

The Nature and Sources of Stress among EFL Teachers

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Stress is a major concern in teaching profession. Stress has become a major concern in modern time because it can cause and harm employee's health and performance. So, it cannot be ignored (Pathak & Sarin, 2011). Stress can be debilitating or facilitating. If the sources and effects of stress are spotted and attempts are made to mitigate the stress level down to the desired level, teaching EFL classes can be more desirable and productive. The aim of this study was to identify the sources of stress among EFL teachers and their coping strategies as well as whether there was a significant relationship between the perception of stress prevalence and their demographic information. The population in this study consisted of 65 EFL teachers in Fasa. The interview and questionnaire were used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of 4 sections and 55 items administrated and collected in teachers' meetings. The results were analyzed using SPSS 16 for windows. Percentage of responses, means, standard deviation were calculated for each item, and Chi-square was carried out to determine the results. Then Spearman correlation was run to discover the degree of relationship. The results revealed that the main sources of stress among EFL teachers were: books and materials, lack of time, inadequate salary, and parents' low involvement. Furthermore, the findings of the study showed that EFL most frequently used coping strategies were: finding comfort in religion, being optimistic about the outcome, trying to come up with a strategy. Moreover, the results of this investigation showed that the perception of stress prevalence did not have any significant correlation with demographic information.

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Key words: Coping strategies, EFL teachers, stress, the sources of stress

Preliminaries

Stress is considered to be a serious problem among teachers. Teachers in the schools perform their tasks in different conditions. Therefore, the psychological problems of teachers caused by work environment, their perception of work condition and how they cope with these problems differ. Selye (1974) an endocrinologist, perceived stress to be a neutral physiological phenomenon. More specifically he defined it as a general adaptive syndrome or nonspecific response to demands placed upon human body. These demands could either stimulate or threaten the individuals. In later work, he distinguishes between 'stress' and 'distress' (Cited in Wilson, 2002).

Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) assert that the Health and safety Executive defined stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them" (p. 272). Eres and Atanasoska(2011) believe when a person feels insufficient in dealing with demands and challenges faced in life, she/he experiences stress. Moreover, Chona and Roxas (2009) maintain that definition of stress is centered around the idea of "a perceived imbalance in the interface between an individual, the environment and other individuals" (p. 87). Jepson and Forrest(2006) explained that stress is a general term used for pressure that people are exposed to in life .

Hart and cooper (2001) state that " Stress occurs when a state of disequilibrium exists within the system of variables and only when this state of disequilibrium brings about change in people's normal (i.e. equilibrium) levels of psychological well-being. This suggests that stress is relatively an abstract construct that cannot be assessed directly, instead it can only be understood by assessing a complex system of variables, and establishing how these variables relate to one another over time" (p. 97).

The world of change and anxiety has caused stress to be an inseparable part of our daily life. According to Brackenreed (2011), stress is an imbalance between the demands being made upon an individual and resources available to help cope with the demands.

As teaching profession demands daily interactions with pupils, principals, colleagues, and organization, it is an undeniable stressful occupation. Kyriacou (2001) defines teacher stress as “the experience of unpleasant, negative emotion, such as anger, anxiety tension, frustration, depression, resulting from some aspects of their work as a teacher” (p. 28).

It is worth mentioning the coping strategies as remedies to overcome the stress. If we want to see teachers healthy at their profession, they should be equipped with coping strategies to beat the stress. Coping behavior has been defined by Mechanic (1967 cited in Dunham, 2002) as application of a person’s acquired skill, techniques and knowledge and he has argued that, in attempting to understand stress, more attention should be given to problem-solving and coping behaviors. Lazarus(1991) defined coping as” the cognitive and behavioral effort to manage specific external and internal demands and conflicts between them that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person” (p. 112).

Lewis (1999) explained that coping refers to a set of cognitive and effective teacher responses which arise in response to a concern about being unable to implement best practice in the area of classroom discipline. They present an attempt to restore the equilibrium by solving the problem, minimizing it, accommodating to it, or attempting to avoid it. Coping is essentially a dynamic phenomenon whereby the individual and environment are engaged in an interactive process.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Background

Stress is considered to be an important problem among teachers. Teachers in school perform their jobs in various environments. Therefore, the psychological problems of teachers caused by work conditions, their perception of work environment and how they cope with the problems differ. Teachers have very important roles and responsibility in learning–teaching process in the school. Also effectiveness of other elements of education system mostly depends on the teachers; however, it should not be expected from even the best teacher to become efficient under non-convenient conditions.

Teachers are affected from stress resources due to necessity of their job. Therefore, realization of teaching purposes requires teachers to work in environments without stress. So, it is necessary to manage stress well in order to decrease stress of teachers and to support them to be effected less. Fisher (2011) from previous studies reiterated that teaching as a profession is emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating. In today's fast-paced work, teachers are expected to do numerous and diverse activities every day. They must do a lot of social, individual, and professional responsibilities. Furthermore they complete paperwork, prepare for their classes, plan and prepare for future instructions, evaluate students, and remain up-to-date in their teaching profession. They regularly encounter both positive and negative interactions with students, colleagues, school administrators, parents and other community members (Unal, 2000).

A vast number of studies showed that teaching is stressful occupation and many teachers experience stress in their profession and nobody can refute it (e.g. Adams, 2001; Afta & Khatoon, 2012; Crothers et al. 2009; Dunham, 2002; Fisher, 2011; Mccarthy, , Lambert, Crow & Mccarthy, 2010; Van Dick &Wagner, 2001; Wilson, 2002). It is necessary to mention that EFL teachers along with other teachers in other fields have heavier responsibilities than before. EFL teachers are expected to communicate with learners, try to motivate them and encourage them to participate in classroom activities and generally speaking, to help facilitate learning. So performing these tasks puts them under pressure. It is a must to probe their sources of stress to recognize their potential stressors.

2. Stress

Stress is a multidimensional concept and has variety of usages in different fields which vary according to specific focus and purpose. Oxford (2011) [CD] explains the origin of the word '*stress*'. It shows that in the Middle English the word meant the hardship or force exerted on a person for the purpose of compulsion. It denotes that it was made from shortening of '*distress*', or partly from old French '*estresse*' '*narrowness, oppression*'. It based on Latin '*strictus*' '*drawn tight*'.

An understanding of stress must begin with a clear definition. A search of the literature on stress revealed that there is no consistent definition provided by the experts in the field. A Study of the literature showed the recurrent disagreement among researchers about the definition of

stress in humans. One of the pioneers in this field, Selye(1974), indicated that stress is difficult to define(Cited in Gold & Roth, 2005). Gold and Roth (2005) summarized his statements about stress. These are:

- *Stress is the wear and tear caused by life*
- *Stress is a state manifested by a specific syndrome of biological events and can be both pleasant and unpleasant.*
- *Stress is the mobilization of the body's defenses that allow human beings to adapt to hostile or threatening events.*
- *Stress is dangerous when it is unduly prolonged, comes too often, or concentrates on one particular organ of body.*
- *Stress is not merely nervous tension.*
- *Stress is not always the nonspecific result of damage.*
- *Stress is not something to be avoided.*
- *Complete freedom from stress is death. (p 15)*

Selye (1974) defines stress in the following way: “stress is the state manifested by specific syndrome which consists of all the nonspecifically induced changes within a biologic system” (Cited in Gold & Roth, 2005, p. 15). Furthermore, Jackson (2004) states that stress is associated with a lack of coping strategies to manage the pressures of life.

Gold and Roth (2005) define stress as a “condition of disequilibrium within the intellectual, emotional and physical state of the individual; it is generated by one’s perception of a situation, which results in physical and emotional reaction. It can be either positive or negative, depending upon one’s interpretation” (p. 17).

Kyriacou (1987) states that Stress has been identified as a response syndrome of negative affects which developed when there are prolonged and increased pressures that cannot be controlled by an individual’s coping strategies (Cited in Jepson and Forrest, 2006).

Kyriacou (2001) was defining teacher stress as “The experience by teachers of unpleasant, negative emotions such as , anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher” (p. 28). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stress

results from individual cognitive appraisals of demands and resources (Cited in Ullrich, Lambert, & McCarthy, 2010).

Dunham (2002:3) defines stress as “a process of behavioral, emotional, mental and physical reactions caused by prolonged, increasing of new pressures which are significantly greater than coping resources”. Hayes (2006) puts forward a formula to assess the stress:

$$\text{The stress equation: } stress = \frac{\text{stressor}}{\text{perception} + \text{support}}$$

He explains that ‘stressor’ is the thing which is causing us stress, ‘perception’ is how we interpret this to ourselves, and ‘support’ is the internal and external support we use.

Statement of the problem

Stress is often considered as an occupational hazard of teaching profession (Van Dick & Wagner, 2001). Stress in teachers can be more prevalent than in other professions. Research has consistently shown that those in helping professions, particularly teachers, have significantly higher levels of stress (Gold & Roth, 2005).

The constant interaction with students, co-workers, principals, organizations and unpredictable problems make the teaching profession a demanding job. Teaching is widely recognized as a stressful occupation (Dunham, 2002; Hicks, Fujiwara & Bahr, 2006; Kyriacou, 2001; Torres, Lawver, & Lamber, 2009; Travers & Cooper, 1997).

Hayes (2006) believes that teachers face big stressors all the time. Some of them include pressures associated with balancing the needs of the students, with demands of curriculum, with the expectation of parents.

Stress in teachers has been a matter of discussion over years. An unproductive level of stress can negatively affect their teaching, their health and their students. It is worth noting that so many teachers do not enjoy teaching. Gold and Roth (2005) state that the joy of helping others grow and watching them mature is dampened, even destroyed by the growing tensions, stultifying conditions and unrealistic demands on the profession and teachers.

It is important to investigate the effects of stress on teachers. Gold and Roth (2005) claim that teachers encounter physical threats and emotional dilemmas every day. So, these have a debilitating effect on teachers' professional health which inevitably leads to burn out and drop out. Ongori and Agolla (2008:125) postulate that negative effects of occupational stress are:

- reduced efficiency and interest in working
- lack of concern for the organization and colleagues
- loss of responsibility

Long term exposure to stress can lead to burn out. Schaufeli and Grennnglass (2001) defined burn out as a “ state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that results from long term involvement in work situations that are emotionally demanding” (Cited in Campbell & Rothman, 2005, p. 17). Furthermore, Dorman (2003) described burn out as “the inability to function effectively in one’s job as a consequence of prolonged and extensive job related stress” (p. 35).

If we want to decrease the teachers’ stress level, we should be aware of teachers’ stress sources. Stress sources of teachers may be summarized as low motivation in study, discipline problems, the pressure of time and work load, being assessed by others, colleague relationship, conflict and indefiniteness of roles, bad working conditions and self-respect, students’ discipline problems, inadequate support of colleagues, family and friends (e.g. Eres & Antanasoska, 2011; Betroch, Nielsen, Curley & Brog, 1988; Kyriacou, 2001).

It is of great interest to get a deeper knowledge of source, cause and consequences of teachers’ stress to mitigate it to a desired level to enhance the learning situations. It is noteworthy that this study seeks to investigate the sources of stress among EFL teachers in Fasa. This study attempts to accentuate the viewpoint of EFL teachers who have some experience in the realm of teaching and they may have faced some obstacles or experienced stress due to their teaching milieu.

Objectives and significance of the study

Sorenson (1999, Cited in Fisher, 2011: 10) states that “stress is a condition of twenty-first century education that continues to increase as more accountability standards a new policy initiatives are introduced”.

Teachers enter the profession with high expectations, a vision of future and a mission to educate children and youth. When they are personally insecure, lack confidence or have a sense of not being in control of themselves or their environment, they cannot be successful regardless of how strong the technical preparation has been (Gold & Roth, 2005).

Considering the above mentioned problems the following specific objectives are to be achieved:

1. To investigate the various sources of stress experienced by EFL teachers.
2. To examine the relationship between the perception of stress prevalence and demographic variables such as gender, experience, and degrees.
3. To identify the effects of stress on teachers.
4. To provide the coping resources or approaches to eliminate or at least reduce them.

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Research questions

This research tries to delve into the nature of stress and coping resources among EFL teachers. It, therefore, sets out to investigate the sources, causes and effects of stress in teaching among EFL teachers in Fasa. It tries to seek their coping strategies for effective stress management. It, therefore, tries to find answers for the following questions:

1. What are the main sources of stress among EFL teachers?
2. Is there a significant difference between male teachers and female teachers in overcoming stress?
3. What are the effects of stress on them?
4. What is the relationship between the perception of stress prevalence and demographic information?
5. Do genders make any differences?
6. What do they do to reduce the pressure?

METHODOLOGY.

participants

The population in this study consisted of 65 EFL teachers from various schools in Fasa and included both high schools and guidance schools. The biographical information of 65 EFL teachers who participated in the study is presented in figure 1.

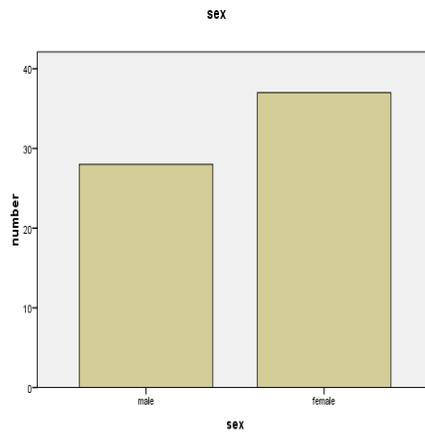


Figure 1. The number of participants by gender

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Figure 1 shows that 56.9% of the respondents in the sample were females and the 43.1% of the respondents in the sample were males.

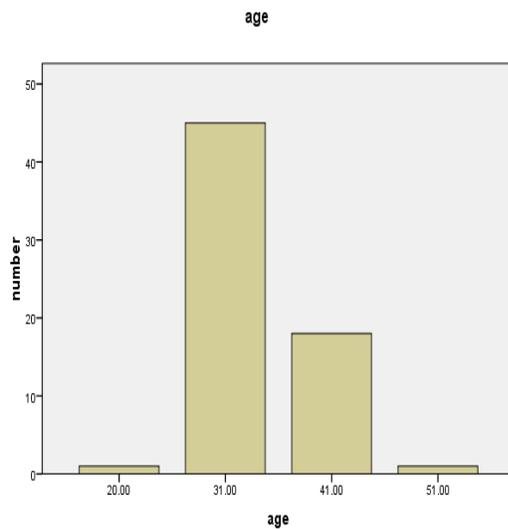


Figure 2. The number of respondents by age

Figure 2 illustrates that the majority of the respondents (97% of the respondents) falls into the age group of 31-50 years.

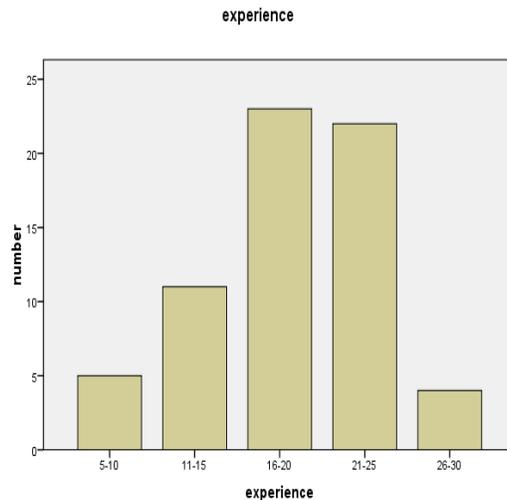


Figure 3. The number of participants by experience

Figure 3 depicts that the majority of the respondents (about 70 %) falls in the group experience of 1

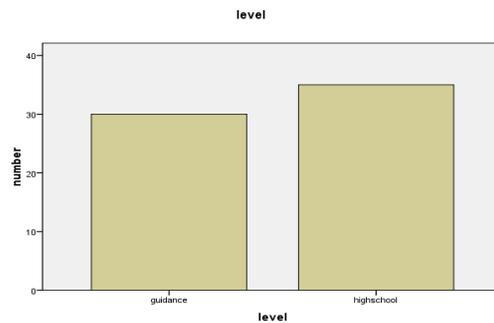
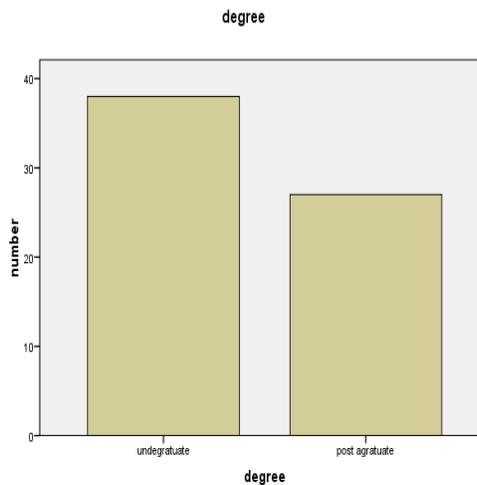


Figure 4. The number of participants by level

Figure 4 shows the levels taught by the sample. 30 participants were teaching in guidance schools and 35 participants were teaching in high schools.



sections:

- Section 1 dealt with the personal background of respondents that included the respondent's gender, age, years of teaching experience and level which they were teaching.
- Section 2 consisted of 5 items and mainly focused on EFL teachers' view of stress prevalence and manifestation of stress on them.
- Section 3 was the main body of questionnaire and consisted of 30 items related to sources of stress. This part aimed at unearthing the source of stress among EFL teachers. It tried to cover all sources of stress such as:
 - Work load
 - Role conflict and ambiguity
 - Parents' involvement
 - Poor working conditions
 - Students' behaviour
 - Communication in English
 - Materials and resources for teaching English
 - Management style
 - Variety of pronunciation in English

Section 4 exclusively examined the types of coping strategies individuals used when experiencing a stressful situation. Items of this section fit with direct action and palliative coping methods. Direct action coping methods included: active coping, planning, seeking emotional support and instrumental support. Palliative coping strategies include positive reframing, acceptance.

Figure 5. The number of respondents by degree

Figure 5 shows the degrees of the participants. About 60% of participants had BA degree and about 40 % of participants had MA degree.

Instrument

The study was conducted first by obtaining permission from the Ministry of Education in Fasa. First the researcher selected 10 teachers for interview. Six teachers were chosen from high school (3 males and 3 females) and four teachers were chosen from guidance school (2 males and 2 females). After obtaining their consent, the researcher conducted a structured interview with each of them. The researcher provided questions mainly on the topic of the sources of stress, manifestation of stress and coping strategies.

- Because of preventing any ambiguity the questions were asked in Persian and answers were written by researcher in Persian. Each interview lasted between 30-45 minutes. By this way the researcher collected items for his questionnaire. After that the researcher tried to formulate the questionnaire. The questionnaire was formulated based on the ideas and insight taken from EFL teachers' interviews and different authorities as reflected in the related literature. The questionnaire was comprised of four e, religion and self-distraction.

Reliability and validity

The researcher also carried out a pilot study to examine the questionnaire. Changes were made according to the EFL teachers' feedback, comments and the result of the pilot study. For reliability, *Cronbach's Alpha* was calculated totally for sections 2, 3, and 4. Section 1 which elicited demographic information was excluded from the reliability. Sections 2, 3, and 4 with 50 items were found to have $\alpha = 0.752$. According to Pallant (2007) alpha above 0.7 is acceptable, so this indicates that the questionnaire had an acceptable level of reliability.

To check the content validity, some professors at Shiraz Islamic Azad University and some instructors in Fasa University judged the extent to which the content of the questionnaire was comprehensive and representative of the content domain purported to be measured by the study.

Procedures

This study was conducted first by obtaining permission from Ministry of Education in Fasa. The researcher personally attended and administrated the questionnaire to the participants in teachers' meetings (two separate sessions). The questionnaire consisted of 4 sections and 55 items (Appendix A). Before they started to complete the questionnaire, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and all the sections of the questionnaire in about 10 minutes. They were given 25 minutes to respond. Respondents were allowed to ask the researcher for clarification of items and procedures. When the EFL teachers had problems in understanding the questions, phrases, or clauses, the researcher clarified those problems in their mother tongue (Persian).

When the researcher collected the data, he omitted those participants who had not answered all parts of the questionnaire. Then the questionnaire data were collated and analyzed, and the results were interpreted.

Data analysis

The results were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 for windows. Percentages of responses for each Likert point were calculated for each item, and nonparametric correlation was computed between two items in section 1 which obtains respondents' opinion about stress prevalence in their occupation and overcoming stress or with their demographic information. Then, Chi-square tests were carried out to determine whether gender makes any differences with regard to:

1. EFL teachers' sources of stress
2. EFL teachers' coping strategies
3. Effects of stress on teachers

The relationship was regarded as statistically significant when the p value was **<0.01**.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented along with the statistical analysis of data relevant to research questions.

The analysis of data concerning the investigation of the nature and sources of stress among EFL teachers, their coping strategies to mitigate the stress, relationship between the perception of stress prevalence with demographic information, relationship between overcoming stress and demographic information, and the effects of stress on the respondents is presented in this chapter.

Statistical analysis

In this section, only those results that relate most directly to the nature and sources of stress among EFL teachers along with their coping strategies are presented. The results were analyzed using *SPSS 16 for Windows Evaluation Version*. Percentages and means of responses for each Likert point were calculated for each item in sections 1, 2, and 3. Then, nonparametric correlation was calculated between two items in section 1 which obtains respondents' opinion about stress prevalence in their occupation and overcoming stress or stress management with their demographic information. Chi-square tests were carried out to determine whether gender makes any differences with regard to:

1. EFL teachers' sources of stress
2. EFL teachers' coping strategies
3. Effects of stress on teachers

The analyses were carried out at the 0.01 level of significance.

Results pertaining to EFL teachers' perception of the sources of stress in their occupation

EFL teachers' perception of the main source of stress in their profession is shown in **Table 1**. To aid interpretation, the 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were combined and so were the 'strongly agree' and 'agree' categories.

Table 1 shows a rank order of the sources of stress among EFL teachers. These results revealed that low quality resources especially books, diversity in students' knowledge, lack of sufficient time to deal with the students' problems, low salary, parents' low involvement are the main sources of EFL teachers. The results also display that English proficiency such as utilizing different methods and techniques, delivering lesson in English, and variety of pronunciation in English does not put any stresses on EFL teachers.

As it can be seen, in 5 cases out of 30 items: 19, 10, 23, 6, 5 - there was a significant Chi-Square result. It showed that there were differences in the perception of the sources of the stress in these items. In other words, EFL male teachers' perception of the source of stress and EFL female teachers' perception of the sources of the stress were different regarding these items.

Table1. EFL teachers' sources of stress - % of respondents and chi-square

Statements	Strongly disagree + disagree %	Neither agree + nor disagree %	Strongly agree + agree %	χ^2	df	p
25. The materials in books aren't recent and motivating.	0	0	100	-	-	-
24. My books discourage communication and speaking in English.	3.1	3.1	93.8	2.761	2	.248
27. I have to do with limited resources and teaching facilities.	1.5	6.2	93.8	.837	2	.658
6. The diversity in the levels of students' knowledge is a problem for my teaching.	7.7	3.1	89.2	4.108	2	.128
17. I don't have enough time to enable me to deal effectively with students' problems.	3.1	9.2	87.7	.388	2	1.895
14. I receive an inadequate salary for the work I do.	7.7	7.7	84.6	1.232	2	.540
29. Parents' involvement is low.	3.1	15.4	81.5	2.573	2	.276
19. The time of class related to material in books is inappropriate.	4.6	13.8	81.5	8.948	2	.011
20. I feel stressed about teaching unmotivated lesson materials.	7.7	10.8	81.5	.725	2	.696
10. Teaching over crowded classes makes me uneasy.	7.7	10.8	81.5	6.089	2	.048
5. I feel frustrated attempting to teach students who are poorly motivated.	4.6	15.4	80	5.458	2	.065
23. Communicative language teaching methods put more responsibility on teachers.	9.2	12.3	78.5	9.265	2	.010
18. I lack additional training and development in my occupation.	7.7	16.9	75.4	2.285	2	.319
28. My teaching ability and success are not recognized and praised.	12.3	12.3	75.4	.259	2	.879
12. There is too much work to do.	15.4	13.8	70.8	4.501	2	.105
26. I don't have freedom of choice in my job.	7.7	23.1	69.2	.112	2	.946

Statements	strongly disagree + disagree %	Neither agree + nor disagree %	Strongly agree + agree %	χ^2	df	p
4. There is a lot of stress just keeping up with changing profession standards in teaching English.	10.8	20	69.2	5.934	2	.051
3.I find that dealing with student discipline problems puts a lot of stress on me.	16.9	13.8	69.2	.771	2	.680
13. I lack promotion or professional improvement.	13.8	20	66.2	2.318	2	.314
7. Schools and principals are not quite helpful in hard times.	16.9	16.9	66.2	.141	2	.932
30. My work discourages motivation and innovation.	16.9	21.5	61.5	2.212	2	.331
2. I am given school-related duties without adequate resources and materials to carry them out.	21.5	18.5	60	.548	2	.760
1. There is little time to be prepared for my lessons	26.2	16.9	56.9	4.978	2	.083
8. Preparing sources for my lessons demands too much time and puts me under pressure.	26.2	16.9	56.9	.051	2	.975
21. I find it difficult to combine teaching with other roles or tasks expected to me.	23.1	21.5	55.4	1.594	2	.451
22. I sometimes feel I don't have enough knowledge of English.	33.8	21.5	44.6	3.275	2	.194
11. There are a lot of constant changes in my occupation.	32.3	27.7	40	.327	2	.849
6. Variety of pronunciation in English puts me under pressure.	41.5	21.5	36.9	6.050	2	.049
9. Delivering the lesson in English makes me feel anxious	35.4	30.8	33.8	1.350	2	.509
5. I feel worried about using different methods, approaches and techniques.	49.2	20	30.8	8.064	2	.018

Results related to EFL teachers' coping strategies

The EFL teachers' coping strategies to mitigate the stress and Chi-square between gender and coping strategies is presented in Table 2 to aid interpretation, the 'never' and 'seldom' categories were combined and so were the 'often' and 'always' categories.

It was determined that strategies as using drugs and medical services, and using consultation services from schools were almost never used by EFL teachers. They were observed to employ other coping strategies shown in Table 2 occasionally.

It also was found that EFL teachers sometimes express their irritation to colleagues, rely on family to support them, and use outdoor activities to relieve the stress. It was also revealed that among different strategies, mostly finding comfort in religion and spiritual beliefs, trusting in themselves and being optimistic, trying to come up with strategy were applied more than others.

It was found that in 3 cases out of 15 items: 2, 1, and 14 – there was a significant Chi-square result. It showed that there were differences in employing the coping strategies between male and female teachers in these cases.

Table 2. EFL teachers' coping strategies - % of respondents and Chi-square

Statements	Never/ seldom%	Some %	Often/ always %	χ^2	df	p
5. I try to find comfort in my religion or my spiritual beliefs.	3.1	15.4	81.5	.288	2	.866
9. I trust in myself and being optimistic about the outcome.	10.8	16.9	72.3	3.375	2	.185
10. I try to avoid confrontation.	10.8	27.7	61.5	1.424	2	.491
4. I look for something good in what is happening.	9.2	33.8	56.9	4.467	2	.107
2. I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.	6.2	38.5	55.4	10.425	2	.005
12. I think of good things in future.	9.2	35.4	55.4	2.034	2	.362
1. Writing detailed lesson plans and increasing my knowledge help me to reduce the amount of stress.	21.5	29.2	49.2	9.561	2	.008
7. I turn to work or other activities to take my mind off the things.	24.6	32.3	43.1	2.662	2	.263
11. I try to forget work when the school day is finished.	32.3	33.8	33.8	2.662	2	.263
6. I try to forget work when the school day is finished.	33.8	43.1	23.1	.122	2	.941

13. I use outdoor activities such as physical exercise, meditation relaxation techniques and camping.	41.5	40.0	18.5	3.455	2	.178
3. I rely on my family to support me.	49.2	33.8	16.9	.618	2	.734
14. I express my irritation to colleagues at work just to be able to let off the steam.	35.4	53.8	10.8	6.994	2	.030
15. I use support provision that my work provides me such as the school consultation services.	78.5	12.3	9.2	4.377	2	.112
8. I use drugs and medical services to make myself feel better.	90.8	6.2	3.1	.129	2	.937

Results related to the relationship between EFL teachers’ perception of stress prevalence and their demographic information

Spearman correlation coefficients were computed between the item 1 in section 1 which obtains respondents’ opinion about stress prevalence with their demographic information. The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation coefficient of stress prevalence and demographic information

			Stress prevalence
Spearman's rho	age	Correlation Coefficient	.184
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.142
	sex	Correlation Coefficient	-.001
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.993
	degree	Correlation Coefficient	.046
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.714
	level	Correlation Coefficient	-.143
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.256

	experience	Correlation Coefficient	-.122
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.334

The correlation coefficients did not indicate statistically significant bivariate correlation between the perception of stress prevalence among EFL teachers and their demographic information.

Results pertaining to the differences between genders regarding to the perception of stress prevalence among EFL teachers

The Chi-square tests were run to determine whether there were any significant differences between the perception of stress prevalence among male and female EFL teachers. The chi-square results in Table 4 revealed that there were not any significant differences in the perception of stress prevalence between two groups of teachers.

Table 4. Chi-Square tests between genders and stress prevalence

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.288 ^a	2	.866
Likelihood Ratio	.286	2	.867
Linear-by-Linear Association	.024	1	.876
N of Valid Cases	65		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.17.

Results pertaining to the relationship between the perception of overcoming stress among EFL teachers and their demographic information

Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated between the item 5 in section 1 which obtains respondents' opinion about overcoming stress with their demographic information. The results are reported in Table 5 the results showed that there was not any significant correlation between the perception of overcoming stress and demographic information.

Table 5. Correlation coefficient of overcoming stress and demographic information.

			Overcoming stress
Spearman's rho	age	Correlation Coefficient	-.214
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.087
	sex	Correlation Coefficient	-.004
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.976
	degree	Correlation Coefficient	-.086
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.494
	level	Correlation Coefficient	.005
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.970
	experience	Correlation Coefficient	-.162
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.197

Results related to the differences between genders regarding the perception of overcoming stress among EFL teachers

The Chi-square tests were run to determine whether there were any significant differences between the perception of overcoming stress among male and female EFL teachers. The chi-square results are shown in Table 6. The results revealed that there were not any significant differences in the perception of overcoming stress between two groups of teachers.

Table 6. Chi-Square tests between genders and the perception of overcoming stress.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.455 ^a	2	.178
Likelihood Ratio	3.523	2	.172
Linear-by-Linear Association	.534	1	.465
N of Valid Cases	65		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.60.

Results pertaining to EFL teachers' sources of stress by gender

The split file from data menu was run to analyse the sources of stress between two groups (in this case, males and females) separately. The results are reported in Table 7. Because of limitation of space only 10 top items from 30 items for each group will be presented in Table 7.

From these 10 cases the 6 items: 25, 27, 17, 24, 14, and 20 are the same between two groups. Although the rank order of item 24 is different for both groups. The other 8 items: 16, 15, 10, and 29 for males and items: 23, 19, 18, and 4 for females are different between two groups.

Table 7. The sources of stress among EFL teachers split by genders

Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Sd.
25. The materials in books are not recent and motivating.	28	3.00	3.00	3.0000	.00000
16. The diversity in the levels of students' knowledge is a problem form teaching.	28	2.00	3.00	2.9643	.18898
27. I have to do with limited resources and teaching facilities.	28	2.00	3.00	2.9286	.26227
15. I feel frustrated attempting to teach students who are poorly motivated.	28	2.00	3.00	2.9286	.26227
10. Teaching over crowded classes makes me uneasy.	28	2.00	3.00	2.9286	.26227
7. I don't have enough time to enable me to deal effectively with students' problems.	28	2.00	3.00	2.9286	.26227
29. Parents' involvement is low.	28	2.00	3.00	2.8929	.31497
24. My books discourage communication and speaking in English.	28	1.00	3.00	2.8214	.54796
14. I receive an inadequate salary for the work I do.	28	1.00	3.00	2.8214	.54796
20. I feel stressed about teaching unmotivated lesson materials.	28	1.00	3.00	2.7857	.56811

a.sex = male

Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
25. The materials in books aren't recent and motivating.	37	3.00	3.00	3.0000	.00000
24. My books discourage communication and speaking in English.	37	2.00	3.00	2.9730	.16440
27. I have to do with limited resources and teaching facilities.	37	1.00	3.00	2.8919	.39326
23. communicative language teaching methods put more responsibility on teachers.	37	1.00	3.00	2.8919	.39326
19. The time of class related to material in books is inappropriate.	37	1.00	3.00	2.8649	.48087
17. I don't have enough time to enable me to deal effectively with my students' problems.	37	1.00	3.00	2.7838	.53412
14. I receive an inadequate salary for the work I do.	37	1.00	3.00	2.7297	.60776
18. I lack additional training and development in my occupation.	37	1.00	3.00	2.7297	.60776
4. There is a lot of stress just keeping up with changing profession standards in teaching English.	37	1.00	3.00	2.7297	.60776
20. I feel stressed about teaching unmotivated lesson materials.	37	1.00	3.00	2.7027	.61756

a. Sex= female

Results pertaining to effects of stress on EFL teachers

3 items in section 1 were chosen to show the effects of stress among EFL teachers. The results are presented in Table 8. As we can see a vast majority of EFL teachers (about 90 %) experienced anxiety and worry in stressful situations. And a majority of EFL teachers (about 57 %) avoided anger when they felt stress.

Table 8. The effects of stress on EFL teachers - % of respondents

Statements	Strongly disagree +disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree- %	Strongly agree + agree %
2. I experienced anxiety and worry when I experience stress	6.2	4.6	89.2
3. I feel depressed when I experience stress	18.5	21.5	60
4. I experience anger when I am stressed	56.2	12.3	21.5

Discussion

The results of this study led the researcher to go back to the literature to see what support there was for the sources of stress among EFL teachers and their coping strategies and why some of the results of this study are different from those of the previous researchers.

The results of this study showed that the perception of stress prevalence did not have any significant correlation with demographic information. These results are in agreement with those of Johanssen (2011) who concluded that there was no correlation between total stress scores and years of job experiences. These finding supported the findings of Abdul et al. (2010) who showed that there were not significant associations between stress with gender, experience, and educational level. Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that there were not any significant differences between the sexes regarding to stress prevalence. This finding is consistent with the findings of Jude (2011) who found that gender was not a significant factor influencing occupational stress among secondary school teachers. This result is not surprising because the present role of male teachers in schools is not different from their female counterparts. Both are subjected to the same teaching condition and there is no gender discrimination. The above findings are contrary to Btoret and Artiga (2010) and Aftab and Khatoon (2012) whose findings revealed that male teachers have more stress than female teachers.

The results of the sources of stress among EFL teachers revealed interesting data. The main sources of EFL teachers were books and materials in books. The results of present study confirmed the findings of Golpour (2012:170) who concluded:

Iranian Junior high school text books series lack appropriate lay out and physical characteristics, materials have not been recycled, not all skills have been considered equally, emphasis is on grammatical points practiced through speaking and listening. Moreover, recordings are artificial, no attention is paid to students needs and topics are out of date and boring. Also audio-visual materials, teachers' guide and communicative tasks seem to be forgotten by writer. Therefore, all eighteen features except vocabulary lists, availability of glossary and lots of grammatical points have not been

considered a lot. That is, students' interests have been ignored totally and little communicative issues have been regarded in these series. In fact at the end of this determined time students would be proficient at structural points with no efficiency at communication.

Furthermore, this study explicitly showed that students' diversity knowledge, lack of time, inadequate salary, parents' low involvement as main sources of stress among EFL teachers. These findings supported those of Hammad (2012) who found that poor working conditions, students' behavior and discipline problem, parents' low involvement, and low payment were sources of stress among teachers. The outcomes of this study are consistent with his finding except for student behavior and discipline problem issues.

These findings are inconsistent with the findings of Rhode et al. (2004) who found issues concerned with work load, balance between work and personal life, proportion of time spent on administration, relations with other staff, society's view of teachers, pupil behavior, class size, and pay as main sources of stress among teachers. The present results are contrary to their findings except for two items: class size, and low salary. Moreover, our findings corroborates with those of Betoret and Artiga (2010) except for students' misbehavior as a source of stress. They indicated that the classroom level stressors and barriers were: students' misbehavior, students' demotivation, and students' diversity. And in the part of parent level they mentioned that insufficient parents' involvement was the significant problems.

Wilson (2002) revealed that pupils' misbehavior, poor working conditions especially relationship with colleagues, workload, and poor school ethos were the major causes of stress. The results of this study are opposed to Wilson's findings. The results of this study confirmed the findings of Karavas (2009) who reiterated that Greek EFL teachers' problems were: learners' lack of motivation for learning English, their lack of interest in their subject, and students' discipline problems. Our findings supported his findings except for students' discipline problems.

Coping strategies are important to decrease the amount of stress. The present investigation aimed to analyze the different coping strategies utilized by EFL teachers. Unal (2000) believed that teachers do not have continually used stress coping strategies and they try to decrease their stress by using various coping styles developed by themselves.

The results of coping strategies revealed that EFL teachers' most used coping styles were:

- Finding comfort in religion
- Being optimistic about the outcome
- Trying to avoid confrontation
- Trying to come up with strategies

It is not surprising that teachers find comfort in religion and stick to their religious beliefs to mitigate the stress because they live in Islamic community. According to Islamic beliefs sticking to religion and God can diminish the amount of anxiety and stress. These results were mostly in agreement with the findings of Unal (2000) who concluded that self confidence to overcome the stress factor, speaking on stress factor with friends, no to think about the stress creating situation, engaging in a hobby and saying prayers were applied more than others.

Furthermore, the results of this study revealed that there were not any significant differences among male and female teachers in most coping strategies. The findings of this study confirmed the findings of Nayak (2008) who found that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers on different types of coping strategies.

Conclusion

This study investigated the nature and sources of stress among EFL teachers. Kyriacou (2001: 25) defined teacher stress as “ the experience by teachers of unpleasant, negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher”. Dunham (2002:3) believes that stress has been variously defined but it is generally recognized as “unpleasant emotional state which is said to occur when there have been prolonged, increasing or new pressures that are significantly greater than the coping resources”.

A number of factors that contribute to the causes of teacher stress have been identified. Adams (2001) delineated three main sources of teachers’ stress: System category, internal category, and students’ category. He included role ambiguity, role conflict, school stress, task stress, supervisory support, non- participation, peer support, role overload, and management styles as stressors in system category. Moreover, in his review stressors such as role preparation, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, illness symptoms, locus of control, and self esteem were arranged into the internal domains. He also identified class size, students’ learning and students’ behavior as stressors in students’ category.

Identification of the causes of teachers' stress is necessary if we wish to improve the teachers' situation to handle the pressures well. Paulse (2005) postulated that the sources of stress are many, varied, complex and different for every individual, change over time therefore are almost impossible to analyze. Hammad (2012) concluded that the most important sources of stress were: the conflict and role ambiguity, workload, parents' involvement, poor working conditions, students' behavioral and discipline problems, salary, school structures, ethos, and management style.

Every profession has its own problems and stressful situations. Some individuals handle these situations better than the others. In her review Oi Ling (1995) showed that the literature of strategies that teachers used to cope with stress was: social support, direct action, and indirect action. Every one develops his own strategies to mitigate the stress. Nayak(2008) found that the strategies for reducing physical stress mainly were: relaxation, correct posture, diet, physical exercise, medicinal therapy, and natural care. And she also added that the methods for reducing mental stress were: religious meditation, psychotherapy, social support, altering situation, reducing responsibility, and most liked activities.

Here, we devised a questionnaire with potential stressors understood as pedagogical barriers to conduct this research. And we are to compare the results of this study with those of previous researchers.

EFL teachers' perception of the sources of stress in their occupation

The results of the source of stress among EFL teachers revealed that the main sources of their stresses were:

- Books and materials in books
- Students' diversity knowledge
- Lack of sufficient time to deal with students' problem
- Inadequate salary
- Parents' low involvement

Golpour (2012) evaluated English books in schools according to standardized norms. He diagnosed the deficiencies of these books. This study verified his findings regarding the

evaluation of the books. As EFL teachers indicated that their books were not recent and motivating and they were sources of problem for them. The findings of this study supported the results of Hammad (2012) who concluded that parents' low involvement, poor working conditions, students, misbehavior, discipline problems, and low salary were the major sources of stress for teachers. The results of this study were consistent with his findings except for students' behavior and discipline problem issues. The results of present investigation were opposed with those of Rhode et al. (2004) who found work load, balance between work and personal life, proportion of time spent on administration, relations with other staffs, society's view of teachers, pupils' behavior, class size, and pay as some sources of teachers' stress. Therefore, our findings and their findings were totally different except for 2 items: class size and pay.

Results related to EFL teachers' coping strategies

The findings of this study related to coping strategies showed that EFL teachers' most frequently used coping styles were:

- Finding comfort in religion
- Being optimistic about the outcome
- Trying to avoid confrontation
- Trying to come up with strategies

These results were mostly consistent with the findings of Unal (2000) who found that self confidence to overcome the stress factor, speaking on stress factor with friends, no to think about the stress creating situation, engaging in a hobby and saying prayers were applied more than other coping styles.

Furthermore, the results of this study revealed that there were not any significant differences among male and female teachers in most coping strategies. Therefore, the findings of this study supported the findings of Nayak (2008) who found that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers on different types of coping strategies.

The relationship between EFL teachers' perception of stress prevalence and their demographic information

The results of present study showed that there were not any significant relationship between the perception of stress among EFL teachers and their demographic information. These findings confirm the findings of Johannsen (2011) who concluded that there was no correlation between stress scores and years of job experience. Moreover, our findings corroborate with the findings of Abdul samad et al. (2010) who showed that there was no significant association between the stress level with work experience, job personality, material status, and educational level.

The difference between overcoming stress and genders

The results in this research revealed that there was no significant difference in overcoming stress between males and females. The above findings are contrary to those of Abdul Samad et al. (2010) who concluded female teachers had poorer mental health status and stress level compared to male teachers. Furthermore, they stated that “females are more emotional and heavily affected by negative emotion, while male generally more independent and have rugged feeling. This may show females are more susceptible to the impact of environmental stressors.”(p. 167).

The effects of the stress on EFL teachers

The results of this study revealed that a vast majority of EFL teachers (about 90 %) experienced anxiety and worry in stressful situations. And a majority of EFL teachers (about 57 %) avoided anger when they felt stress. The results of this study are inconsistent with Putter’s (2003) who showed that teachers experienced high levels of stress manifestation with regard to emotional, fatigue, cardiovascular, gastronomic, and behavioral manifestations. These different results may be due to different working conditions.

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