

Impact of Teachers' Mental Health in Classroom Transactions: A Narrative Review of Literature

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ABSTRACT

Teacher mental health continues to be of concern in elementary and secondary schools; however, supporting teacher wellbeing is understated in present time particularly from a gender perspective. Among professionals, teachers exhibit one of the highest levels of job stress and burnout on the job. This has been highlighted in several studies yet the measures taken to rectify this concern are low. This narrative review explores the existing research on teacher mental health, burnout, and the impact of these concerns in classroom transactions. Work context and personal factors/family context contribute to teacher stress and by extension may impact temporary leaves of absence. Many research articles have recommendations on interventions but lack of implementation is significant. The amount of stress high school teachers are experiencing worldwide and the stress that is causing them to burn out is the most common finding present in the findings of research. The review highlights research gaps in the literature on teachers' mental health, wellbeing, and its effect in classroom transactions.

Keywords: Education, Mental Health, Teachers, Teacher Wellbeing

Teachers are an essential aspect in the educational process and do play a very significant role in students' academic and holistic development. In fact, the role of a teacher goes beyond academics as the relationship is crucial in the holistic development of the child. However, it is the mental health of the teacher that affects their capability to play out these roles. Despite this importance, teachers' mental health normally remains as an area that is overlooked in educational discourse and policy-making. It's not normal to have mental health problems as a teacher because teaching is an extremely stressful, anxious, and tiring profession.

Among these are some things that could be attributed to a heavy workload and expectations, insufficient resources, and demanding behaviors of students. These demands increase the risk of chronic stress and may lead to serious mental health problems if not checked over time. They will, therefore, be able to get the students actively involved in teaching-learning, giving way to a typical learning environment that facilitates student participation and academic achievements.

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On the other hand, mental health problems may hinder teachers from taking up their professional responsibilities. Indeed, mentally healthy teachers are capable of expressing emotional support, establishing positive relationships, and maintaining good communication with students. All these factors establish a supportive classroom environment with students who feel valued and motivated toward learning. On the other hand, teachers who do not have good mental health find it hard to build a relationship with their students, and therefore they may further lack emotional support and cause a bad student-teacher relationship. This will have negative effects on the students in terms of their performance and behavior and will introduce stress and frustration in a cycle between the teacher and the learners. Establishing a healthy school environment must go hand in hand with a focus on teachers' mental health. Addressing the needs and concerns of mental health is crucial in an educational system, because it can improve the quality of teaching learning process and the progress of students, and, generally, the learning environment. This paper presents an overview of the impact of teachers' mental health on class transactions with a view to establish a healthy environment for all the stakeholders of education system.

METHODS

Extensive literature searching was done on databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar. The keywords used included "teachers' mental health," "classroom transactions," "student engagement," and "teaching effectiveness." The studies considered were those spanning the last 15 years in order to give this topic a broad perspective of view.

Findings

Teaching Effectiveness

- Emotional Exhaustion: Highly stressed and burned-out teachers show reduced teaching effectiveness. This is described by a lack of interest, innovation, and vigor in the presentation of lessons.
- Cognitive Functioning: Mental illness negatively affects the psychological functions of a person, among them being memory, attention, and problem-solving abilities that are crucial in executing effective teaching.

Student – Teacher Interactions

- Emotional Availability: The teachers' emotional availability, care, connection, bond with students is mainly determined by the mental health of the teachers themselves. Teachers with mental health problems may not be in a position to provide required care, attention and develop cordial relations with their students.
- Patterns of Communication: Patterns of communication are modified by poor mental health, resulting in misconceptions and vagueness in instructions, which limit the learning process of students.

Classroom Management

- Classroom Behavioral Management: Teachers who have mental health problems can seldom manage classroom behavior effectively. This would usually result as behavioral issues, conflicts or chaotic situations in the class which can result in poor learning experiences for students.
- Consistency and Fairness: Mental health problems among teachers may harmfully affect their ability to provide fair interaction, discussion, decision making and

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consistent behaviour in their disciplinary practices, leading to lack of trust due to perspectives of bias and unfair treatment among their students.

Students Outcome

- **Academic Performance:** The mental health of teachers is directly proportional to the academic performances of students. Students from a class led by a mentally healthy teacher often tend to reflect in better academic results.
- **Psychosocial Development:** The mental health of teachers also affects psychosocial development of students. Students' social skills, communication skills and life skills are affected due to the same reason. The supportive role from a mentally healthy teacher should be able to foster a positive classroom climate that enhances the social and emotional development of students.

DISCUSSION

This review recognized the influence of teachers' mental health in classroom transactions in various domains. Teachers' mental health problems not only hamper their own performance as professionals but also the academic and psychosocial development of students. Ensuring good mental health and well-being of teachers is imperative through preventive measures, mental health aid, and professional development programs to create an conducive educational environment for effective learning of students.

Future Research Recommendations

Longitudinal studies in the future with regard to teacher mental health may relate to classroom transactions. Effectiveness studies of intervention regarding teacher mental health support programs will additionally contribute to literature on best practices in supporting teachers for mental well-being.

Practical Implications

It is therefore incumbent on educational settings to give precedence to the mental health of teachers through the adoption and implementation of comprehensive mental health policies, access to mental health resources, and a culture of well-being. Training programs on equipping them with the skills for stress management and resilience building are also quite indispensable toward the promotion of their mental health and, as such, the quality of education they render.

The concern regarding the effect of teachers' mental health on their effectiveness and the educational environment has been brought out time again by several studies.

- Research on the relationship between personality type and teachers' effectiveness was carried out by *Bhardwaj and Singh* in 2013 among senior secondary school teachers. According to them, teachers' personality had a great influence on their effectiveness in teaching. It has been observed that only those who have stable and positive personality traits as teachers are more effective in their role since they are able to handle the class situation and the interaction of students more effectively.
- *Betoret*, 2009, examined how self-efficacy, school resources, job anxiety, and burnout interacted within a sample of teachers working at the level of primary education and at the secondary level in Spain. The results from that study indicated that high self-efficacy and good school resources were related to less job anxiety and burnout. This means that when pre-service and practicing teachers have confidence

in their abilities and when schools have adequate resources, it will help reduce the negative impact of stress and burnout on their mental health and job satisfaction.

- In the study, *Harding et al.* (2019) assess the relationship between teachers' mental health and that of students. The results proved significant: it is suggested that the mental health of teachers is directly related to the mental health and well-being of their students. It thus places the mental health of teachers as an important issue not only for themselves but for the positive spillover effects likely to improve student outcomes.
- *Klassen and Chiu* (2010) researched how gender, years of teaching experience, and job stress impacted teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction. The results indicated that job stress detracts from the self-efficacy and satisfaction of teachers, especially less experienced ones. This has an implication for the need to take matters concerning reduction of job stress through support and professional development, especially for inexperienced teachers.
- *Kyriacou* gave an extensive review on teacher stress in 2011, from prevalence to building resilience. According to the author, the systemic changes that highly need to be implemented in the education sector are decreasing the stressors at work and increasing teachers' resilience by creating a supportive work environment together with resources to help teachers manage stress effectively.
- *McLean et al.* (2017) examined the teacher mental health and school climate perceptions during the novice teachers' transition time from training into teaching. Results indicated that positive school climate was one of the biggest enabling factors for supporting teachers' mental health at this critical time period. Those schools that provided a more inclusive and supportive environment adjusted to their new teachers better and reduced stress.
- *Schmidt and Hansson* 2018 conducted a systematic review of studies on teacher well-being. It describes the multiple factors influencing teachers' well-being, relating to workload, support, and work-life balance. From the review, this means that what is called for is comprehensive measures on these causative variables if mental health among teachers is to be improved.
- *Skaalvik and Skaalvik* (2017) studied the dimensions of burnout among teachers and their relationships with school-related stressors. In their results, workload, student behavior, and lack of support were the most pervasive factors leading to burnout. Addressing these stressors by way of policy changes and supports could very well reduce burnout and further enhance the mental health of teachers.

CONCLUSION

Teachers' mental health is a crucial in classroom transactions and generally influences the quality of teaching, students' engagement, students' holistic development and classroom management. Psychologically healthy teachers are enthusiastic, passionate, calm, active, and clear, and their mental state creates positive learning environment. However, stressed teachers may be challenged in their cognitive abilities and less emotionally available for students, which easily increases the possibility of poor student-teacher interactions and problems in discipline. The problem of teachers' mental health is significant not only for themselves but also for the children who wish to be successfully educated and all-round developed.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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