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Perceptions of Occupational Stress regarding Female Primary School Educators in socio–economically deprived Johannesburg Schools.

A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Education Masters (Educational Psychology) in the Humanities Faculty, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Education Masters (Educational Psychology) in the Department of Psychology, School of Human and Community Development, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before any degree or examination at any other university.

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Date

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore perceptions of occupational stress regarding female primary school educators in socio–economically deprived Johannesburg Schools. This was achieved by conducting a qualitative exploratory study that employed a structured questionnaire as the mode of data collection and thematic content analysis as the mode of analysis. The participants were 30 female, South African primary school educators, ranging between the ages of 25 – 60 years, who were selected via non–probability, purposive sampling using female primary school teachers who have had more than three years teaching experience. The questionnaires were analysed to extract the perceptions of female primary school educators regarding occupational stress. The analysis revealed nine central categories: socio–economic deprivation, language barriers, lack of pupil discipline (from home) which highlighted perceived lack of control as a sub-category, lack of parental involvement, large pupil to teacher ratio, incongruence between Department of Education and teachers, excessive administration work, multiple role expectancy and finally sufficient collegial support.

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Finally I dedicate this research report to my parents. To my mother Sharon Jay for her strength, faith, unconditional love and always being there to listen throughout an extremely challenging year.

To the memory of Howard Jay, I have missed you this year more than words can express but I know that you have been with me every step of the way.

CHAPTER ONE:

1. INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW:
Perceptions of Occupational Stress regarding Female Primary School Educators in socio–economically deprived Johannesburg Schools.

There are numerous perceptions of teachers and teaching. One group of perceptions is both ancient and philosophical in nature. It regards teaching as a vocation, a calling or a gift: a talent that certain individuals possess that by a sense of compulsion they must and will use (Jepson & Forrest, 2006). Another associated tradition involves the idea of teachers performing relatively reactionary functions such as protecting and maintaining social and political values, to more revolutionary ones such as challenging those values (Gardiner, 2004). Other experiences of teachers may focus on the idea of skills and techniques that take into account method, observation and practice, whilst others may choose a more inclusive view of the profession whereby a teacher is not merely an educator but a counsellor, gatekeeper or care-taker (Gardiner, 2004). Therefore these and other perceptions indicate that a teacher does not merely take on the role of an educator, but in reality performs a number of functions and responsibilities, all of which may simultaneously serve to provide a sense self fulfilment as well as increased experiences of stress.

Stress is currently a phenomenon that must be recognized and addressed in various professions and the teaching profession is no exception (Olivier & Venter, 2003). The South African educational system has been in a transitional stage where change is the current reality. The lack of discipline in schools, abolishment of corporal punishment, unmotivated learners, increased retrenchments, lack of resources, and retirement packages for teachers, as well as large pupil-teacher ratios and a new curriculum approach all contribute to raising the stress levels of teachers (Mokhaba, 2005). Furthermore, the current education approach of Outcomes - Based Education (OBE), the management style of principals, new governing bodies for schools, the high crime rate in the country and coping with current political change and corruption in state departments are causing increasing levels of stress amongst teachers (Mokhaba, 2005). Consequently, many teachers nowadays complain about low morale and illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, ulcers, heart attacks and depression while others plan to leave the profession altogether and go on early retirement (Gardiner, 2004).

A substantial proportion of teachers are thus exposed to elevated stress levels within their working environment. Teachers are not only affected physically by stress, but additionally are also affected on various social, political and emotional levels. These factors together influence teacher's perceptions regarding their occupation significantly (Devonport, 2007). The majority of studies that have been conducted in this area of teachers' perceptions regarding occupational stress in South Africa have focused on educators in the secondary schooling system as well as tertiary level educators. Hence this study sought to explore perceptions of occupation related stress as held by primary school educators working in the South African education system. Specifically the study proposed to examine the perceptions of female teachers working in schools that are socio-economically disadvantaged. As numerous studies have shown how the stress levels of educators teaching in economically deprived areas tend to be enhanced in comparison with their economically raised counterparts (O'Donnell, Mc Carthy & Lambert, 2008). This study focused specifically on female educators' perspectives as the literature indicated that females represent a large proportion of teachers that currently experience chronic stress, specifically in the contemporary South African education system (Olivier & Venter, 2003).

1.2. Rationale

Teaching has been recognized as an emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating occupation for many years. For decades, researchers in the social sciences have identified teaching as an occupation with a high risk of stress (McEwan, 2000), and consequently teachers are the largest homogenous occupational group investigated in burnout research (Schulze & Steyn, 2006). Burnout is defined as a syndrome that results from chronic and extended occupational stress, characterised by physical, emotional and attitudinal exhaustion (De Nobile & Mc Cormick, 2006).

In the past teachers did not consider stress to be the primary cause when they needed to escape from the school environment, but rather claimed to be overworked, this however, is no longer the reality (Olivier & Venter, 2003).

Racism, violence and other manifestations of antisocial values and behaviour are still evident in many South African schools, particularly in schools that are economically deprived. These

factors all serve to contribute as major stressors for the educators concerned. A report on the employment and working conditions of South African educators as far back as 1981 concluded that job-related stress was a growing problem facing educators; however most of this research has been focused on secondary educators (Jackson & Rothmann, 2005).

The lack of research on primary school educators in South Africa is a concern as these educators are equally exposed to the daily stressors of the South African education system as are secondary and tertiary educators (Olivier & Venter, 2003). Additionally, international studies in this area of educator stress have demonstrated that female teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress, specifically with regard to interaction with students and colleagues, workload, students' progress and emotional exhaustion. This finding was seen to be particularly prevalent in schools that were vastly under resourced and situated in economically depressed areas (Devonport, 2007).

These findings are further confirmed by the majority of international studies exploring gender differences in the education sector (Timms, Graham & Caltabiano, 2006). Evidence indicates that female teachers report higher levels of stress and higher dissatisfaction stemming from, what they perceive to be adverse conditions in the classroom often characterized by a framework of economic disadvantage. A general tendency also exists in the literature, which sees female teachers experiencing higher levels of occupational stress regarding gender-specific stressors, which will be discussed further on. They also have different ways of interpreting and dealing with problems related to their work environment as compared to their male counterparts (Timms, Graham & Caltabiano, 2006).

A considerable number of studies both in mainstream and in special education settings in South Africa (Olivier & Venter, 2003) both at primary and secondary level have identified the major sources of teachers' occupational stress which will be illustrated in the literature review. Yet very little investigation of the associated perceptions of these stressors has been conducted which is cause for concern, specifically in a profession where stress and disillusionment have become prominent themes. Thus the practical implications of conducting this study may help to implement effective primary as well as secondary level prevention programmes against occupational stress. In turn it may also serve to produce a significant addition to the teacher stress literature, especially in South Africa where few relevant studies are in existence dealing with this particular problem.

Such research may also have a very real positive effect on informing occupational health policy on teacher - related stress, which may help to minimize levels of stress and increase job satisfaction amongst educators (Jepson & Forrest, 2006). It could also have a positive effect at an organizational level, such as saving the education department as well as the schools affected considerable amounts of money due to factors such as less absenteeism caused by stress – induced illness. This may in turn promote positive representations of the profession thereby improving retention and recruitment as well as transformation.

Finally, teachers participating in this study will represent an inside view of the stresses involved in teaching during a time of increasing socio - political and economic change. The teachers will not be posed as 'victims' of stress, those who are excluded or marginalized, who have already been lost to the system, but rather as volunteers willing to tell their own stories of the daily stress of teaching within a contemporary South African context.

1.3. Structure

This chapter has provided an overview of, and introduction to the study represented in this dissertation. Chapter 2 presents a view of the literature which formed the theoretical foundation of the research. Definitions of perceptions, stress and socio economic deprivation are explored as well as teachers' perceptions of stress within the theoretical frameworks of the transactional model and biopsychosocial model of stress. The nature of stress in South African Schools is also described including specific stressors that South African teachers are exposed to. Chapter 3 describes the methodological underpinnings of the study, including accounts of the study's design, procedure, instrumentation, data analysis and ethics. Chapter 4 provides an integrated representation of the findings of the study and in addition to the thematic results, broader reflections such as strengths and limitations of the study as critiqued by the researcher, recommendations based on the findings of this study as well as suggested areas for further research are highlighted in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Introduction

There are numerous aspects that may serve to inform female primary school educators' perceptions and experiences of occupational stress. This literature review seeks to address some of these aspects in order to provide the reader with a sufficient understanding of useful theoretical concepts and descriptions of issues that are of critical relevance to this report.

2.1. Teachers' Perceptions of stress: The Biopsychosocial Model of stress

The term 'stress' has become fundamental in modern society. McEwan (2000) defines stress as the response of an individual to a situation that is perceived as difficult or challenging and therefore elicits psychological or behavioural responses. Jepson & Forrest, (2006) define a stressor as an external environmental stimulus that can be physical, psychological, or behavioural in nature. While these environmental stimuli form the basis of the perceptions of stress, individual factors do intervene and often moderate an individual's experience thereof (Argyle, 1964, as cited in Jepson & Forrest, 2006). For the purpose of this study on educator stress, stress is defined as the personal reaction of educators to extreme demands or other types of work pressure placed on them, resulting in unpleasant and negative emotions, such as frustration, anger, anxiety and depression (Schulze & Steyn, 2006). This ever present phenomenon filters into every aspect of an individual's life, both privately and professionally and the South African primary school educator is certainly not immune. The central factors that underpin most stress models are seen as an interconnected cycle concerning a primary appraisal (the stressor perception), secondary appraisal (cognitive response selection) and coping (response execution and return to equilibrium) (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989). Another comprehensive model that explains the stress phenomenon is the Biopsychosocial model. This model highlights the critical importance of affording equal value to the biological, social and psychological aspects of human experience and how they each serve to contribute to one's general health (Ross & Deverall, 2004).

According to this model there are three components that contribute towards the creation of stress; an external component, an internal component and the interaction between these components. The external component of stress refers to the environmental events that precede

the recognition of and response to stress. This concept relates to the comprehension of the nature of particular psychosocial stimuli that result in a perceived threat to one's physiological, psychological or social equilibrium (Colman, 2003). Examples relevant to the educator's role include; low paying salaries, heavy workloads as well as curriculum related difficulties (Jepson & Forrest, 2006).

Factors which relate to the psychological component of the Biopsychosocial model include a poor self concept, low personal tolerance, an inability to set realistic goals, poor health habits as well as diminished communication and interpersonal skills are also associated with a high degree of personal stress (Bryce, 2001). It has also been indicated that the moderation of the above mentioned stressors may be related to gender, age and experience.

Personality factors have also been used to demonstrate how stress may be moderated with regards to one's locus of control, personality type and hardiness for example (Ross & Deverall, 2004). An educator's experience and socio – cultural context may also influence stress levels and collectively all these aspects may play a significant role in the educator's assessment as to whether or not relevant situations are indeed stressful. Thus all the above mentioned factors may influence educators' experiences of stress and may have an effect on the psychological and physical well being of the educator (Bryce, 2001).

2.2.Teachers Perceptions of Stress: The Transactional Model of stress

A further model of stress that provides an additional theoretical underpinning for the present study is the Transactional Model which proposes that it is not the actual stressful event that causes stress in an individual's life, but rather it is the way the event is perceived by the individual that in fact serves to produce the stress (Bryce, 2001). A perception is a subjective experience or feeling that results from the exposure to particular stimuli, objects or events in the environment (Coleman, 2003). 'It is the act of or faculty of perceiving, instinctive recognition… an action by which the mind refers to its sensations to an external object or entity as a cause' (Branford, 1993, p. 145). What one perceives is a result of interplays between past experiences, including one's culture, and the interpretation of the perceived (Bryce, 2001). An individual's subjective perception thus allows them to organize and interpret their world in order to produce a meaningful experience. It permits the individual to encounter the ultimate experience of the world and this experience is shared through

communication. Therefore, perceptions can be described as being the tools which individuals utilize that help to construct their impressions which in turn serve to infer their internal beliefs about their external world.

The Transactional Model postulates that it cannot be assumed that individuals will react similarly to the same pressures: for some individuals a pressure may be regarded as a stimulus and for others it may lead to distress. This model views stress as an individual phenomenon that is both interactive and situational (Rice, 1999). It implies that different individuals, when confronted with the same situation, may well respond differently. Stress emanates neither from individuals nor from their environments, but from the interrelationships between stressors, individuals' perceptions of situations and their subjective responses. Thus coping with stress will result from the interactions between an individual's situational appraisals and emotional responses (Schulze & Steyn, 2007).

2.3.Socio-economic deprivation

The notion of socio- economic deprivation is a complex and multi dimensional phenomenon that has specific historical, economic, social and political origins (Mayekiso &Tshemese, 2007). This term is chiefly characterised by poverty as well as a distinct lack of adequate resources and opportunities. This remains a persistent state in South Africa and can be intrinsically linked to the systematic entrenchment of discrimination during the apartheid era (Mayekiso & Tshemese, 2007). Although socio-economic deprivation cannot be confined to any one race group, it is mostly concentrated amongst black communities (61% of blacks are poor compared to 1% of whites) thus mimicking the poverty trends that prevailed during the apartheid era (Interfund, 2001, as cited in Mayekiso & Tshemese, 2007). The schools that this study was conducted in are ones that have inadequate resources with which to work with and where opportunities to improve the situation for teachers and pupils alike are few and difficult to achieve. Socio – Economic deprivation will be examined further in the results and discussion section.

2.4.Stress in South African Schools: a case for concern

International and local research has indicated that teachers' stress is reaching epidemic proportions, which could have serious implications for the physical and mental health of teachers. Teachers hand in more medical insurance claims than persons in other professions, have a four-year shorter life expectancy than the national average and often blame job stress as the reason for sick leave from school. (Crossley, Chisholm & Holmes, 2003). Studies have also found that it seems that there are far more similarities than differences in stress patterns to be found in comparisons of teachers' stress internationally and locally (Crossley et al, 2003).

Teacher stress is associated with multifarious factors, including intrinsic job factors, environmental factors, and individual factors (Crossely, et al, 2003). Research also suggests that individual differences are quintessential to understanding the variation in workplace stress. Teachers will all be exposed to similar intrinsic job factors, and environmental stressors would be expected to be relatively constant for those working in a similar setting under comparable conditions. Moreover, not everyone suffers high levels of stress, as some individuals will be much more susceptible than others (McEwan, 2000). Teacher stress levels have been found to differ cross-culturally, and across levels of education (Mokhaba, 2005). Equally plausible is that those with greater commitment to the teaching profession cope with stress more easily because they believe in the value of being a teacher, despite the stressors and drawbacks they might face. However the relationship between occupational commitment and stress is quite complex, as feeling stressed may also affect how committed and satisfied one feels with one's occupation (Jepson & Forrest, 2006).

The South African literature has reported that teaching is seen as hard, poorly paid, and held in low public esteem. Consequently, it appears that such representations of the profession as a highly stressful occupation are having a detrimental effect on recruitment and retention of teachers in the country (Milner & Khoza, 2008). One study found that in comparison to other occupations, teachers experience much higher levels of stress (Mokhaba, 2005). This is supported by research which confirmed that teaching is one of the most stressful professions, with 41% of teachers reporting high levels of occupational stress. This is compared with 31% in nursing, 29% in managerial jobs, and 27% in professional and support management (Gardiner, 2004).

As the demands on South African educators and schools continue to exist, so does the incidence of stress in the teaching profession. Although some pressure is necessary for people to perform effectively, excessive pressure may lead to distress, poor teaching, poor decision-making, lowered self-esteem, low job satisfaction and lack of commitment in terms of remaining in the profession (Schulze & Steyn, 2007).

Numerous studies have been carried out regarding the stress situation in South African schools all over the country. Motseke (1998) investigated stress among educators in township secondary schools in the Free State to identify organisational, personal, interpersonal, and environmental stressors; Jeena's (1998) study in Pietermaritzburg indicated high levels of stress for all respondents irrespective of age, gender and post level in comparison with other studies; Olivier and Venter (2003) investigated educator stressors in five secondary schools in the George region, to reveal that educators experienced moderate to high stress levels and that low salaries were a significant stressor.

Other studies focused on certain cultural groups only as the example Van Zyl and Petersen (1999) used. They looked at 66 white, primary school educators in two predominantly white schools and found that the educators' high stress levels were related to changes in the structures of teaching, retrenchments, syllabi and medium of instruction.

Therefore the teaching context in post-apartheid South Africa is continuously transforming and educator stress is therefore an ongoing important issue. Recent transformations include a change to an outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum, as well as new rules and policies being enforced in different structuring of governing bodies for schools and ways of dealing with discipline. Among other things, corporal punishment has been abolished and alternative ways of dealing with disciplinary problems have had to be developed

The literature has also noted that teachers who wish to leave the profession due to increased and intolerable stress levels are unable to do so for various reasons including unavailability of alternative work and geographic immobility. While one study suggested that those who remain in the profession do so after an existential adjustment, it is more probable that these teachers remain in the profession in spite of their burned out condition (Timms et al, 2006). The consequences of the decision to remain include less idealism, reduced work goals, and emotional detachment from the educators concerned (Timms et al, 2006).

2.5.Specific stressors South African teachers are exposed to

Workplace stress and its impact upon retention levels are becoming an increasing concern within the teaching profession. The literature has largely focused upon the effects of environmental factors, as well as noted that it is the interplay between the individual and the environment which may hold the key to understanding this problem. Identifying these environmental and individual contributory factors as described below, is essential in understanding why and how teachers are exposed to such intense levels of stress (Jepson & Forrest, 2006).

Firstly, a heavy workload with little time generally features as a stressor in studies with educators. They often do not have enough time to achieve the standards of teaching and learning they would like to, nor are they always able to meet the needs of their learners especially when the pupil – teacher ratio in classrooms is so large that individual attention for struggling pupils is a basic impossibility (O'Donnell, Mc Carthy & Lambert, 2008).

Secondly, is the prevalence of The Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in South Africa, which serves to add to the stress of South African educators. It is a disorder in which the immune system loses its efficacy (Kometsi, 2004). Immune deficiency itself is not fatal, but without a functioning immune system the body cannot protect itself from the many organisms that invade it and cause damage (Ross & Deverell, 2004). It is difficult to track the exact number of infections and deaths that occur as a result of the disease (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2002), however it is expected that 4 to 6 million people in South Africa alone will be lost to the disease in the next ten years (Pembery, 2007).

Furthermore, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has far reaching consequences for the education system in South Africa. It significantly adds to the stress experienced by the teachers as they try to care for orphaned learners or those with sick parents, often acting as untrained counsellors to these children (Crossley, Chisholm & Holmes, 2003). This often means that the teachers have to become not only school educators but HIV/AIDS educators as well, which most are not equipped to do. The disease also serves to erode the demand for education by decreasing family budgets for school fees. This in turn causes a domino effect by eroding the process, quality and supply of education as educators become drawn to other

fields where they do not have to deal with this additional health related stress, and often receive higher salaries in the process (Gardiner, 2004).

Curriculum-related problems are also identified as a major source of educator stress. These include lack of resources, i.e. inadequate teaching materials, not enough desks and textbooks for pupils. Linked to a curriculum such as OBE, the amount of paperwork educators are required to do is a major cause of stress in addition to other curriculum changes which include efforts to raise standards (Milner & Khoza, 2008). What also needs to be taken into account are educators who are set in their ways and therefore find it more difficult to adapt to curriculum changes and new teaching approaches. Years of teaching experience could therefore be an influencing factor on stress in the educational environment (Schulze & Steyn, 2007).

Furthermore, inadequate or irrelevant educator training programmes also influence the development of stress, because these fail to provide educators with the required skills to meet the demands of teaching. Inadequately trained educators have been shown to lack self-confidence, doubt their ability to communicate effectively with learners and feel disempowered. Additionally the teaching profession, like most others, requires staff performance appraisal. This in itself may lead to stress, especially if the outcome influences the teacher's salary. Therefore the threat of losing one's job is regarded as a major source of stress for educators (Jackson & Rothmann, 2005).

Interpersonal relationships can also function as both a source of support and stress for teachers. Supportive colleagues and satisfaction with the teaching environment are reasons for educators experiencing job satisfaction, while a lack of these two factors may lead to stress (Byrne, 1999). Poor learner discipline is also common stressor. Poor discipline includes disruptive behaviour, negative attitudes towards work, aggression and violence against the educator, to all of which teachers in South Africa are exposed. There is also the issue of lack of student motivation which may lead to failure and thus reflects negatively on educators causing stress. This was confirmed by South African studies such as Yoon's investigation (2002, as cited in Olivier & Venter, 2003) which revealed that educator stress, negative effects and a lack of self-efficacy in educators may have a further detrimental effect on the quality of learner-educator relationships.

Another major stressor that affects the occupational lives of South African teachers is the system of Inclusive Education which was introduced in 2001 by the Department of Education by means of White Paper 6 (Department of Education, White Paper 6, 2001). Inclusive education in the South African education system requires all educators to deal with children with learning difficulties in their classrooms (Jackson & Rothman, 2005). Therefore this new system has systematically moved away from segregating learners according to categories of disabilities as an organising principle for institutions (Department of Education, White Paper 6, 2001). Theoretically this new inclusive system was intended to introduce strategies and interventions that will assist educators to cope with a diversity of learning and teaching needs in order to ensure that transitory learning difficulties are ameliorated. In this way all learners are given equal access to quality education which emphasizes inclusivity over exclusivity (Department of Education, White Paper 6, 2001). In reality, learners with special education needs create additional stress for educators as many schools throughout the country are under- funded and under – resourced thus making the promotion of full personal, academic and professional development of all learners close to impossible (van der Linde, 2006).

Educators also experience stress because of parents' and learners' poor attitudes towards learning; disciplinary problems in schools and changing conditions (in and out of school) inhibits the learning process. Discipline problems include behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning, behaviour that interferes with the rights of other learners to learn, behaviour that is psychologically or physically unsafe or behaviour that causes the destruction of property (Marais & Meier, 2010). However these findings should be interpreted with careful consideration of the South African historical as well as current context of the education system (van der Linde, 2006).

Parent's poor attitudes to learning may be influenced by their own poor education. For example, certain sectors of the population were, during the previous dispensation, subject to the espoused policy of apartheid which was to provide sub-standard education to black South Africans (Milner & Khoza, 2008). Thus, these attitudes, in turn, may negatively influence those of their children. As the family is the most immediate and perhaps the most influential system affecting the individual, lack of parental guidance and general family dysfunction are emphasized as risk factors for disruptive behaviour and consequent disciplinary problems (Marais & Meier, 2010). If children are exposed to disruptive family dynamics that are based on aggressive displays between the adult partners who are their role models at home, they are

likely to carry these experiences with them into the school environment (Marais & Meier, 2010).

Language barriers on the teachers' part as well as learners' language incompetence are also cited as key factors impacting occupational stress for primary school teachers in South Africa. The majority of learners in South Africa are bi - lingual or multi - lingual and attend school in a language that is not their first language (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). South Africa has 11 official languages. This creates logistical difficulties, which together with the widespread preference for education in English, result in the Revised National Curriculum Statement's (RNCS) language policy only being partially implemented (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). This language policy uses an additive approach to bi - lingual or multi - lingualism, whereby the first language is maintained and is used as a basis for the learning of another language (Chick & McKay, 2001, as cited in O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). This approach has benefits for the learner as continued development of both languages into literate spheres functions as a precondition for enhanced cognitive, linguistic and academic growth (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). However due to the language policy being only partially implemented, South African educators are faced with the challenge of large numbers of English - second (or other) language learners (ESOL) in their classes. Although learners may be able to use language competently around peers and in social settings, they may not be proficient in the type of language expected in the classroom (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). South African educators have expressed deep distress about this lack of language acquisition and stimulation in their classes and tend to spend significant amounts of class time regarding these language impediment issues which interrupts the flow of lessons (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009).

Educators have been found to feel frustrated as their classes comprise of learners with different English abilities, therefore they have to teach on diverse language and academic levels. Educators are thus required to give extra attention to learners who are struggling to keep up as well as adequately challenging stronger learners in order to ensure that all learners in their class receive an equally effective education. This added pressure serves to increase the workload in all teaching areas in terms of marking and preparation for lessons, leaving educators feeling overworked, frustrated and strained, consequently contributing to their levels of occupational stress (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009).

Teachers, who are in constant contact with children, parents and colleagues, walk an emotional tightrope due to the constant controlling of emotions in the light of the many challenges they face. These include such aspects as student performance, student misbehaviour, parental expectations, lack of resources, and mandated government reforms which increase work load but not teaching quality (Byme, 1999). Over time, this emotional dissonance experienced by hiding feelings of agitation can create serious health problems for the individual concerned.

In addition work intensification as a result of government reforms would seem to have unwittingly imposed a policing role on management to the consequent deterioration of workplace relationships. However one should note that considerable evidence from researchers suggests that the challenges of difficult work circumstances will not necessarily lead to elevated levels of stress and consequently burnout, when there is a supportive atmosphere provided by a facilitative school administration (Crossley, et al, 2003).

What also needs to be considered are certain changes in schools that could influence learners' poor behaviour such as the abolishment of corporal punishment in the absence of other effective disciplinary methods (Milner & Khoza, 2008).

The literature on teacher stress also indicates that female educators are more inclined than males to indicate 'finding time to accomplish goals' as a stressor (Timms, Graham & Caltabiano, 2006). This confirms the results of previous research findings where females reported that their roles as not only educators, but as parents and house-keepers caused additional stress. Although spouses may have similar attitudes towards work and family roles, in reality women (including female educators) carry a disproportionate share of household chores (Timms et al, 2006). This can be seen in the light of South African society, a society which is still relatively patriarchal in its construction. The fact that the very nature of this society places greater demands on females may also explain why more female educators indicate 'lack of confidence as a professional' as a stressor (Jepson &Forrest, 2006).
It is well established in research on stress that women on average tend to suffer significantly higher levels of perceived stress, and they may also adopt different coping strategies to men. However international studies examining teachers' stress levels more specifically, have often failed to find any gender differences, or note that the gender difference is inconsistent across studies (Timms et al, 2006).

The gender of the teacher as well as their experience of teaching, more specifically what type of school they work in, and how long they have been a teacher may also affect levels of perceived stress. It could be that stress is cumulative, that is to say the longer they have been a teacher, the more stressed they will be. Thus experience of teaching and gender may also contribute to increasing levels of perceived stress within the South African education system (van der Linde, 2006).

The literature also identifies the issue of role conflict which occurs when the school provides information about the educators' role and responsibilities that conflict with the reality of daily professional life. For example, educators have to meet learners' needs, but also have to follow restrictive teaching methods (Schulze & Steyn, 2007). As mentioned previously, often educators feel they have too many roles to fulfil, such as, as counsellors, social workers, managers, examiners, secretaries and creative educators who are concerned with the performance of learners. Thus role ambiguity occurs when educators lack clarity about their responsibilities or work objective. This is especially true of married female educators who claim that this is caused by domestic role commitments in addition to their teaching role (Schulze & Steyn, 2007).

Moreover, high levels of educator stress may have destructive effects on the educators themselves, their personal lives and inhibit classroom teaching and learning. As such, this is a matter of concern that requires urgent attention. This would also suggest that perhaps a systemic or 'whole school' approach to problems facing teachers should act as a protective factor which will be essential to the development of resilience in the face of difficulties within the teaching environment (van der Linde, 2006).

Considering the above, a gap in the literature exists regarding perceptions of occupational stress, concerning female primary school educators who work in the socio economically deprived sectors of the South African education system. These educators are understood to experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress regarding gender specific stressors as well as greater degrees of dissatisfaction. Consequently this presents an important area which warrants further and necessary exploration. Before presenting the findings of this study, the methods that were utilised will be discussed.

In conclusion it is evident that educators experience numerous perceptions of stress which include socio-economic based phenomenon within their own classrooms as well as diverse stress factors concerning their job roles, work environments as well as individual stress factors, all of which serve to contribute to their perceptions of occupational stress.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

The previous sections of this report have detailed the rationale and theoretical motivation for conducting the research described here. In the sections that follow, the operationalisation of this study is discussed. Fundamental aspects that are attended to include: the methodological orientation and design of the research as well as the sample and sampling techniques that were utilised. The instrumentation, the procedures which were followed as well as the analysis which was conducted are also discussed. Matters of ethical considerations are also addressed.

3.1. Research Aims and Questions

The aims of this research are:

- To explore the specific perceptions of elevated levels of occupational stress regarding female primary school teachers, in socio – economically deprived schools in the Johannesburg area.
- To explore what specific stressors female primary school teachers are exposed to when working in socio–economically deprived schools.

The study presented here sought to investigate the following research questions:

1. Do female primary school teachers in socially economically deprived schools in Johannesburg perceive themselves to be stressed?
2. In terms of the perceived stress, what themes emerge from the questionnaires?
3. If exposed to elevated levels of stress, what recommendations do female primary school teachers make in order to decrease these elevated stress levels?

3.2. The Interpretive Paradigm

As this study focuses on the educators' reported perceptions and experiences, it directly emphasizes the subjective reality of the educator. Therefore it is important for one to

understand the paradigm which underpins such a subjective enterprise as research methods in any field are guided by certain paradigms and related philosophical assumptions. Thus consistent with this aim and orientation, this study can be located within the interpretive paradigm, which will be discussed. A paradigm is a set of beliefs, a world view, a set of assumptions about the world and one's place in it. Paradigms are human constructions that represent the most informed and sophisticated view that its proponents have been able to devise to understand different phenomena (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Interpretive research seeks to understand the social world as it is created and understood through the eyes and thoughts of its social inhabitants (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). This differs from the positivist research paradigm which focuses on the statistical inference and prediction regarding the phenomenon being studied. Thus in contrast to the position of the positivist paradigm, which focuses on the experimentation and mathematical treatment of data, the interpretive paradigm concentrates on exploration and insight (Cryer, 2006).

“Interpretivist researchers regard social reality as the product of its inhabitants; it is a world that is interpreted by the meanings participants produce and reproduce as a necessary part of their everyday activities together” (Blaikie, 2009, p.99).

Therefore as the above quote implies, this study made use of the interpretivist paradigm, as it endeavoured to systematically analyze the socially meaningful actions of the participants which allowed the researcher to arrive at significant understandings and interpretations which the participants created in order to maintain their realities.

3.3. Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is interpretivist in nature and allows room for emergent findings instead of being bound by a specific scope of investigation. Thus qualitative research allows for the researcher to appreciate how expression allows us to realise, construct and understand the social world in which we live (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

3.4. Research Design

Within a qualitative study, a research design should be flexible in nature but should also remain thorough, concise and sound in its logic (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). A qualitative

design was chosen in order to allow the researcher to capture and discover meaning once the researcher had become immersed in the data (Devlin, 2006). A qualitative design also allowed for concepts in the form of themes, motifs and theoretical narratives to be examined and for the analysis to proceed by extracting themes from the evidence gathered as well as organizing the data to present a coherent, consistent picture (Devlin, 2006). The perceptions of the participants were classified as subjective occurrences based on human experience and therefore could not be placed within a quantitative context. Thus the subjectivity of the participants became legitimate data by using a design that allowed for experiential as well as intellectual understanding. Qualitative studies generally involve trying to understand a particular phenomenon of interest and are concerned with the question of experience and how to effectively examine that experience (Berg, 2005). Thus in the case of this particular study whereby the phenomenon in question carried personal meaning and is under researched, this form of exploratory inquiry allowed for the experiences to be observed and reflected the truth as well as providing a contextual understanding of those experiences.

3.5. Sampling Techniques

A non – probability approach was employed in this study which was consistent with the scope of research, with respect to the availability of accessible potential participants.

3.6. Participant Selection

The participants were obtained via non – probability, purposive sampling using female primary school teachers who have had more than three years teaching experience. Thirty participants were selected from various socio – economically deprived schools within the Johannesburg area. The schools that were chosen were done so as they reported positive interest in participating in the study and the thirty participants were selected from these schools. The participants were approached in a staff meeting after consent from the principal had been granted. Qualitative research allowed for a non-probability sample such as the one that was employed in this study, to be utilized and enabled the participants to be fully representative of the target population. In this case the target population were female primary school teachers from which the sample was selected.

3.7. Procedure

Prior to the commencement of the research, the Ethics Board of the University of the Witwatersrand was approached for permission to conduct the research (Protocol #: MEDP/10/003 IH – see appendix A). Additionally the Gauteng Department of Education was approached in order to obtain permission to get in touch with the potential participating schools (appendix B). The researcher then met personally with each of the principals of the potential participating schools and permission was then requested and subsequently obtained from the principles of the relevant schools to conduct the study which was achieved through an information letter (appendix C) that described and explained the intentions of the research. The letter guaranteed confidentiality of the required educators and requested consent from the principles to continue the research. Once permission had been granted by the principle at each school the researcher then approached the educators at each school during a staff meeting and requested the participation of the female educators for the study. Each staff meeting took an estimated ten minutes. The intentions of the research were explained in detail and it was made clear that anyone who did not wish to participate would not be penalised nor would they be advantaged or disadvantaged in anyway if they chose to participate or not to participate in the study.

Clarity was also emphasized concerning the fact that the study would not be related in any way whatsoever to any staffing or legal matters within the school and that the questionnaires would never be seen by the Department of Education or anyone else other than the researcher and her supervisor. The questionnaires did not require any identifying information, thus confidentiality was guaranteed.

Time was allocated for addressing any questions and concerns that the educators may have had prior to completing their questionnaires. Educators were also provided with the researcher's contact details should any questions arise.

Once the participants, who had had more than three years teaching experience had been selected, their permission was achieved through a participant information letter, (appendix D) that described and explained the intentions of the research. The letter guaranteed confidentiality and requested that the participants sign a consent form (appendix E) before participating in the study.

The completed questionnaires were placed in a box in the staff room of each school and the educators who had agreed to participate had three working days to complete them along with the signed consent form which was attached to each questionnaire. The researcher emphasized that she would collect the box of completed questionnaires personally after three working days.

The original period over which the participants had to complete the questionnaires was initially supposed to take one working day. However due to the demanding schedules of the educators, the researcher extended this period of data returning from the participants to three working days in order to give the participants adequate time, privacy and space to fill in the required questionnaire.

3.8. Instruments

The instrument used comprised of a questionnaire constructed by the researcher that began with biographical questions concerning age, years of teaching experience, exact amount of time spent teaching at the school and the educational qualifications of the participants. After which open ended questions followed as can be seen on appendix A. The estimated time to complete the questionnaire was ten minutes.

3.9. Data Analysis

This study utilized a structured questionnaire (appendix F) in order to collect the required data and the Six Phases of thematic content analysis as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) as the method of data analysis. The study of female primary school teachers' perceptions of elevated stress within a socio – economically deprived South African educational context is relatively new thus the study needed to follow an exploratory structure in terms of its unique research topic as well as to allow for ways of linking this structure to a psychological framework in order for further research on this area to be conducted.

The method that was followed to analyze the questionnaires was the Six Phases of Thematic Content Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) – See table 1.

This is a technique of analysis that provides an objective yet deductive guide by identifying themes within the questionnaires through a recursive process. This model of thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within the research data and organizes and describes the data set in rich detail. This model also allows for the researcher to work within a participatory research paradigm, with participants actively contributing as collaborators. Additionally it will allow for the summarisation of key features of a large body of data as well as offer a substantial description of the data set. Finally this method was chosen as it would also serve to highlight similarities and differences across the data and generate unanticipated insights for social as well as psychological interpretations of data (Braun &Clarke, 2006).

Table 1. Steps for conducting thematic analysis (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)

Phase	Description of the Process
1. Familiarising oneself with one's data:	Transcription of data where necessary, reading and re -reading the data. Initial ideas should be noted at this stage.
2. Generating initial codes:	The researcher will systematically code the data set, highlighting interesting features of the data and collate all data relevant to each developed code.
3. Searching for themes:	Codes are collated into potential themes, and all relevant data to each of the potential themes are gathered and organised accordingly.
4. Reviewing themes:	At this phase, it is necessary to assess if the themes work in conjunction with the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2). This process will include the development of a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

In order to analyze the data, explicit rules known as criterion of selection (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were adhered to prior to the actual analysis of the data. Criterion were derived from a theoretical background, and the research questions. Berg (2005) emphasized that research criterion needs to be exhaustive, in order to account for each variation of questionnaire content. This was also observed in the present study. An objective coding scheme was also applied as well as categories, in order to develop inductively from patterns that emerged from

the data. The data was analyzed intensely so as to ensure extensive theoretical coverage. Categories were then revised and reduced to main categories (Mayring, 2000), as the initial categories were tentative. The categorization process was conducted by two individuals and subsequently matched in order to ensure a reliable degree of objectivity. Once coding of the data had been completed, an entire analysis of the data was achieved by integrating the proposed theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of exploring perceptions regarding occupational stress of female primary school teachers.

However it is also vital to take into account how the researcher also brings his/her own pre – dispositions and postulations to each undertaking. Therefore as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) it is important for the researcher to engage in an ongoing reflexive interchange throughout the research process in order to maintain a critical and analytical stance on the emergence and relevance of themes.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

The research was only conducted once the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand had issued a clearance certificate (appendix A) and once permission had been granted by the Gauteng Department of Education via a research request form (appendix B). Permission was also requested from the school principles, and from the participating individuals before the research was able to commence.

Once ethical clearance had been granted by the Ethics Committee and the Department of Education, the researcher met with the principles of each school and they each received an individual Principle information letter (appendix C) which informed them on the exact nature of the study and how the researcher was going to go about conducting the study whilst ensuring confidentiality of their participating staff members. Once permission from the principles of each school had been granted to conduct the study, the teachers were informed of the exact nature of the study when addressed at the staff meetings as well as in their information letters if they wished to participate (appendix D). It was be emphasized that their decision to participate in the study was entirely voluntary and that if they decided not to participate it would not affect them in any way whatsoever. Participants were informed of this both verbally and by means of an information letter which invited them to participate in the study (appendix D) that all their responses would remain confidential and that they could

terminate their involvement in the study at any time. Those who expressed an interest to participate in the study were then required to sign a consent form which guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of all responses, voluntary participation and that there were to be no risks or benefits experienced by participating in the study. This information was also clearly stated in the participant information letter (appendix D) which was attached to the consent form.

Once the questionnaires had been completed (by the end of three working days), the participants placed them in marked box that was placed in the staff room of each participating school. The signed consent forms (appendix E) were placed in a separate box which was also clearly marked. The researcher then collected the questionnaires personally. Each questionnaire (appendix F) had a number allocated to it in order for the researcher to be able to collect and categorise the data in a clear and concise manner. The participants were assured verbally that all data of the questionnaires, once it has been ensured that it was correct and entered into the study, would be kept in a locked cabinet in a secure facility at the university until the study was completed. If any of the participants had any questions regarding the research, the researcher's contact details were provided on the information letter (appendix D) that was be provided to the participants. Additionally if any of the questions in the questionnaire elicited any associated feelings regarding the subject matter, the Emthonjeni Centre's contact details were provided on the participant information letter if the participants should require any counselling. If the research participants wish to see the final research report and results, they are able to contact the researcher, who will make the findings available to them.

Summary

This section has sought to provide the reader with a deeper insight into the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the procedures and analytic techniques that were implemented in the current study. The chapter which follows discusses the findings which subsequently emerged from the participants' responses.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4. Introduction

Educators are expected to execute various and diverse activities whilst facing enormous volumes of individual, social and professional responsibilities in today's fast paced world which can heavily influence their experiences of stress (Steyn & Kamper, 2006). Steyn & Kamper (2006) found that occupational stress levels often depend upon the specific stressors that educators experience in their work and the data collected in this study has indicated nine categories to be discussed. These were revealed by employing a deductive approach and are listed below:

- Socio–economic deprivation
- Language barriers
- Lack of pupil discipline (from home)
  → Perceived lack of control
- Lack of parental involvement
- Large pupil to teacher ratio
- Incongruence between the Department of Education and teachers
- Excessive administration work
- Multiple role expectancy
- Sufficient collegial support

4.1. Socio–economic deprivation

As this study focused on schools that are characterised by socio – economic deprivation and are situated in impoverished areas of Johannesburg, the theme of socio–economic deprivation serves as the over arching motif as it directly informs the subsequent themes that follow on throughout this discussion. Socio–economic deprivation in South Africa tends to be represented as the struggle to maintain a minimal standard of living measured in terms of basic consumption needs or the income required to satisfy them (Mayekiso & Tshemese,

2007). It is about deprivation of resources, opportunities and choices, and its persistence and reproduction in South Africa are intrinsically linked to the systematic entrenchment of discrimination during the apartheid era as was previously discussed in the literature review (Interfund, 2001). Socio–economic deprivation is distributed unevenly across the nine provinces, with the lowest for Gauteng (32.3%) and the Western Cape (21.1%) (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2009). However this does not make its reach throughout the communities any less as it extends into home environments, occupational environments and schools. And the results from this study illustrate that as its expansion continues, so does its reciprocal relationship with the affected individuals' lives and well being.

The effects of socio–economic deprivation were alluded to throughout the data in this study as the educators constantly referred to the consequences of its existence in the lives of both their pupils and the parents of their pupils. On an individual level poor socio–economic histories and current circumstances have served to inform many of the parents' impoverished experiences of education which serves to affect how they interact with their childrens' education needs (according to the participating educators). From a collective perspective, the occupational environment for the educators is also diametrically affected by socio–economic deprivation in terms of class size, the schools being vastly under resourced and the pupils coming from homes where financial difficulties often inform their schooling experience. The following quotes from two participants respectively demonstrate this.

- ***"When you see the behaviour of some of our pupils, well you just know that they don't know any better because their parents are hardly ever at home as they work long hours and get home late due to transport problems. Most of them don't come from homes where there is money, most of them struggle so much".***

- ***"The reason the learners are at a school like ours is because their parents can't afford to send them anywhere else. There's nothing wrong with our school you know, it's just that we don't have much in terms of resources".***

The above quotes serve to illustrate how socio–economic deprivation is witnessed and experienced by the participating educators on both individual and environmental levels. These perceptions and experiences then inevitably affect their occupational lives as seen below.

- ***"Often we don't have the things we need to teach. Even basic things like stationary. The kids won't have either and I find myself providing it from my own pocket".***

- ***"The parents at the school try and respond economically but for most this is hard".***

From the above it can be seen that socio–economic deprivation does not exist in a vacuum. Rather it affects communities in terms of environmental sustainability, education, services and resources with its multi–dimensional reach. And although the international community classifies South Africa as a middle–income country, the scale and demographic profile of deprivation still reflect this is one of the countries with great levels of inequality and economic struggle amongst its citizens (Mayekiso & Tshemese, 2007). This struggle was profiled by many of the participating educators in terms of how it affects their occupational lives as they battle to teach in environments that are under resourced and provide an adequate educational experience in the midst of the current disparities in access to socio–economic opportunities that are still prevalent in the communities where they teach. This profound influence will be illustrated throughout this discussion as many of the outlined themes refer to the ever present manifestations of such deprivation.

4.2. Language barriers

The majority of learners in South Africa are bi–lingual or multi-lingual and attend school in a language that is not their first language (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). As South Africa has 11 official languages, this can create logistical difficulties regarding the wide spread preference for education in English. Although the Language Policy and Plan for South Africa (The

Advisory Panel and Language Policy, 2000) strongly encourages learners to learn in their first language, the data collected in this study has shown that most ESOL learners are attending school in English when English is not their first language or the language used for neighbourhood communication. According to the educators, most of the ESOL learners are exposed to very little English at home and tend to converse in their mother tongue with their peers at school.

A study by O'Connor & Geiger (2009) which examined the challenges facing primary school educators of English Second (or other) language learners in the Western Cape, found that he ESOL learner's limited English language skills lead to a difficulty with expressing themselves and confusion for not understanding instructions which in turn contributes to the stress of the educators as well to a lack of confidence on the part of the learner. Therefore the participating educators have had to deal with the subsequent additional academic challenges that these language barriers present them with as well as the socio-emotional problems that the ESOL learners may experience as they begin to substitute their home language and culture as they are learning in a language that is not their first language (Morrow, Jordaan & Fridjhon, 2005).

- ***"Language is a huge problem. Learners don't understand instructions and basic vocabulary and they are then expected to do lots of impossible work"***

The data and the literature have also indicated that such language barriers may actually serve to produce an emotional climate for the students and the educators as it seems to cause tension between those individuals that do understand (English mother tongue speakers) and those who do not (the ESOL learner). This tension then seems to lead to feelings of frustration as educators in spite of feeling sympathy towards learners where language is a problem, also feel frustrated at having to work with them because of their already heavy workloads. As they first have to teach the language and vocabulary for specific content and then additionally have to work with the ESOL learners' limited language skills, the data has shown that they often find it increasingly difficult to complete the syllabus for the year. This overloading of both students and educators

means that there is often little opportunity for educators to pay struggling students special attention.

- ***"Most of the learners who take this subject {English home language} are second and third language speakers. Their written language is poor. Their spelling, grammar and idiom are very weak ... by now incorrect language habits have become entrenched and it is difficult to help learners unlearn them".***

The educators also reported having learners in the class with better English abilities resulting in the educator struggling to teach on diverse language and academic levels. As mentioned above, educators reported being required to give extra attention to those in the class who are not keeping up, as well as having to adequately challenge stronger learners in order to ensure that all learners in their class are receiving an adequate education.

It seems that there is a belief by parents that sending their children to an English school will provide a better education for their children. This seems to cause a lot of frustration for the educators in the present study.

- ***"I can't comprehend why children who have never heard a single word of English come to a school that teaches in English. I won't send my children to a Japanese school. It's a burden to them and to us ... they simply can't remember the hordes of foreign words and can't build sentences".***

Educators also reported frequent problems with discipline which will be discussed in more detail further on, identifying one of their main problems as not being able to speak the first language of ESOL learners, therefore also experiencing difficulties collaborating with parents. It emerged that despite trying to involve parents, few respond. Most educators are aware of the benefits of encouraging parents to use their first language when helping children

with homework as well as creating opportunities for their child to listen and interact in English (Dawber & Jordaan, 1999).

- ***"You try and talk to parents about what is going on with their child ... it's difficult, they don't understand you. I don't speak their language and they can hardly speak mine".***

However it also emerged from the data that parents are often unable to assist with their child's school work though as they themselves struggle to understand English or are unable to read or write in English. The data illustrated that the educators believe that particular socio–economic circumstances may have served to complicate prior schooling for the parents of their learners, which would influence the abilities of the parents to be able to have sufficient knowledge of the required language for their children's schooling. In other words, if parents were not exposed to schooling in English or Afrikaans or received an impoverished experience of education due to the policy of apartheid which provided inadequate education to black South Africans (Milner & Khoza, 2008), they are unlikely to be able to aid their children with their own language impediments.

- ***"So many of the parents did not finish school or their schooling was bad. You can see they didn't receive lessons in English or Afrikaans at school. They can't help their own kids then".***

- ***"Some learners and their parents don't understand English or Afrikaans".***

Therefore the above quotes indicate that there is a need for more resources to be devoted to language training for educators – both for English and African languages at pre-training and in-training levels. This is not to say that educators should be required to be multi–lingual, but

rather that the curriculum should be altered to effectively address such language barriers early on in the schooling experience as there is clearly a constant struggle in the classroom as these barriers persist. Perhaps if educators are required to devote more time to languages in the foundation phase of learning, the stress associated with language barriers will not be as prevalent as it is currently.

4.3. Lack of pupil discipline

Disciplining learners is another crucial factor in the classroom and studies reveal that objectionable learner behaviour and poor discipline are important predictors of educator stress (Steyn & Kamper, 2006). This includes disruptive behaviour, negative attitudes towards work, aggression and violence towards educators (Naong, 2007). Disruptive behaviour continues to be the most consistently discussed problem in South African schools, with misbehaving learners and disciplinary problems forming a disproportionate and intractable part of every teacher's experience of teaching (Marais & Meier, 2010).

Teachers in South Africa are becoming increasingly strained concerning disciplinary problems in schools as corporal punishment has been outlawed by legislation such as the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). Some sectors of society have reacted positively, claiming that the above legislation affirms learners' dignity, but others have expressed concern, contending that there are no viable alternatives to corporal punishment (Marais & Meier, 2010). Many educators maintain that abolition of corporal punishment in schools has left a gap which cannot be filled and that it has led to all sorts of disciplinary problems in South African schools (Naong, 2007).

Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000) stated that disruptive behaviour is attributable to disciplinary problems in schools that affect the fundamental rights of the learner and educator to feel safe and be treated with respect in the learning environment. These disciplinary problems then serve to inhibit the achievement of the teacher's purposes and often leads to teachers feeling overwhelmed and out of control in their own classrooms (Marais & Meier, 2010).

Furthermore this feeling of being over powered may then threaten the educators' rights to safety which can compromise their abilities to optimally fulfil their roles. The participating educators indicated that the learners often behave as they see fit, leaving the educators feeling disempowered regarding the disciplining of bad or disruptive behaviour.

According to the participating educators, behaviour that disrupts classroom activities is mostly attributable to lack of discipline and rules at home. This prominent belief emerged from the data with the participating educators claiming that learners are simply undisciplined as they are not reprimanded at home, and therefore they think that they can be disobedient and disruptive at school too.

It also emerged from the data that this lack of discipline serves to make educators feel highly disrespected, with the educators in this study reporting that learners have no regard for authority. The participating educators seemed to feel that this disregard for discipline and authority can be traced back to the home environment where learners are allowed to be disrespectful at home, resulting in immunity towards authority at school as can be seen from the following quotes.

- ***"There's no discipline or rules at home and they bring that attitude to school. How do you teach a big group of undisciplined learners?"***

- ***"There is just no discipline from home and they bring that to school"***

- ***"Parents don't do the basic disciplining at home; they don't even teach their children manners".***

The overarching belief from the educators was that this lack of discipline is deeply embedded within the values and beliefs of the family, where ethical principles and convictions are being

neglected at home. This finding can be associated with previous studies which found that if parents avoid their responsibilities towards the disciplining and moral upbringing of their children, disruptive behaviour in homes and in schools will be inevitable (Rayment, 2006).

- ***"I find that because of the poverty and broken homes, alcohol abuse as well as drugs and unemployment that the learners have a lot of aggression. I find this emotionally taxing and it causes me to feel depressed because no matter how hard you try you cannot change things".***

Perceived Lack of Control

The participants' beliefs seem to indicate strong feelings of lack of control concerning the lack of discipline. The data from the participating educators suggests that they believe that their ability to control the learner discipline in the classroom is outside of themselves, i.e. discipline falls within the hands of the learners inside the classroom and ultimately with the parents at home. Therefore the educators in this study seem to be attributing their stressful experiences concerning lack of pupil discipline purely to outside forces {the learners and their parents}. This would indicate that the educators are not attributing any of the discipline problems to their own possible lack of internal resources and skills regarding discipline control in the classroom. Rather they appear to place sole responsibility on the parents and the learners themselves.

- ***"If they aren't being disciplined at home there's not much we can do at school. I mean I try but I can't be expected to teach a child manners or good behaviour when they aren't being taught it at home. It's the parents' job".***

This result can be linked to the above conclusion where the educators in question are possibly exhibiting counter-productive actions by blaming others instead of also looking at their own

internal resources as possible predictors. This is not to say that the educators do not have a valid argument by placing accountability on the parents and learners for their experiences of lack of discipline, however not one of the participants saw themselves as possible contributors to the stressor concerning lack of pupil discipline. This suggests an extremely high sense of perceived lack of control regarding their expectations over where control over subsequent situations resides.

4.4. Lack of parental involvement

The literature on lack of parental involvement is scarce if almost non–existent within the South African context, thus the researcher had to begin this section purely on the results that emerged from the data, followed by the discussion of these results. It emerged that while most educators try and collaborate with parents, few respond and when they do the response is often negative. Lack of parental care, lack of parental involvement and lack of role models were noted as significant problems by the participants.

- ***"Most parents are not very involved and do not even show up for parent meetings etc."***

- ***"I experience a lot of parents as being very negative towards educators and the school ... they always find fault and shift the blame for the learners who are performing poorly".***

Therefore it is evident that the above educators feel unsupported and alone as they perceive that the parents of learners do not help to bear the burden of the responsibility of their children's education, which the participants seem to believe would not only benefit the learners but also aid in reducing their own frustrations.

- ***"Parents do not appreciate what we do or give us any support – I give their children the support they need".***

However is important to take into account is that all of the schools that participated in this study were characterised as socio–economically deprived as they lacked resources and the opportunities to improve this state were few and thus difficult to achieve. The principles from the specific schools also confirmed in discussions with the researcher how most of the parents whose children attend these schools are reportedly under severe financial strain, hence the reason why they send their children to a school that is vastly under resourced but one which they can afford and for some it is still a financial struggle. Furthermore, social circumstances such as long working hours, transport issues and financial difficulties may also affect parents' involvement (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009).

This may then explain why parents do not participate enough in home support, the lack of which the educators have emphasized as a major stressor, as many of their generation were not adequately exposed to such educational opportunities and therefore are not familiar with the parental supervision expectation that the educators require of them.

- ***"Most of the learners come from very poor economic environments and there is very little parental supervision with homework".***

This discovery was also explained previously in the literature review as parent's poor attitudes to learning may be influenced by their own experience of sub–standard education (Milner & Khoza, 2008).Therefore this socio–cultural milieu serves as a reminder of how the learner seems to be subject to his/her system and experience therein where the character presented in the classroom and school environment seems to be tightly bound up with his/her experiences beyond the boundaries of the school.

4.5. Large pupil to teacher ratio

The South African Literature has indicated that educators in government schools, particularly in ones where resources are scarce and deprivation is an increased reality, have to deal with large pupil to teacher ratios in their classrooms (Gardiner, 2004). They often do not have enough time to achieve the standards of teaching and learning that they are expected to, nor are they always able to meet the needs of their learners as the pupil–teacher ratio in classrooms is often so large that individual attention for struggling pupils is a basic impossibility (O'Donnell, Mc Carthy & Lambert, 2008).

Literature on educator stress indicates that there is an association between class size and felt competency of educators (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). Educators with classes above thirty learners seem to feel competent only in some circumstances as compared with educators with smaller classes who have been found to feel more competent and in control of their learners (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). This feeling of incompetency was also alluded to by the participating educators as a source of additional stress as they are teaching in schools where classes are felt to be too large leaving them feeling overwhelmed as they do not have the substantial resources to manage the amount of pupils effectively.

Participants reported frequently experiencing more problems in larger classes (thirty or more learners) than in smaller classes (less than thirty learners). Most of the participating educators had more than thirty learners in their classes and they felt that not only would smaller classes make their responsibilities easier; they would also be far more beneficial to the learners themselves.

- ***"The large number of learners in the classroom {is an obstacle}. I do not have time to give individual attention especially to the ones who really require it".***

- ***"There will be no improvement if classes don't become smaller..."***

- ***"It's very difficult to work with 40 learners ...".***

- ***"I can't always control what is happening in such big classes, it's not as if we have teacher aids or any other kind of help".***

This feeling of being overwhelmed may then also lead educators to encounter even more work related stress with regards to how they perceive their self-efficacy (Steyn & Kampel, 2006). Self–efficacy refers to a person's ability to produce certain actions and make themselves believe that they are able to perform a task or to cope adequately with stress (Steyn & Kampel, 2006). When educators are faced with many pupils in one class and doubt their confidence in their classroom management skills, they will probably give up easily when confronted with disruptive learner behaviour, particularly in a class where the pupil to teacher ratio is over extended (Jonas, 2001). This can consequently lead to feelings of ineffectiveness in educators when it comes to maintaining classroom order (Jonas, 2001) which is apparent in the statement below.

- ***"It often feels like I have no control ... there's so many of them and only one of me, how can one of me make some kind of lasting difference?"***

This perceived educator ineffectiveness as stated above has also been looked at in previous studies in terms of how it may serve to further affect the educator's self esteem (Jepson & Forrest, 2006). Self esteem refers to an individual's sense of his or her value or worth or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes or likes herself or himself (Colman, 2003). An Individual's self-esteem is a generalized evaluation of the self, which has the potential of influencing thoughts, moods and behaviours (De Nobile & McCormick, 2006). Generally those with low self esteem lack confidence in themselves, often have doubt about their worth and acceptability and they frequently blame others for their shortcomings rather than take responsibilities for their actions (Colman, 2003). Evidence suggests that most

people go out of their way to maintain self-esteem and to sustain integrity of their self-concept. It therefore means for example, that when a teacher's efforts to create and maintain a healthy self-esteem are thwarted, frustration begins to set in (De Nobile & McCormick, 2006).

- ***"... I sometimes just don't know what to do".***

- ***"I don't even know if I'm actually 'good' at my job anymore ... I often feel as if I'm just going through the motions..."***

The researcher has been given the impression that this large pupil to teacher ratio presents itself as a cumulative stress factor whereby the threat of burnout without the improvement of resource allocation and management seems imminent. This could then lead to a spiralling affect as the educators' sense of self efficacy and self esteem may become more and more diminished as they seem to feel almost incapacitated by the sizes of the classes in the face of a minimally supportive environment.

However it would appear that Class size is a complex issue. Reducing class size on its own is not going to improve teaching and learning. Adequate attention given to teacher preparation time, teaching time and assessment time in relation to the number of learners in class is equally important. This more nuanced view of class size will allow for consideration of other implications.

4.6. Incongruence between Department of Education and teachers.

In South Africa, education plays a huge role compared to other countries. The government usually spends 20% of their expenditure on education (Schulze & Steyn, 2006). But despite

this expense there does not appear to be a sense of harmony and congruence between the Department of Education and their educators. As previously indicated in the literature there seems to be inadequate or irrelevant educator training programmes available (Jackson & Rothmann, 2005), and this is seen to greatly influence the development of stress, as the department's programmes fails to provide educators with the required skills to meet the demands of the ever changing teaching environment. Quite a contrasting conclusion emerged from the data with the educators feeling that the department is completely out of touch with their educators by implementing interventions that do not seem to address the educators' needs. The process does not seem to consult the educators with whom it is implemented for and this implementation seems to be carried out in an unsystematic manner whereby the training requirements are not being adequately met.

- ***"Interventions are not properly researched and the process is not systematic".***

According to the participating educators, the Department of Education seems to have lost sight of the key elements to teacher development, in terms of improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. This would indicate that there is a lack of communication between educators and the organizations that represent them. However The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) which represents South African teachers is an organization that does seem to be aware of this apparent discord between the Department of Education and educators as it states that "there are too many poorly trained educators contributing to poor learner outcomes and a negative image in the community, resulting in demoralization and low self-esteem of educators" (South African Democratic Teachers Union, 2010, p. 3). SADTU believes that the key to the delivery of quality education is well-trained and motivated educators (SADTU, 2010). This does not seem to be the case though as the participating educators consistently reported the incompatibility between what the Department of Education offers in terms of training interventions and what the educators expect resulting in feelings of disorder and frustration.

- ***"I have to try and teach in a sea of chaos developed by the Department of Education".***

- ***"If only they could stop blundering around and constantly changing things! It drives us mad!".***

- ***"Sometimes I feel very lost, like I'm not really sure how to go about things that we're supposed know".***

- ***"I sometimes wonder if they (the department) have any idea of what really goes on and how it affects us negatively as educators. The interventions are supposed to help us, not make us more stressed".***

The above statements suggest that there is a need to properly identify teachers' development needs to improve teaching in the classroom as well as teacher training as this may serve to underpin the quest to deepen professionalism as well as improving the quality of learning and teaching in South Africa. This will promote the image of teachers and their own self-esteem with regards to them taking responsibility for their own professional development and may even aid in decreasing their stress levels regarding education intervention schemes.

The quotes cited above propose a link between the training interventions, class size and administrative work that appear to function as interrelated stressors for the educators. The interventions seem to be performing a three-fold stress role as they appear to affect the educators' stress levels in terms of their incongruity, the amount of paper work that new interventions require as will be discussed further on, as well as the difficulty that educators seem to be experiencing when applying the interventions in over-crowded classes. The educators seem to experience enhanced difficulty with the proposed interventions by being required to implement them in classes that may not benefit from them as literature has indicated that class size does influence the quality of educational outcomes (Wobmann & West, 2002). The participating educators seem to be acutely aware of this fact, particularly as they all work in government schools whereas the most successful and wealthiest schools have much smaller classes (SADTU, 2010).

It is evident from the above statements that the Department of Education may actually be contributing towards the stress of its educators instead of helping to alleviate it. The statements suggest that the educators require more support and communication between themselves and the department in order to build an education culture that is informed by interventions that enhance educator solidarity and synchronization rather than serving as a major contributing stressor.

4.7. Excessive administration work

Classroom teaching has been characterised as an occupation where many demands are present (Steyn & Kamper, 2006). Heavy workloads and time pressures are well documented in educational studies and this study found that educators do not have enough time to achieve the standards of teaching and learning that they want. One of the most common sources of stress in South African schools is administration work-over load, which tends to present the educators with situations where there are more expectations than educators are able to fulfil (Steyn & Kamoer, 2006).

Wilson and Hall (2002) believe that change itself is implicated in educator stress and could either be a problem or a challenge. Linked with new change initiatives, such as OBE, as well as the current changes which are once again taking place, is the major shift in the South African educational paradigm where the amount of paper work that which educators are expected to generate and the participating educators in this study have indicated this as a key stressor in their occupational lives.

- ***"Admin is killing us! Every time the learning systems change we have to implement it ... we as teachers don't have to do all this paper work to know our children".***

- ***"95% of our work is unnecessary administrative work, which takes up important teaching time and energy"***

- ***"Insisting on paper work is what is causing educator stress".***

- ***"... Most interventions just lead to more related admin for the teacher"***.

4.8. Multiple role expectancy

The educators in this study also experienced multiple role expectancy as a vital cause of their stress. Role–based stress, which includes role conflict and role ambiguity, exists when educators do not have clarity on their responsibilities, expectations or work objectives (Steyn & Kamper, 2006). This role conflict seems to arise when the school provides information about educators' roles and responsibilities that conflict with the reality of the daily professional life. Role ambiguity occurs when the responsibilities and duties are ambiguous and unclear and may include a lack of information needed to perform a certain role (Wilson & Hall, 2002). It also arises when educators have to fulfil too many roles, for example as counsellors, social workers, managers, examiners and secretaries on the one hand, and creative educators who are concerned with the performance of learners on the other hand (Steyn & Kamper, 2006).

- ***"You're not only a teacher to the pupils, but also a mother, lawyer, welfare worker and friend".***

Role overload has been found to be a strong predictor of work pressure which in turn serves as a predictor of emotional exhaustion (Steyn & Kamper, 2006).Due to this multiple role expectancy, educators also often have difficulty in performing their duties effectively as they are expected to meet both learners' needs on an educational, social and emotional levels as well as having to follow restrictive teaching methods (Mokhaba, 2005). This multiple role expectancy was highlighted as a significant stressor for the participating educators.

- ***"A teacher must be an educator, doctor, mother, cook, peacemaker, preacher, coach, secretary, a hundred jobs in one".***

Along with the stress of multiple role expectancy is the lack of financial compensation for playing these multiple roles. None of the educators in this study made mention of being financially rewarded for their assorted services to their schools, learners and parents. It emerged that they are merely expected to multi–task regardless of their abilities to do so with no remuneration.

- ***"I'm expected to teach, do loads of admin, coach different sports, fundraising, cultural activities, remedial work and be a problem solver between children as well as parents and for what?"***

Thus even more pressure is placed on educators who demonstrate a certain level of commitment and emotional investment in the efficacy of their roles as they may not be able to do justice to each role that they are expected to apply themselves to. This finding could then lead to further feelings of frustration and resentment as heavy expectations are placed on educators, which is likely to increase their stress as pressure is put on them both inside and outside the schooling environment, with little appreciation for their extra responsibilities.

4.9. Sufficient collegial support

Working with people can be a source of support and stress. Social support, including administrative and collegial support, refers to help from other people and it is often viewed as crucial to the buffering of the experience of occupational stress (Jonas, 2001). Studies have indicated that colleague support can buffer stress reactions among educators and researchers have found that people who lack support from others also may have more physical and psychological symptoms than those with support (Jonas, 2001). Almost all of the educators in this study felt that they received sufficient support from their colleagues and the benefits of

such support were highlighted. It seems that this theme of support is not only a prominent result throughout the data but a positive factor as well.

- ***"My colleagues are what keep me sane and at this school".***

- ***"My colleagues always help me and we encourage each other, this is what keeps me going".***

- ***"I am receiving good overall support from my colleagues".***

- ***"Colleagues are willing to attend meetings, give valuable inputs, provide extra time for one – on – one support and their commitment to teaching and learning is commendable".***

However the researcher also noted the contrast between the perceived administrative support and the emphasis on 'too much admin'. This perceived support may then serve to buffer the effects of the excessive administration work as mentioned above.

The above quotes may indicate that even amidst the challenging circumstances that have been highlighted throughout this discussion, there is indeed a constructive and somewhat optimistic element that has been discovered which may provide a foundation from which more positive outcomes may emerge within the occupational stress landscape of teaching.

4.10. Reflexive Review

Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim (2006) have emphasized the vital role that the researcher themselves plays in interpretive, qualitative research. For this reason it was important for the researcher to present a reflexive review of the research process and experience. It is also important to acknowledge the researcher's experiences during the course of this study in terms of how these have shaped the attitudes and opinions adopted towards this population throughout the study. This section therefore seeks to provide a personal reflection of the process of engaging in the context and world of female primary school educators working in socio – economically deprived schools.

Since beginning this research project over a year ago it has been the researcher's belief that educators render a critical service to the South African population. The researcher's experiences in conducting this research have only served to confirm this belief. The continued need for quality education in an ever changing South African learning context which constantly serves to produce new demands for the educators to face confirms the importance of this work.

When the researcher was beginning her data collection she was initially apprehensive that the principles she would need to approach in order to gain permission to conduct the research in their schools would be reluctant to involve their already overworked staff in such an undertaking. However the researcher's reservations proved to be unfounded as she experienced the very opposite reaction from all the principles she approached. Each principle welcomed the researcher and her proposed study with a keen sense of interest and two out of the three actually met with the researcher personally to talk about the exact nature of the study. These meetings proved to be extremely helpful to the researcher as the principles she met provided with her with additional insight and understanding into the forum in which educator stress exists and the crucial influence it has in both the current state and future of education in this country.

On the whole the researcher mostly experienced a positive attitude from the teachers who participated in this study. When the researcher presented her proposed study to the teachers in the staff meetings, they seemed reasonably open to hearing about what the study entailed. Some did come across as slightly disinterested but the researcher had expected such responses and was glad that they seemed to occur minimally. As the researcher was aware from the literature review that she had already compiled for her proposal that the educators were faced with heavy workloads, she did not wish to be seen as contributing to this stress. Therefore the researcher took care to emphasize to the educators how much she appreciated their participation and that they were free to take the questionnaires home with them in order for them to feel minimal pressure to complete them. The educators seemed grateful for this consideration and consequently they all returned their questionnaires and consent forms within the required time frame.

An encouraging factor was that most of the questionnaires were filled in with detail and care as the educators endeavoured to give the researcher in depth insights into their occupational lives. The researcher felt that this was partly due to her taking the time to speak to them personally, which she believed helped to facilitate the efficiency of the data collection. The researcher also felt that perhaps the attention paid by the educators to the questionnaires was also possibly due to their need to feel heard and understood as they seem to exist within a context where their worries and needs seem to be under estimated and over looked.

A fact that surprised the researcher was that out of a sample of thirty, only one of the educators in the study mentioned the nationwide strike that had occurred before the data collection had commenced and its impact on their perceived stress levels. The researcher felt that perhaps this provided an insight into the overall perceived disempowerment that the educators feel as perhaps they are so used to feeling unsupported. This was a concern for the researcher as she realised that this lack of mention may be indicative of the prevailing sentiment of hopelessness and apathy. This view is no doubt a pessimistic one and must force one to consider whether the South African education context is now heavily characterised by dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

Finally, even though the researcher was aware that she would be going into schools that were socio – economic depressed, she still felt disheartened at their states of economic disrepair and was forced to reflect on her educational experiences which were contrasted by privilege and opportunity. However despite their surrounding circumstances, the staff and the learners at the schools with which the researcher came into contact with were cordial, helpful and accommodating. This served to provide the researcher with a renewed sense of optimism, as she realised that even when individuals are consistently exposed to arduous circumstances, they are still capable of being welcoming and considerate which perhaps indicates that all is not lost in South African education.

CHAPTER FIVE:

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Introduction

This chapter begins by evaluating the strengths and limitations of the study, followed by recommendations based on the findings of this study, areas for future research and a final concluding paragraph.

5.1. Strengths and Limitations

It is important to acknowledge both the strengths and limitations that are inherent in this study. One such strength is that the chosen technique of data analysis employed in this investigation did not merely serve to qualify and identify the various findings from the participants. Additionally, it also allowed for their experiences to be captured in such a way that rich descriptions concerning their perceptions and knowledge could be uncovered and explored.

Another highlighted strength of this research report is that by undertaking this research, the researcher subsequently added to the spirit of inquiry as well as the existing body of literature concerning an area of research that is underexplored. The final strength to be taken into account is that the study focused on female participants which served to rule out gender as an extraneous variable.

A possible limitation of this research is that while it did acknowledged some interplay between various life domains of the educator, its prominent focus was more on occupational stress according to what occurs in the school environment rather than the influence of personal factors such as family life. Therefore this study assessed one prominent domain of educator stress in isolation rather than looking at educators' experiences of stress in totality.

This study was conducted on a very small part of the broader South African population. Similar research conducted within the wider South African regions is required.

Finally if this research were to be reworked, the researcher would use an external rater (triangulation) as a means of quality control.

5.2. Recommendations based on the Findings of this Study

It is the suggestion of the researcher that an optimal way forward should include the recipients and stakeholders working together to carefully assess, change and refine the instruction, orientation and nature of teaching in South Africa. There seems to be a need to assess the effectiveness of the intervention strategies proposed by the Department of Education in order to assist educators and schools to alleviate occupational stress. The researcher also believes that the role that government and senior members of staff in schools can play in reducing stress among educators cannot be overemphasized. The educators who have not yet been lost to indifference and resentment at the current state of the education system need to be valued and certainly not disregarded. Perhaps by adopting certain measures for checking the welfare of teachers should be made more psychological than material.

It may also be essential for all those involved in education from the governmental departments to the learners and parents begin to value these educators in order to foster their pride in their occupation. This could present one way of encouraging educators to work and remain in the education sector. However it also appears to be evident when examining educators' experiences, that if a change is not made imminently, the educator force may be significantly reduced and be crippled by its lack of retention and support at all levels.

Furthermore, if teachers perceive inequality in the allocation of rewards such as; poor salary structure and poor working conditions which has led to the poor image of this noble profession in the society, then the work relationship may be potentially unstable. This could be one of the reasons for the recent strike actions undergone by the teachers' under the umbrella of SADTU. Furthermore, this framework has become the underlying cause of teachers' taking additional jobs, engaging in other profitable activities during working hours and seeking for "greener pasture" in other professions, which in turn may account for the low commitment and job dissatisfaction as well as turnover intentions that seem to be prominent in the teaching profession.

5.3. Future Research

This research has sought to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding occupational educator stress in South Africa, particularly focusing on female educators who teach in socio – economically deprived institutions in Johannesburg. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations for future research are discussed below:

- It is evident from the findings of this study that further research is needed regarding the development of enhanced education interventions which would include a thorough investigation of the consistencies and discrepancies in teacher workshops and training programmes that are instituted in schools by the Department of Education.
- Another possible focus of future studies may be to continue exploring the occurrence of educator stress, the sources of stress and the coping mechanisms that may be utilised by the educators. Stressors from all sources may need to be identified on a continuous basis in order to develop the necessary approaches that may assist educators exposed to such stressors. Such studies are necessary in order to keep abreast of this phenomenon and to explore developments and subsequent changes in the education system.
- This study highlighted the lack of literature concerning parental involvement within the South African education context. Therefore further research needs to be conducted in this area as the findings from this study indicate that it has a significant impact on educator stress
- Future research needs to include specific studies on stress caused by educational changes so that the Department of Education and schools can be informed of how such changes serve to affect educators.
- Finally as this study was conducted in socio – economically deprived schools, perhaps it would be useful to repeat it in socio – economically stable schools which are characterized by privilege and opportunity in order to assess what similarities and differences emerge.

5.4. Concluding Paragraph

This study set out to investigate the perceptions of occupational stress regarding female primary school educators in socio – economically deprived Johannesburg schools. The results indicated that the participants identified nine central themes, as was discussed, which contribute to their experience of occupational stress. The themes highlighted the fact that transformation and transition in the South African education system as well as the evident problems and uncertainties experienced by educators are major contributors to educator stress. These themes then served to inform various recommendations that may decrease perceived educator stress and suggestions for future research were proposed.

APPENDIX A: Ethical Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	PROTOCOL NUMBER: MEDP/10/003 IH
PROJECT TITLE:	Occupational stress
INVESTIGATORS	Ashley Jay
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	23/03/10
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 01 June 2010

CHAIRPERSON K. Cockcroft
(Professor K. Cockcroft)

cc Supervisor: Prof. K. Cockcroft
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2012

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES



APPENDIX B: Department of Education Research Approval Form

UMnyango WezeMfundo
Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Enquiries: Nomvula Ubisi (011)3550488

Date:	18 May 2010
Name of Researcher:	Jay Ashley
Address of Researcher:	50 The Trails
	Linden Street
	Sandown
Telephone Number:	0118836660/0822935803
Fax Number:	N/A
Research Topic:	Exploring Perceptions of Elevated Levels of Occupational Stress Regarding South African Female Primary School Teachers in Socio-Economically Deprived Schools in the Johannesburg Area
Number and type of schools:	3 Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg Central

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

4. *A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
5. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
6. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
7. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.*
8. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
9. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
10. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
11. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
12. *On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.*
13. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
14. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

24-05-2010

Martha Mashego
ACTING DIRECTOR: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH

The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher.	
Signature of Researcher:	
Date:	20/10/2010

APPENDIX C: Principal Information Letter

The University of the Witwatersrand

Department of Psychology

Ms. A. Jay

Supervisor: Dr. Charmaine Gordon

School of Human and Community Development

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559

Email: 018lucy@muse.wits.ac.za

Dear Principal,

My name is Ashley Jay. In partial fulfilment of completing my Masters Degree at the University of the Witwatersrand I am conducting research focusing on the **Perceptions of Occupational Stress regarding Female Primary School Educators in socio – economically deprived Johannesburg Schools.**

Teaching has been identified as an occupation with a high risk of stress and in the past teachers did not consider stress to be the primary cause when they needed to escape from the school environment, but rather claimed to be over worked, this however, is no longer the reality, particularly in South African schools. There is a lack of research on primary school educator occupational stress in South Africa which is a concern as these educators are just as exposed to the daily stressors of the South African education system as secondary and tertiary educators. Studies have also shown that female teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress when compared to their male counterparts.

Therefore teachers who choose to participate in this study will represent an inside view of the stresses involved in teaching during a time of increasing socio - political and economic change. Such research may also have a very real positive effect on informing occupational health policy on teacher - related stress, which may help to minimize levels of stress and increase job satisfaction amongst educators.

I would like to invite your female teachers with more than three years teaching experience to participate in this study. Participation in this research will entail completing the attached

questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, your staff will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to complete or not complete the questionnaire and they will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. No identifying information will be asked for and all answers will remain confidential. The completed questionnaires will only be seen by myself and my supervisor.

If you do choose to allow your teachers to participate in the study, the attached questionnaire needs to be filled out as carefully and honestly as possible by the participating teachers. Once the questionnaires have been completed I will personally collect them.

If for any reason any of your staff require counselling after participating in this study, the Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand, provides free counselling services. Their contact details are provided below.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge regarding the perceptions of elevated levels of occupational stress in female primary school teachers and it will help to further develop an under researched area of enquiry in South Africa.

Please see the attached copies of the questionnaire and consent form that the participating teachers will be provided with. If you have any additional inquiries about the study please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Ms. Ashley Jay

Researcher

Tel: 082-293-5803

Email: ashleysjay@gmail.com

Dr. Charmaine Gordon

Research supervisor

Tel: (011) 717 - 4527

Emthonjeni Centre

University of the Witwatersrand East Campus

(011) 717 - 4513

APPENDIX D: Participant Information Letter



The University of the Witwatersrand

Department of Psychology

Ms. A. Jay

Supervisor: Dr. Charmaine Gordon

School of Human and Community Development

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559

Email: 018lucy@muse.wits.ac.za

Dear Teacher,

My name is Ashley Jay. In partial fulfilment of completing my Masters Degree at the University of the Witwatersrand I am conducting research focusing on the **Perceptions of Occupational Stress regarding Female Primary School Educators in socio – economically deprived Johannesburg Schools.**

Teaching has been identified as an occupation with a high risk of stress and in the past teachers did not consider stress to be the primary cause when they needed to escape from the school environment, but rather claimed to be over worked, this however, is no longer the reality, particularly in South African schools. There is a lack of research on primary school educator occupational stress in South Africa which is a concern as these educators are just as exposed to the daily stressors of the South African education system as secondary and tertiary educators. Studies have also shown that female teachers experience significantly higher levels of occupational stress when compared to their male counterparts.

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I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation in this research will entail completing the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to complete or not complete the questionnaire and you will have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime. No identifying information will be asked for and all your responses will remain confidential. Your completed questionnaire will only be seen by myself and my supervisor.

If you do choose to participate in the study please complete the attached to the questionnaire as carefully and honestly as possible. Once you have completed the questionnaire I will personally collect it.

If for any reason you require counselling after participating in this study, the Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand, provides free counselling services. Their contact details are provided below.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge regarding the perceptions of elevated levels of occupational stress in female primary school teachers and it will help to further develop an under researched area of enquiry in South Africa.

Please complete the attached consent forms if you wish to participate in this study and do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Kind regards,

Ms. Ashley Jay

Researcher

Tel: 082-293-5803

Email: ashleysjay@gmail.com

Dr. Charmaine Gordon

Research supervisor

Tel: (011) 717 - 4527

Emthonjeni Centre

University of the Witwatersrand East Campus

(011) – 717 - 4513

APPENDIX E: Participant Consent Form

In order to participate in this study on perceptions of elevated levels of occupational stress in female primary school teachers in socio – economically deprived Johannesburg schools, it is necessary that you give consent. By signing this consent form you are indicating that you have read and understood the information letter attached and that you are agreeing to participate in psychological research. Please consider the following points before signing:

- I understand that my participation will be confidential and that all information I provide will remain confidential;
- I understand that the results may include the direct quotes from participants' answers, but that this will be completely confidential and anonymous.
- I understand that participation in research is not required, it is voluntary, and that, after the research project has begun, I may refuse to participate without further implications.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher (Ashley) at 082-293-5803 should I have any questions or comments about the research.
- I understand that there are no risks or benefits attached to my participation in this research.

I (Signature) _____ hereby consent to participate in research conducted on (date) _____ by Ashley Jay.

APPENDIX F:

QUESTIONNAIRE ON PERCEPTIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS REGARDING FEMALE PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS IN SOCIO – ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED JOHANNESBURG SCHOOLS.

SECTION 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

In the following sections, please mark the appropriate box with an x.

1. How old are you?

21 - 25	
26 - 29	
30 - 34	
35 - 39	
40 - 49	
50 - 59	
60+	

2. How long have you been a teacher for?

3 years	
5 years	
10 years	
15 years	
More than 20 years	

3. How long have you been teaching at this school?

0 – 5years	
5 – 10 years	
10 – 15 years	
15 years or more	

4. How many students are there in your class?

20 - 30	
30 – 40	
45+	

5. What level of education do you have?

Matric	
Undergraduate tertiary degree	
Post – Graduate tertiary degree	
Diploma and/or other qualification	

6. What is your marital status?

Single	
Married	
Divorced	
Widowed	

7. Who is the primary bread winner in your household?

I am	
My spouse/ partner	
Other – please specify	

8. How many dependents are in your household?

2	
2 - 4	
4 or more	

9. How far do you live from the school where you teach?

2km	
2km – 5km	
5km – 10km	
10km or more	

<u>SECTION 2:</u> PERCEPTIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS REGARDING FEMALE PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS IN SOCIO – ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED JOHANNESBURG SCHOOLS.

1. What obstacles within this school environment do you find personally challenging?

2. How would you describe the relationship you share with the parents/care givers of your pupils?

3. What specific stressors do you feel you experience working as a teacher in South Africa?

4. What is expected of you in your job role and do you think these expectations are reasonable?

5. Do you find the interventions employed by the Department of Education to improve quality of teaching helpful? Please elaborate.

6. What kinds of support do you feel you receive from your colleagues within the school environment? Please specify.

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire

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