrium will fail in this regard. So given that teacher stress can have a significant impact on his/her relationship with children, a view shared by many teacher stress researchers (see Burchielli and Barttram 2006; Caprara et al. 2006; Acha 2010; Ejere 2010;

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Aftab and Khatoon 2012; Okeke et al. 2014; Okeke et al. 2015; Sotuku et al. 2016), it became imperative for the present researchers to investigate the causes of stress among teachers in the preschool sector.

Statement of the Problem

Although there has been a growing interest in research on the incidences and effects of stress among teachers, and other occupational stress in general worldwide (Ngidi and Sibaya 2002; Jackson et al. 2010; Kaur 2011; Kerr et al. 2011; Hung 2011; ETUCE/CSEE 2012; Mapfumo et al. 2012; Sarmah and Baruah 2012), research on preschool teachers' experiences of stress appears scanty. More so, although the growing public interest in ECDE/ECE in South Africa has given researchers the momentum to assess the incidences of stress among educators of early childhood education, no empirical studies suggest that this may be happening. Given what is known as the corollary of stressful situations on teachers (see Mintz 2007; Milner and Khoza 2008; Mapfumo et al. 2012; Perry and Li 2012; Okeke and Dlamini 2013; Dlamini et al. 2014) and the unique characteristics of children (Olivier and Venter 2003; Omoniyi and Ogunsanmi 2012; Pitsoe and Machaisa 2012), it becomes imperative for researchers to take advantage of the opportunity provided by this surge in public interests on ECD/ECE to investigate stress matters among preschool educators in South Africa. It was thought that investigating stress matters among early educators in East London Education District would provide all ECD/ECE stakeholders with necessary information to impact policies on the psychosocial wellbeing of the teachers and the children too. It was therefore reasonable to embark on the study, which has influenced this paper.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of study was to examine the causes of stress among of preschool educators in the East London Education District in the Eastern Cape of South Africa.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed by the researchers to guide the study.

- i) What are the major causes of stress among preschool educators in the East London Education District?
- ii) How is the manifestation of stress associated with the teachers' demographic variables of race, age, marital status, gender, qualifications and location of school?

The Concept of Stress

It is important to note that despite the fact that stress has been a very popular topic among researchers, the concept remains one difficult to define. In fact, some writers (Abbas et al. 2012; Holeyannavar and Itagi 2012; Koruklu et al. 2012) have described stress as both a simple but complicated concept. Stress is one of the main problems affecting teachers today the world over. In other words, although this phenomenon is well known and has also received huge research attention, it nonetheless remains very difficult to define. Notwithstanding, some researchers have managed to provide some understanding of what the concept may entail. For instance, according to Onchwari (2009: 391), "stress is the non-specific response of a human body to any demand made upon it. The situation is considered stressful when the demands to cope exceed an individual's ability to cope". Stress must be understood as that unavoidable aspect of the individual's everyday work life and even the individual's domestic situations. This situation is experienced differently by different persons depending on the individual's capacity and response style to situations confronting him or her. Stress can also be seen "as physical force or pressure, or extreme scientific overload of an object, or a psychological condition brought about by specific demands of the environment on a person" (Olivier and Venter 2003: 186).

Okeke and Dlamini (2013), and Dlamini et al. (2014) contend that stress is also a combination of physiological and psychological reactions that negatively affect individuals as a result of the conditions in their environment. But not all stressful situations produce negative outcome. Studies (Steyn and Kamper 2006; Reddy et al. 2010; Qusar 2011; Richards 2012; Schelvis et al. 2013) suggest that the body often requires a response to certain kinds of stressful conditions to be able to perform efficiently. However, the nature of stress is such that if it exceeds the

capacity of the individual to manage it, other problems may develop. Research has shown that an unmanaged stressful condition may result in emotional and behavioral problems. For instance, research shows that “adults who have been abused as children, may respond negatively to elevated levels of stress both at a physical and emotional level placing them at risk of maintaining and being susceptible to mental and physical disorders” (Lewis 2011: 14). But reaction to stress varies from one environment to another, and it also varies from individual to individual.

Teacher Stress

Despite the traditional beliefs that the teaching profession may be stress-free, the general notion is that teachers are experiencing stress. Such belief has sparked off numerous local and international studies aimed at providing empirical evidence on the psychosocial wellbeing of the classroom teacher. For example, studies by Okeke and Dlamini (2013), and Dlamini et al. (2014) suggest that teachers are experiencing extensive stress in their everyday activities. Other studies (Murray-Harvey 1999; Steyn and Kamper 2006; Jackson et al. 2010; Malik and Ajmal 2010; Sarmah and Baruah 2012) suggest that today’s teachers may be experiencing more stress than their counterparts two decades ago. Hence, contrary to the traditional beliefs, findings from literature confirm “high levels of stress teachers experience and the impact that this may have on their performance” (Milner and Khoza 2008: 158). This finding has been hugely corroborated by numerous other studies (see for instance, Bell 2005; Burchielli and Bartram 2006; Caprara et al. 2006; Whelan 2008; Vazi et al. 2013; Zedan and Bitar 2013; Zurlo 2013). What is not common in literature, however, is the knowledge of the nature and extent of stress among preschool educators, and its impact on their psychosocial wellbeing. Moreover, it is also not common in literature how stress among preschool educators impacts the educators’ relationship with the children under their care.

Such revelation offers huge research agenda for early childhood education researchers within the South African educational research parlance. This is because in today’s South Africa, teachers are confronted with numerous challenges given the relatively transitional state of

education at all levels while “change is the order of the day” (Olivier and Venter 2003: 186). Such challenges and changes, which have brought fundamental expectations on the part of the teacher, have been a source of intense stress to the schoolteacher. For instance, post 1994 educational developments in South Africa have come with numerous challenges and demands on the average teacher, with implications for continuing professional teacher development programs that some teachers perceive as additional workload. These developments have caused numerous ill feelings towards the teacher, which at the extreme may implicate teacher stress. Burchielli and Bartram (2006) argue that teaching is a very emotional, difficult and complex work. Over the years, South African contemporary teachers have had to contend with an increasingly work and multiple roles situations that appear to be negatively impacting their social and psychological wellbeing (Olivier and Venter 2003; Okeke et al. 2014; Okeke et al. 2015; Sotuku et al. 2016).

Personal experiences from the authors of the current paper about the complexities of teaching children within the category of 0 to 6 years old, suggest that teachers within these categories may be experiencing stress, thereby necessitating research in this area of childhood development in the context of teaching and learning. According to Lewis (2011: 14), a South African perspective to the management of stress among children would suggest that “stressors unique to South Africa have a distinct impact on the general population and will thus be perceived and experienced differently”. Childhood stress can impact the psychosocial wellbeing of the teachers in charge of such children. Lewis (2011) also argues that HIV and AIDS, poverty, gender segregation, violence and child abuse are some of the factors that can cause stress in children. If teachers form part of the general population that may be affected by childhood stress (the proximal relationship preschool educators share with children appear to suggest so), it becomes plausible to investigate stress incidences among such category of educators.

Having said that, numerous studies (Wu et al. 2006; Mintz 2007; van der Merwe and Parsotam 2011; Zedan and Bitar 2013; Dlamini et al. 2014; Okeke et al. 2014) note that teaching ranks among the most stressful occupations in the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, teachers appear to be the most stressed professionals (Okeke

and Dlamini 2013). On the other hand, research also shows that teaching experience stress more frequently than any other profession (Frone 2000; ETUCE/CSEE 2007; Froeschle and Crews 2010; ETUCE/CSEE 2012; Holeyannavar and Itagi 2012). Literature equally suggests that teacher stress can have significant effects on both the teacher and learner performance (Kerr et al. 2011; Qusar 2011; Okeke et al. 2014; Okeke et al. 2015; Sotuku et al. 2016). It is also noted in literature that teacher stress can impact his or her relationship with other colleagues within a given workplace (Mintz 2007; Whelan 2008; Ejere 2010; Vazi et al. 2013; Dlamini et al. 2014). A view corroborated by Burchielli and Bartram (2006) as well as Zedan and Bitar (2013) suggests that when teacher stress is left without intervention, it may drastically impact the health of the teacher. Teacher stress is therefore an established area of research, the causes of which appear faceted and multidimensional. Discussions on some of the causes of teacher stress will be the focus of the next subsection of this paper.

Causes of Teacher Stress

Many factors may be responsible for teacher stress. This subsection will attempt to look at some of these factors. However, space will not permit a full discussion of all known factors. Instead some factors have been identified in literature and are presented below.

School Climate

It has been suggested that “the behavior of individuals in any organization can be determined by the climate because of its functional role” (Milner and Khoza 2008: 158). Within the context of the school therefore, climate entails the shared values, norms, beliefs and set of practices that fundamentally inform the instructional and other daily activities of a given school. The nature of the school climate can be a source of stress for the teacher. However, it is very important to note that these set of shared practices are not generalizable from one school to another. Rather, different school setting may experience different sets of shared values, norms and practices.

School climate can exact either or both positive and negative influences on a particular unique school. That is why Hoy et al. (2002) had earlier argued that a healthy school climate is

characterized by positive relations among teachers, school administrators, learners and parents. On the contrary, an unhealthy school climate is marked by bad and poor relations and this becomes a source of stress (see also, Milner and Khoza 2008; Lewis 2011; Mondal et al. 2011; Okeke et al. 2014). While a healthy school climate influences teachers’ behavior positively, an unhealthy climate influences negatively and becomes a source of stress to teachers. However, it is important to note that what may be considered positive school climate in one school may be adjudged negative school climate by another school. Individual schools and personnel within such school, and other stakeholders operating in the school, decide what may constitute positive and effective school climate.

Lack of Discipline among Learners

Numerous researches (Mondal et al. 2011; Perry and Li 2012; Schelvis et al. 2013; Zedan and Bitar 2013; Okeke et al. 2014; Shumba et al. 2016) have shown that the quality of learner discipline can have a significant impact on the dimensions and levels of teacher stress. The assumption in these studies is that teachers will experience greater stress in those schools where the learners’ discipline level is poor. Conversely, teachers will experience less discipline related stress in those schools where there are no negative issues with learner discipline. For instance, Zedan and Bitar (2013) and Okeke et al. (2014) argue that indiscipline leads to a rise in the stress levels of teachers. Incidences of learner misbehavior in classrooms mean that teachers spend a lot of time and energy managing disruptive learners and this has remained a major cause of stress for teachers. Time and energy that should be spent on enhancing teaching and learning will now be spent on attending disciplinary issues. If this becomes daily routine, teachers become tired and frustrated with their teaching responsibilities and this situation may result to teachers feeling stress.

In addition, the fact that no meaningful learning can take place where there is disruptive behavior cannot be overemphasized, and managing such environments becomes stressful for teacher. De Witt and Lessing (2013) argue that learner disciplinary problems have an effect on the working life of teachers in schools including the teachers’ emotional life. De Witt and Leas-

ing (2013) also state that learners' disciplinary problems cause emotional problems in teachers, as they make excessive demands on teachers' tempers and also cause aggression. It becomes clear, that indiscipline in schools does not only negatively affect teaching and learning but also takes a toll on the very lives of teachers.

School Management Practices

This is one area of teacher psychosocial wellbeing that has not witnessed extensive research within the South African ECD context. Hence, this may well prove to be a very lucrative research agenda in time to come. Understanding how school management practices impact teachers' psychosocial wellbeing is imperative and researchers are challenged to invest their time in this area of teacher professional lives. Notwithstanding, research has shown that schools management practices may also cause a strain on teachers. Kyriacou and Chien's (2004) study established that the way schools were managed by principals could result in teacher stress. A typical example is a situation where the principal of a school places excessive demands on teachers.

Holeyannavar and Itagi (2012) found that a significant number of respondents in their study indicated that they felt stressed by the harsh behavior of their school principal. Also, in an earlier study, Torrington et al. (2005) observed that poor human resource management practices demotivate employees. Where management styles are authoritarian with limited participation, delegation and communication, teachers tend to be negatively affected resulting in stress. This therefore suggests that heads of schools should be properly trained in management in order to minimize cases of management-induced stress among teachers.

High Workload

Both Kaur (2011) and Okeke and Dlamini (2013) suggest that excessive workload is found to be a major cause of teacher stress. In a study of high school teachers in Swaziland, Okeke and Dlamini (2013) found that one of the major stressors confronting teachers in that region was excessive workload. On the other hand, Kaur (2011: 153) defines occupational stress as "the discrepancy between the demands of the environment

or workplace and the individual's ability to carry out and complete these demands". It becomes clear that the inability to cope with job demands is a source of stress, with increased workload evidenced by large classes, a lot of paper work and assessment of learners, teachers often fail to cope. In most developing countries teachers have to deal with large classes in all levels of educational institutions. In a study on teacher motivation in Uganda, Acha (2010) found that primary school teachers were overwhelmed with large classes and the number of learners was not consistent with the number of teachers. In a study related to school principals' stress and coping mechanisms, Van der Merwe and Parsotam (2011) establish that among the many stressors that affected school principals were the issue of work overload.

Person-Environment Fit Theory

The larger study that has influenced this paper was conceptualized in terms of the Person-Environment Fit (PEF) Theory. This was necessary, as the incidences of occupational stress were conceptualized as the "by-product of an imbalance between job or environmental demands...and the ability to meet these demands [which is] mitigated by a person's job control and decision latitude" (Vazi et al. 2013). It should be noted that the central premise of the Person-Environment Fit theory suggests that stress does not arise from a person or their environment separately, but rather from the interactional relationship between a person and their environment (Okeke and Dlamini 2013). There is therefore a very strong relationship between the individuals and their environment. The researchers therefore assumed that the event of stress would be most significantly reduced when there is a fit between the individuals and a particular environment. This view was supported by Okeke and Dlamini (2013), and Dlamini et al. (2014) who suggest that the congruence between individual characteristics such as needs, abilities or values and environmental characteristics like job supplies, job demands or organizational values predict attitudes and behavior.

For the four decades PEF theory has been influencing the humanities and social sciences (Qusar 2011; Holeyannavar and Itagi 2012; Koruklu et al. 2012; Okeke and Dlamini 2013; Vazi et al. 2013; Dlamini et al. 2014). It was therefore

thought that the theory was appropriate in investigating the causes of stress among early childhood educators in preschools in East London. Given what is already known about the complexities of working with young children (Lewis 2011), it would appear that what impacts the psychosocial wellbeing of preschool educators whether inherently from the point of view of the person or the environment would most certainly impact the wellbeing of children. It was also thought that the use of the PEF theory presented the researchers of this study with the epistemological standpoint that enabled the interpretation the causes of stress among early childhood educators in preschools in East London.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive survey research design was employed to enable the researchers to generalize the result on the entire population that was studied. According to Bell (2005), and also Muijs (2011), the survey design is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of the independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred.

Study Population

The study population is the aggregate of all likely respondents from which the sample is selected (Bell 2005). The targeted population for this study comprised all of preschools educators teaching 0-6-year-old children in the East London Education District.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 133 preschool educators to participate in this study. The stratified random sampling allows the strata to form based on members' shared attribute or characteristics. Then a random sample from each stratum is taken in a number proportional to the stratum's size when compared to the population. The researchers used stratified sampling technique because the population is heterogeneous and hence, allows it to be divided into smaller groups.

Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire titled the Teacher Work Stimulated Stress Questionnaire (TWSSQ) was used to obtain data from the respondents. The questionnaire had five parts. Part A was used to obtain information on demographic variables. Part B was a ten-item Likert Scale rating questionnaire. The rating ranges from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD) and was used to gather information from the respondents on causes of work-stimulated stress at work. Part C was a ten-item questionnaire with a modified Likert scale rating as described above. Part D and E were open-ended response questions as follow-up questions to Parts B and C.

Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics of percentage was used to find the causes of stress among preschools educators, while the use of inferential statistics was not left behind to answer research question two.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1

What are the major causes of stress among early childhood educators?

In Table 1, the Likert-type questionnaire item request from participating educators to respond to whether teaching pupils without enough support was stressful. Of the total sample of 133 educators, 122 representing ninety-two percent of all participants were of the view that teaching pupils without enough support led to stress.

Concerning item 2 on Table 1, a second Likert-type questionnaire item on the TWSS asked participants to indicate whether too many duties and responsibilities impacted their psychosocial wellbeing thereby causing them stress. To this item, 103 (77.4%) agreed that too many duties and responsibilities was a cause of stress.

On participants views regarding whether completing schools works at home was typical of stressors impacting their personal lives, over half of the participants reported that it would appear that such practice was stressful. For instance, item 3 in Table 1, 67 educators representing 50.4 percent of all participants in the study

Table 1: The descriptive statistics of the causes of stress among early childhood educators

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Missing	Total
1. Participants' views on teaching without enough support	76 (57.1%)	46 (34.6%)	7 (5.3%)	2 (1.5%)	2 (1.5%)	133 (100%)
2. Participants' views on the impact of too many duties and responsibilities	49 (36.8%)	54 (40.6%)	21 (15.8%)	6 (4.5%)	3 (2.3%)	133 (100%)
3. Participants' views on taking school work to their homes	33 (24.8%)	34 (25.6%)	44 (33.1%)	17 (12.8%)	5 (3.8%)	133 (100%)
4. Participants views on feeling lack of control	31 (23.3%)	43 (32.3%)	34 (25.6%)	15 (11.3%)	10 (7.5%)	133 (100%)
5. Participants' views on lack of relaxation time as a cause of WSS	37 (27.8%)	55 (41.4%)	26 (19.5%)	9 (6.8%)	6 (4.5%)	133 (100%)
6. Participants' views on teaching demotivated pupils	59 (44.4%)	54 (40.6%)	15 (11.3%)	4 (3.0%)	1 (0.8%)	133 (100%)
7. Participants' views on the pressure of being accountable	41 (30.8%)	60 (45.1%)	23 (17.3%)	9 (6.3%)	-	133 (100%)
8. Participants' views on insufficient time for lesson preparation	19 (14.3%)	43 (32.3%)	53 (39.8%)	15 (11.3%)	3 (2.3%)	133 (100%)
9. Participants' views on testing and pacing pressure	25 (18.8%)	44 (33.1%)	47 (35.3%)	8 (6.0%)	9 (6.8%)	133 (100%)
10. Participants' views on class size as a source of stress	25 (18.8%)	33 (25.4%)	57 (42.9%)	15 (11.3%)	3 (2.3%)	133 (100%)

reported that taking school work to their homes was a cause of stress for them.

Item 4 on the Likert-type questionnaire instrument sought information on participants' views regarding the lack of control over school decisions that affected them and the pupils was something that caused stress to them. Again, this would seem to be the case as 74 participating educators (that is, 55.6%) agreed to feeling lack of control as a cause of stress.

Educators also completed the questionnaire item that aimed to obtain their views on the relationship between lack of relaxation time and WSS. In item 5 of Table 1, this would seem to be the situation as 92 of the participating educators, which represented sixty-nine percent of all participants in the study, were in the affirmative that having little time to relax was a caused of WSS to them.

Item 6 in Table 1 was regarding whether working with demotivated pupils was a stressor. To this item, a total 103 or eighty-five percent agreed that teaching pupils who do not seem motivated was a source of stress.

As is indicative in item 7 of Table 1, 101 or seventy-six percent of all participants in the study agreed that feeling of constant pressure of being accountable appeared to be very stressful experience for them. Accountability was therefore one area of their teaching experience that caused participating educators enormous stress.

Item 8 on the Likert-type questionnaire instrument sought information on participants' views regarding a feeling that insufficient time to prepare lesson may be causing them some stress. To this particular item, only 62 (46.8%) agreed that insufficient time to prepare lessons causes stress. As less than half of the participating educators responded to this item, it would appear that this particular variable was not a major cause of stress for the majority of the educators who took part in the study.

Questionnaire item 9 on the Likert-type instrument obtained the feelings of the educators on the pressure of testing and pacing. As Table 1 has shown, 69 of the participants or fifty-two percent agreed that testing and pacing pressure was stressful to them.

Finally, item 10 on the questionnaire instrument obtained data on the participants' views regarding whether class size was a cause of stress to them. This again would appear to be the case as 58 participants or fifty-three percent responded to the item that large class size was a cause of stress. Class size has been a very serious issue within most rural preschools in the Eastern Cape Province.

Research Question 2

How are the manifestation of stress associated with the teachers' demographic variables such as race, age, marital status, gender, qualifications and location of school?

Table 2 shows the 10 manifestations of stress that were presented to the participating educators. The Likert-type scale was then used to enable the researchers to determine whether the participants had experienced any of the manifestations of stress in their day-to-day activities as preschool educators, and whether such manifestations correlate with any of the demographic variables. As indicated in Table 2, it would appear that the school location is positively and statistically significantly related to manifestations 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. The analysis suggested that educators in the rural areas were more likely to show these manifestations of stress than their counterparts in the urban areas. However, gender did not show any statistically significant relationship with any of the manifestations of WSS.

On the other hand, the demographic variable of age was found to be positively and statistically significantly related to each of the manifestations on items 6, 7 and 8. Hence, it would be plausible to suggest that as a teacher advances in age, he/she will more likely than younger teachers, present issues relating to items on manifestations 6, 7 and 8. Demographic variable of age would then correlate with the intensity of the experiences of stress among preschool educators.

In contrast to the researchers' expectations, race did not show any statistically significant relationship with any of the manifestations of WSS on the questionnaire instrument. However, marital status appeared to be positively and statistically significantly related to both items on manifestation 1, and manifestation 8. Hence, a divorced educator will more likely present both

feelings on manifestation 1 as well as manifestation 8 than never-married or single educators, who in turn will likely show the manifestation than a married teacher.

Finally, qualification and experience at work both featured on the manifestations of stress to determine their relationships with stress among preschool educators. Analysis showed that qualification was positively and statistically significantly related to manifestations 2 and 3. This implied that more qualified teachers would more likely show manifestations 2 and 3 than a less qualified teacher. On the other hand, work experience did not show any statistically significant relationship with any of the manifestations of TWSS.

The analyses of the data obtained from the study as represented in the tables indicate that preschool educators experienced stress when they did not have enough resources and support in dealing with the pupils. Findings also indicate that too many duties and responsibilities as well as taking schoolwork back home caused the educators much stress. Again, results indicate that the feeling of lack of control, and having little time to relax were also related to work-stimulated stress for the educators in the study. Moreover, it was also found that teaching pupils who do not seem motivated and feeling of constant pressure of being accountable appeared to be very stressful experiences for the educators. Findings equally indicate that insufficient time to prepare lessons was not a major cause of stress for the majority of the educators who took part in the study, while testing and pacing pressure was stressful to the educa-

Table 2: Correlations between demographics and manifestations of stress

	<i>Group (Location)</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Qualifi- cation</i>	<i>Work experi- ence</i>
Manifestation 1	.034	.099	-.067	-.001	.174*	.138	-.041
Manifestation 2	.096	.053	.079	.042	.136	.264**	.093
Manifestation 3	.146	.044	.067	.013	.135	.241*	.086
Manifestation 4	.370**	.041	.117	-.072	.020	.094	-.056
Manifestation 5	.181*	.148	.022	-.061	.054	.113	-.010
Manifestation 6	.422**	.056	.189*	-.168	.067	.089	-.037
Manifestation 7	.323**	.036	.194*	-.080	.115	.179	.049
Manifestation 8	.252**	.026	.180*	-.063	.215*	.077	.069
Manifestation 9	-.054	.026	.139	.151	.050	.119	.076
Manifestation 10	.084	.018	.166	.052	.130	.165	.077

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

c. Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.

tors. On the other hand, a large class size was found to be a major cause of stress among the educators.

Regarding the manifestations of stress, results indicate that educators in the rural areas were more likely to show the manifestations of stress than their counterparts in the urban areas. However, findings indicate that gender did not show any statistically significant relationship with any of the manifestations of WSS. On the other hand, findings from the analysis of data suggest that as a teacher advances in age he or she will be more likely than younger teachers to be stressed. However, findings suggest that race did not show any statistically significant relationship with WSS, while a divorced or never-married/single educator will more likely show the manifestation of stress than a married teacher. More so, findings also indicate that more qualified teachers are more likely show manifestations of stress than a less qualified teacher. Finally, it was also found that work experience did not relate with the incidences of stress among the educators who took part in the study.

DISCUSSION

Although a plethora of literature on teacher stress exists out there, little has been covered through research within the context of preschool educators' stress while almost nothing is known on this matter within the South African research tradition. Studies that specifically target preschool educators' experiences with work-related stress are not common in South Africa. As was evidenced in reviewed literature (see Caprara et al. 2006; Coetzee et al. 2009; Aftab and Khatoon 2012; Brown 2012; Okeke and Dlamini 2013; Dlamini et al. 2014) among others, research on teacher stress is mainly focused on teachers in the formal primary, secondary and high schools. This corroborates with the outcome of this present paper from such evidences can only be implicit rather than explicit. Notwithstanding, the findings that preschool educators who took part in the study felt stressed for lack of support and when overburdened with too many duties and responsibilities were found to be in agreement with an earlier study by Aftab and Khatoon (2012) on secondary school teachers that found teachers complaining about lack of support, and multiple responsibilities for the same teacher

being major stressors that they had to live with every day.

On the other hand, findings from a study of 239 high school teachers in Swaziland (Okeke and Dlamini 2013) correlate with the results of the present study in terms of age, marital status and qualifications. Okeke and Dlamini (2013: 39; see also Aftab and Khatoon 2012) found that "there were interesting relationships relating to the demographic characteristics such as qualification, age and marital status of the sample" and incidences of stress. However, as Aftab and Khatoon (2012), and Okeke and Dlamini (2013) both sampled secondary school teachers, it would appear suggestive that caution must be exercised in making any comparisons between both findings.

The findings of the study, which appeared consistent with many previous studies, relate to those of little time to relax (Froeschle and Crews 2010), and relationship between dealing with demotivated pupils and stress (Hoy et al. 2002; Ejere 2010; Hung 2011; Perry and Li 2012; Richards 2012; Dlamini et al. 2014). By virtue of their ages (0-6 years) it would appear that the relationship between preschool educators and children in their care is necessarily different from relationships between primary and secondary school educators and their learners. Given the fact that ECD in South Africa only began to gain publicity and attention quite recently, it is possible that most of its educators may lack relevant training in dealing with the numerous complexities associated with children's teaching and learning. This would mean that those educators might lack the necessary training in child psychology, developmental psychology, and child learning theories.

CONCLUSION

It has already been noted in the earlier section of this paper that research on teacher stress within the context of ECD is not common in South Africa and in the Eastern Cape Province in particular. Given this, it is then argued that the unique characteristics of children of preschool age and their educators provide researchers with very rich research agendas. Researchers are therefore challenged to take advantage of that. The researchers argue that without investigating the association between stress and teachers' race, age, marital status, gender, qualifica-

tions and location of school in a single study, it would be almost absolutely impossible to determine how safe preschool environments may be. More so, the effectiveness of ECD policies in South Africa is dependent on what research comprehensively offers that impact the formulation of such policies. If the safety of the environment in which preschoolers dwell is germane to effective ECD/ECE, and if the educators must contribute to this safety, then the psychosocial wellbeing of the educators must therefore necessarily form part of this safe environment. This is plausible given the fact that what impacts the wellbeing of the educators will invariably impact the wellbeing of the children themselves. Research on preschool educators is therefore constantly required to ensure that fit is established between the educators and the ECD/ECE environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings of the present study, it is recommended that school authority and leadership should look at the prominent causes of stress and play pivotal roles in reducing them through the mounting of intervention programs to enable stressed educators manage but also (if possible) to completely eliminate stress from their lives.

Given the fact that the incidences of stress among educators can cause a lot of damage to the future of the young children, there is the need for the government to pay attention to them in order to provide solid foundation for the education of the young ones.

It is equally recommended that the demographic variables that had adverse effects on the educators should be catered for. For instance, effective support mechanisms should be put in place in preschools where educators appeared to lack support in working with the children. This will promote confidence, job satisfaction and productivity on the part of the educators.

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Paper received for publication on October 2015
Paper accepted for publication on July 2016