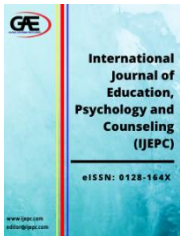
International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING (IJEPC)
https://gaexcellence.com/ijepc

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

Noor Malinjasari Ali[1], Hasmida Mohd Noor[2]* Suzila Mat Salleh[3], Siti Fatimah Mardiah Hamzah[4], Raslina Mohamed Nor[5], Ruzaidah Sulong @ A. Rashid[6], Roszainora Setia[7], Rahayu Izwani Borhanuddin[8], Noor Hafiza Mohammed[9], Hasmi Mokhlas[10]

[1]Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
noorm726@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0162-8133
[2]Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
hasmidam@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6554-0208
[3]Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
suzilamsalleh@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5170-0187
[4]Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
sfatimah@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0608-5458
[5]Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
raslina@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1417-1988
[6]Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
ruzai019@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8054-7324
[7]Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
roszainora@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7994-7015
[8]Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
rahay823@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2840-1012
[9]Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
hafiza2054@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7882-1261
[10]Faculty of Business & Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Melaka, Malaysia
hasmi@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1064-2679
*Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:
Received date: 03.08.2026
Revised date: 27.08.2026
Accepted date: 24.09.2026
Published date: 30.09.2026

Abstract:

Work stress among teachers is an issue that needs to be addressed and discussed. Coping strategies are needed to eliminate the causes of teacher work stress to enable teachers to perform effectively. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the causes of work stress among teachers. This study employed a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews. Sampling involves four experienced secondary school

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

To cite this document:

Ali, N. M., Noor, H. M., Salleh, S. M., Hamzah, S. F. M., Nor, R. M., Rashid, R. S. A., Setia, R., Borhanuddin, R. I., Mohammed, N. H., & Mokhlas, H. (2026). Beyond The Classroom: A Qualitative Inquiry Into Secondary School Teachers' Experiences. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counselling, 11*(64), 1954-1969.

DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.1164109

teachers. The interview data were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed. The findings reveal four primary sources of work stress, namely, workload, organizational culture, leadership quality, and students' behavioral problems. If these issues are not addressed properly, they may adversely affect the national educational system. Therefore, it is important to develop proposals for comprehensive models to support teachers. This study provides qualitative insights into the lived experiences of Malaysian secondary school teachers, contributes to the understanding of occupational stress in the education sector, and offers practical implications for improving teachers' well-being and workplace environment through development of models that could overcome work stress among teachers while contributing to the literature on education. Among the causes of stress are workload, organizational culture, leadership quality, and students' behavioral problems.

Keyword:

Education System, Organizational Stress, Secondary School, Work Stress, Workload

© The authors (2026). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY NC) (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact ijepc@gaexcllence.com.

Introduction

A teacher can be defined as someone whose job is to teach and educate. However, the current responsibility of a teacher is not only limited to the common definition of a teacher but far more than that and it is absolutely challenging. The main role of a teacher is producing human capital that has good qualities, is competitive and subsequently can contribute and pour their energy and work towards economic development, political stability and improve social problems. The irony of all these ambitious goals is that teachers are also expected to fulfill multiple roles and responsibilities beyond the academic world, resulting in them having unexpected stress.

Current education system has subjected most teachers to face the bitterness of this situation. It is a far change from 20 or 30 years ago where only some specific appointed teachers would take the roles. For example, these educators are the ones who taught the important subjects, helming important posts in schools as well as those who need to work after class hours like the sport trainers (Azira, 2012). Whilst those who were not involved in any of those tasks mentioned above had more flexible times to finish their jobs.

Globalization of education has encouraged the government to create one sustainable education system aims to fulfil the requirement to complete all Malaysian students with needed skills to cope with the new centuries challenging aspects of economic, political and social impacts. This is documented in the Education Development Plan 2013-2025 which focus on learning in the

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

21st century and the ideas that teachers' role has been diversified to being facilitators (Norazlin & Siti Rohaimah, 2019). However, to achieve the stated objectives, there are prices that need to be paid. Consequent impact is not just that teachers are packed with various workloads but most of the workloads cannot even be categorized as either in the education or academic line. This in turn has made teachers becoming stressful. Thus, this paper will focus on the teachers' workload in school and which aspects of the workload trigger stress factors among the teachers. The stress level among teachers is a serious matter and it needs to be studied thoroughly to solve the issues arises. According to Rohman (2018), the Ministry of Education had produced a statement that in year 2018, out of 48, 258 teachers, a staggering number of 2,123 teachers had experienced high levels of stress. Moreover, in 2019, University Putra Malaysia (UPM) study showed that 7.1 percent of teachers in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur had developed stress at the workplace. The same study reported that female teachers developed stress twice as much as compared to male teachers (Nur Aishah & Shahlan, 2024).

Teachers' jobs are not only limited to educating and teaching but also comes with the workload that goes beyond the job scopes as they also must perform other tasks like doing clerical work, handling donations or financial matters for school, and various other roles. According to Hizan and Rodzalan (2020), teachers are stressed with work that come with deadlines because they were unable to finish the task during the specified time. Teachers feel stressed because their task starts at 7.30 am in the morning and may last until 2.00 pm in the afternoon for teaching and learning activities and other tasks apart from that could only be completed after, at other times or at home.

A study done by Ibrahim et al., (2020) on teachers in East Coast of Peninsula Malaysia found out that majority of teachers were overworked. This included the fact that there were high number of students they need to teach. In addition, their teaching workload and administrative work also had impact on their health. Past research found out that majority of the teachers in Malaysia had suffered burnout, being stressed out with their job due to overloaded workload and being forced to finish all their tasks in limited time frames (Pau et al., 2022).

Furthermore, past research on organizational stress and burning out among the teachers had positive correlations (Bottiani et al., 2019). According to Zhao et al (2022), there was a relationship between organizational stress among teachers in primary and secondary school in China. Another study conducted by Bete et al., (2022) found out that 95.0 percent of teachers in Ethiopia had depression symptoms. Prior to that, a study on teachers in Czech Republic found out that the male teachers recorded highest emotional stress whereas the female teachers recorded highest physical stress (Ptacek et al., 2019).

Furthermore, a study on teachers' stress and mental health found out that there is a positive correlation between organizational stress and mental health among teachers (Nur Aishah & Shahlan, 2024). A study by Edreina & Shahlan in 2025 also found out the level of teachers' stress is high and factors contributing to teachers' stress among the secondary school teachers included too many workload and could give the information they gathered to the relevant authority about the teachers' emotion in Malaysia in details. Therefore, findings from the various past literature on organizational stress among the teachers, show how important it is for the authors to explore the causes of stress and the stress level among secondary school teachers in Terengganu.

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

Literature Review

Organizational Stress

Stress is a normal phenomenon that occurs whenever someone feels pressure on something. Organizational stress is usually being associated with pressure with the current work that occurs at workplace and is usually detrimental to workers' health. Stress is a multifaceted construct encompassing stressors, appraisals, coping mechanisms, and emotional responses as key components of stress transactions. Makhbul & Idrus (2009) define stress as "a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being." In the context of organizational stress, numerous theoretical models have been proposed to elucidate its nature and impact. Nuraini, Marliani & Yuliati (2024), conceptualize organizational stress as "an ongoing transaction between an individual and the environmental demands associated primarily and directly with the organization within which he or she is operating." This definition underscores the dynamic interplay between the individual and their work environment.

Stressors, which serve as the initial stimuli in stress transactions, are defined as "environmental demands encountered by an individual" (Akgul & Aksoy, 2021). These stressors are characterized by situational properties such as imminence and novelty, which influence the potential for a stressful appraisal. The appraisal process refers to an individual's cognitive evaluation of the significance, relevance, and meaning of a perceived stressor in relation to their well-being and goals. The appraisal process comprises two stages: primary and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal involves evaluating a stressor according to its relevance for the individual and its potential to influence emotions, coping mechanisms, and various stress-related outcomes (Akgul & Aksoy, 2021). During this process, individuals categorize situations as threats, challenges, harm/loss, or potential benefits. Secondary appraisal entails an assessment of available coping resources to manage the encountered stressor(s) (Akgul & Aksoy, 2021; Omar et al., 2020).

This comprehensive framework of organizational stress provides a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between environmental demands, individual perceptions, and coping mechanisms in the workplace context. Coping is defined as 'constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Makhbul & Idrus, 2009). Emotions are entwined within stress transactions and can be defined as 'an organized psychophysiological reaction to ongoing relationships with the environment, most often, but not always, interpersonal or social (Akgul & Aksoy, 2021).

To encompass the concepts of appraising and emotion, Agul & Aksoy (2021) proposed the cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotions (CMRT). This suggests that certain characteristics of emotions (e.g. duration, intensity, quality) are dependent on the appraisals made of the relevance and significance of the stressful encounter and its potential outcomes for well-being. Work stress or organizational stress can be considered as one of the major issues in the occupational safety and health aspect and organizational wellbeing since stress can be considered in some serious cases fatal to employees' health and if the employees is sick, it will affect the organizational success as well (Makhbul & Idris, 2009, Bakhla et al., 2019; Nasrul, Zainal, & Hakim, 2023; Riduan et al., 2024).

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

When someone experienced work stress, it will make him or her felt vulnerable either physiologically or psychologically and the stress issues could lead to more problematic health diseases like cardiovascular, depression and burnout among the few diseases that could occur and even worse stress could lead to mental health problems or could cause cancer (Makhbul & Idris, 2009; Bakhla et al., 2019). Past research also showed that the stress level at the workplace today is higher than what was experienced by their co-workers in the past due to the fact that nowadays, current job required workers to stand in for a longer period of time, low ergonomic awareness, exposure to chemical substance, dust, and psychological work stress such as being bullied at work, poor social interaction at the workplace and bad relationship with the superiors (Bakhla et al., 2019; Riduan et al., 2024).

In addition, evaluation of stress among the workers in the healthcare industry also shows how significant and important it is. All the negative forces and health issues onto the individual as well as organizations show us that something must be done to minimize work stress. Extreme and continuous exposure to stress would reduce an individual capacity to perform at work. Based on this reason, this study must be undertaken. Moreover, literature reviews show that study in this field is very few. For example, how organizational stress impacted the non-medical staff at healthcare industries studies are very limited (Makhbul & Idris, 2009; Bakhla et al., 2019; Nasrul et al., 2023; Riduan et al., 2024)

Workload

Workload can be defined as number of activities that must be completed by an employee or organizational unit in a certain period of time (Nasrul et al., 2023). Workloads also could be considered as tasks given to employees and need to be carried out at a certain time by using the skills and potential of the workforce which can be further divided into categories: workload quality and workload quantities (Nasrul et al., 2023). Workload could also be defined as a condition for processing job descriptions that must be completed within a certain period or tasks assigned to workers or employees to be completed at a certain time by using the skills and potential of the workforce (Riduan et al., 2024). Based on some definitions above, in essence, workload can be defined as a number of activities/tasks that are assigned and must be completed by an employee or organizational unit in a certain period using their knowledge and skill.

Organizational Culture

The organizational culture of an organization, including the culture of their workers and often influenced by various factors. It encompasses the shared values, beliefs, practices, and behaviours within the community. With the increasing number of institutions worldwide, it becomes crucial to understand the importance of focusing on workers' well-being within their respective institutions. The quality and functioning of these institutions, as perceived by stakeholders, significantly impact the organization's overall well-being. (Lubis et al., 2024) also emphasize the employees' physical and mental wellness and overall enjoyment, all associated with 'job satisfaction and thus decrease the stress. It is difficult to define work culture as one concept, since it can be defined variously according to perspective or purpose, but culture can be referred to as a collective term of all the things acquired by acquired learning.

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

Accordingly, organizational culture means a culture formed in accordance with organizational goals by sharing the things acquired by learning, and comprises all the values, activities, philosophy, ideals, etc. of an organization. Once formed, it does not change easily and affects the values and behaviours of organization members and organization performances greatly. Indeed, organizational culture can be seen as one culture represented as a summary of individual cultures in macroscopic terms, but it is not the same as the culture of each member. Organizational culture, as the norms, values and beliefs held within an organization, plays a role in shaping individual work experiences (Divayani & Darmawan, 2024). Organizational culture can act as another factor that can reduce risk If employees feel alignment between their personal values and the values is acknowledged by the organization, they are more likely to feel engaged and committed, reducing their stress and desire to leave the company. On the other hand, when the value is not recognized by the organization or can be inculcate as organizational culture, it can increase the stress level of employees and lead to dissatisfaction, discomfort, and ultimately encourage intentions to change jobs.

Organizational culture is an important component in a company, because it is a value that will determine the behaviour of all employees in the company and is a component that can differentiate between one organization and another (Divayani & Darmawan, 2024). According to Lubis et al., (2024) organizational culture is an invisible social force, which can move people in an organization to carry out work activities If an organization's values and norms align with an employee's individual values, this can create a strong emotional bond between the employee and the organization and reducing stress. Conversely, if there is a value mismatch, employees may feel dissatisfied and have the desire to move resulting from the amount of stress they received. A culture that encourages social support and collaboration between employees can create a pleasant work environment. Employees who feel supported and have good relationships with their coworkers tend to be more satisfied and have less pressure to take. By understanding and managing organizational culture well, organizations can create an environment that supports employees, reduces organizational stress and reduces their intention to leave the organization (Divayani & Darmawati, 2024; Lubis et al., 2024)

Leadership Quality

Leadership is part of management process, and it is defined as an act of directing the employees in an organization. Usually, leaders ought to encourage employees and allocate duties to personnel or groups toward overall goal attainment (Pattali et al., 2024). As leaders are individuals with different personalities, their leadership will also be different according to their personalities, mentality and their personal view. The manager employs different leadership styles to bring workplace changes (Trembley et al., 2024). To withstand in the globally competitive world, leaders experiment with varying types of leadership to achieve organizational goals and motivate employees (Pattali et al., 2024; Tremblay et al., 2024).

Leadership in hospitals is aligning the employees with the leaders' view in achieving organizational goals (Pattali et al., 2024). The leaders can create an enjoyable work environment that enhances management transparency, information disclosure, internalizing moral ideals, and encourage positive working environment (Pattali et al., 2024). When an organization values employees' work, workers' well-being and socio-emotional needs are met. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) will make employees feel the organization considers their values (Trembely et al., 2024).

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

Stress Among Teachers in Malaysia

According to Hong and Ismail (2017) in many of the past studies on teachers as a profession in civil servants that faced with stress factors, teachers positioned at fourth place after police, prison officer and nurse. According to Subramaniam and Omar (2022) stated that teachers' task not only involved teaching and learning but also administrative work and other tasks. Therefore, teachers feel overwhelmed and one day is not enough for them to clear up all the tasks. Teachers experience stress in their job, especially in time management, because they are always fighting up with time as there are so many things they need to solve during their working hours in school. Every day, from 7.30 am until 2.00 pm in the afternoon, teachers were stressed from the various workloads that they need to fulfill like they need to fill the students' attendance that needs to be updated in the system before 9.00 am as stipulated by the school administrator. Then, the teaching and learning as schedule, reports that need to be updated, training the student to participate in competition, disciplined the students and many more.

The source of work stress had been linked to relationships in workplace, intrinsic motivation, the role of individual in the organization, structure and organization climate or in short organization culture. According to Suhaimi and Muhamad (2020), work stress has negative impact and will subsequently let the quality and performance of the workers being disturbed. Apart from that, individuals that had been stressed by their job often did not have satisfaction in doing their job that led to imperfect tasks and responsibilities.

According to Dawn et al., (2015) and Matthew (2011), the role of the teachers is risky, and the stress levels are higher that could affect their health and happiness. From their studies, teachers as profession are the jobs that have a higher work stress and could give impact to lower performance and lower job satisfaction as a teacher. The source of work stress had been discussed also and the findings mentioned that various workload and more job scope are the culprit of work stress. The increase in teachers' role that feels like a burden is the factors that make more teachers stress as the increase workload will create the environment that will encourage stress factors to the teachers (Nur Aishah & Shahlan, 2024).

Research Methodology

The research design is using qualitative data for data collection. Data was collected using interviews to collect detailed information. The respondents were interviewed using the semi structure questionnaire based on the situations that need to be studied. The data then were transcribed and analysed to ease the coding and categorizing process in a systematic way to answer the research questions.

Respondents

Respondents were selected using purposive sampling among individuals who have more experience and knowledge relevant to subject matters. Four respondents had been identified, three female teachers and one male teacher. The criteria were simple: the teachers need to have more than 20 years' experience in their teaching job and actively involved in school extra curriculum.

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

Instrument

The data collection used interviews that had been conducted using interview instruments. Semi structure questions were outlined to include the main questions that are relevant to the objectives of the study including:

- Are you having stress in your work?
- What are the factors that make you stressed with your job?
- What do you do if you feel stress?
- What are your actions when you feel stress and you need to finish your work immediately?

All the questions were designed to make the respondents want to share their experience willingly and their response could answer the research objectives.

Data Analysis

Data from the interview session then transcribed thoroughly to ensure no important information is being left out. All the interviews were recorded with audio records after receiving permission from the respondents. After the data were transcribed, the data were analyzed for coding and categorized systematically. The analysis process involved open coding: all the transcription interviews were read thoroughly to identify the theme or main category. Secondly, focus coding: all the identified main coding were categorized according to the main theme. It will help in understanding the pattern in the data and gives a clear picture of the study context. After all categories had been developed, the thematic validity was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the theme. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis and more than one researcher to ensure the preciseness of the output of the research.

Validity and Reliability of the Data

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, all the transcript data were then given back to the respondents for their verification. Apart from that, trail of audit had been used to document all the steps in data collection and analysis of the data.

Findings And Analysis of the Data

Outcome of Research

Findings of the research came from four teachers, one male teacher and three female teachers who had vast experience in teaching in secondary school and below is the outcome of the analysis that had been conducted.

Background of the Respondents.

This study involved four respondents who had been selected through purposive sampling. All the respondents have been teachers in secondary school for more than 20 years and experienced a lot of stress in their teaching careers and job scope.

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Code	Age	Education Level	Teaching Experience	Gender
F1	54	Degree	30	Female
F2	51	Degree	28	Female
F3	57	Degree	30	Female
M1	55	Degree	25	Male

Sources of Stress Among Teachers

Based on the data that had been transcribed, interpreted and analyzed manually, there were four main themes which are connected with the stress faced by the teachers: workload, leadership quality, organizational culture and students' behavior.

Workload

Workload is the major source of stress and mental health among teachers. Even though heavy workload will be a burden not only to teachers but also in other occupations, all the respondents agreed that workload is their major mental stress. This is what had been said by the teachers.

P1: "I *think I cannot go on anymore. The heavy task feels burdensome to me. The workload is so huge that sometimes I need to finish it at home, and sometimes it strains my marriage. I need to be active in various activities, hold so many positions in school, and sometimes even during holiday, I need to come to school to finish my tasks*."

P2: *"Teachers today face different challenges compared to when I first started working as a teacher. Now, there are so many things to do, not only teaching and learning. Apart from our main tasks, I need to manage extensive paperwork, conduct sports activities, and update work-related information in both online and offline systems. The increasing workload has become a significant burden to me.*"

P3: "*The burden of teachers workload is increasing. It is no longer limited to teaching but extends beyond that. So many demands from schools, parents and the Ministry of Education requiring teachers bear various responsibilities to improve students' academic performance. I don't mind about the teaching activities, but when they take up my holiday time, I feel extremely frustrated. like I want to be Hulk Hogan. The academic and non-academic activities are conducted almost every week, sometimes until late at night. Not to mention, I also need to attend various meeting, prepare questions, mark homework, conduct interventions, complete paperwork, minute of meetings, and various other tasks."*

M1*: "The tasks in school will continue even after we are nearing retirement. One by one, the workload is assigned to us, and we are required to complete them within the stipulated time. Most of the tasks need to use online system, but the internet connection at school is unreliable. Sometimes, I need to wake up at 3.00 a.m. to key in marks into the system. The workload came continuously without giving me sufficient time to rest, while I also need to attend meetings and conduct other programs. I am so dead tired."*

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

Organizational Culture

Another source of stress for teachers is the organizational culture like the working environment, the peers, the supervisors and the value the company inculcated.

P1: "*Sometimes I feel tired just thinking about going to work. Why? Because the school environment is something that I want to avoid, as it became toxic due to non-understanding colleagues and a rigid school management*".

P2: "*I feel tired whenever I go to school because I do a lot of work behind the scenes, but the credit often goes to other people. It makes me feel that my efforts are not appreciated enough. I am tired both physically and emotionally. I am afraid that if this situation prolonged, I may eventually have a mental breakdown".*

P3: "*With such heavy workloads, an unhealthy working environment for mental health, and responsibility of managing my family, I often feel exhausted. As I am getting older, fatigue affects my emotions more than it used to. I am afraid that my emotional state may affect my students' performance. When I am constantly under stress, I am afraid that it could lead to depression and other health problems too".*

M1*: "My school has a toxic environment. The teachers mostly like to talk about other people, and some are jealous of other people's lives, as if they can't live peacefully if someone else is doing better than they are. I am one of their victims, so I know the feeling".*

Leadership Quality

Leadership quality as can been seen by administrator attitude also can cause stress in a teacher. From the data analysis, respondents said that it is important the leadership quality of a headmaster towards his subordinates or teachers below his jurisdiction. The leader aka the headmaster needs to be professional in allocating the work task and needs to show empathy and tries to understand the problems and the situations of each teacher for the teachers to fulfill their duties with efficiencies.

P1: "The leader, particularly the headmaster, needs to play an important role. If possible, the headmaster should try to understand the situation and feelings of teachers at school. Teachers may face many personal problems too, so the headmaster need to be flexible and practice give-and-take. Leaders should not have favorite groups or individuals or just simply target certain teachers by assigning various tasks to them while others are allowed to do whatever they want. If this happens consecutively, I will lose respect for the headmaster."

P2: "If it is related to work, the headmaster needs to set a good example. There are some cases where the headmaster does not perform his responsibilities effectively but expects teachers to perform excellent work and want to maintain a good reputation for himself. If teachers give their opinions, the headmaster is unwilling to accept them but instead blame the teachers for all the mistakes that occur. This does not reflect the quality of good leader. His services need to be terminated."

P3: "The headmaster and school administrator in my school always assign tasks to a person who usually perform their work well, without considering whether they already had other

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969
existing tasks. They never consider teacher's workload or problems, and this does not reflect good example of leadership quality".

Students' Behavioral Problem

The last source of stress is from students' behavioral problems. Students' attitudes for example, lazy to study, less respect for the teachers, uncouth, and the influence of internet and social media made the teachers feel offended. Apart from that, their poor performance also resulted in teachers' stress.

P1: "Students today are very different compared to students in the past. Students nowadays are less independent. Apart from that, parents' WhatsApp group which contain numerous messages from parents, have made teachers' life more miserable and stressful."

P2: "There are a lot of discipline problems among students, such as smoking, not respecting teachers, not completing their homework, and displaying various attitude problems."

P3: "I taught at a secondary school, where all the teenagers liked to follow negative influences on the internet. They needed to sit for the SPM examination but did not put in the effort to study because they believed that even university graduates failed to secure well-paying jobs. Their attitudes and behaviours deeply broke my heart as they are the future leaders, what will happen to this country one day?"

Discussion

The findings reveal that workload is the primary source of stress among teachers. Respondents highlighted that their responsibilities have expanded beyond teaching and learning to include administrative tasks, documentation, online reporting systems, extracurricular activities, meetings, and various school programs. This increasing workload has contributed to role overload, affecting teachers' professional performance, personal well-being, and family life.

Additionally, digital transformation in education has added new challenges, as online systems and reporting requirements have increased teachers' responsibilities, particularly when technological support is inadequate. Therefore, effective workload management, equitable task distribution, and sufficient organizational support are essential to reduce teacher stress.

Besides, organizational culture also significantly influences teachers' emotional well-being. Negative workplace conditions, such as poor colleague relationships, lack of appreciation, weak cooperation, and unhealthy interactions, contribute to emotional exhaustion, frustration, and reduced commitment. A toxic work environment may intensify teachers' existing stress, while a supportive organizational culture can promote psychological safety, motivation, and a sense of belonging. Therefore, schools should foster positive workplace practices through collaboration, recognition, mutual respect, and open communication to enhance teachers' well-being and resilience.

In addition, school leadership plays an important role in shaping teachers' stress levels. Effective leaders who demonstrate empathy, fairness, flexibility, and proper workload management can reduce workplace stress, while poor leadership practices such as favoritism, unfair task allocation, and lack of communication may increase teachers' frustration and

emotional exhaustion. Therefore, school administrators should promote transparent, fair, and empathetic leadership practices to support teachers' well-being.

Furthermore, students' behavioral problems contribute significantly to teacher stress. Respondents highlighted problems such as lack of motivation, disciplinary issues, disrespectful behavior, poor academic commitment, and negative influences from social media. These problems increase teachers' emotional and psychological demands, as teachers are deeply concerned about students' academic success and future development. Managing student behavior requires additional time, patience, and emotional effort, which may contribute to stress and burnout. Therefore, collaboration between schools, parents, and communities is essential to support teachers, strengthen student discipline, and promote responsible digital behavior among students.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Our study investigated the independent variables—workload, organizational culture, leadership quality, and students' behavioral problem—to work stress among secondary school teachers through qualitative approach of interviewing the teachers. The findings reveal that these factors are indeed the source of stress for teachers. These results partially align with previous research that supported that workload, organizational culture, leadership quality and students' behavioral problems are the factors associated with work stress. This divergence may be attributed to the homogeneity of our sample, which primarily consisted of Malay staff members sharing similar cultural backgrounds and beliefs.

From this study, we could explore that heavy workload, organizational culture, leadership quality and students' behavioral problems are among the identified factors that contribute to teachers' stress. Therefore, it is hoped that the Ministry of Education can produce an outline and strategic plan to overcome the issues. Among significant suggestion is the one proposed by Kamarudin and Taat (2020) that is to emphasize on the empirical research on stress issues among the teachers with grants. The study can develop models that could overcome stress among teachers and contribute to the literature on education, especially on stress and teacher's psychology.

This study has many limitations as it only has four samples, and it is done qualitatively. The limited sample size and geographical scope of our study (focused on a single secondary school) may have influenced this outcome. We posit that a broader study encompassing diverse regions of Malaysia might yield different results. Our research successfully addressed our objectives, with teachers mentioning the sources of their stress. Three independent variables were mentioned by the respondents which is workload, organizational culture and leadership quality regardless the gender of the teachers, showing that males and females teachers both agreed on their sources of work stress. Hopefully with this research finding, authorities could help in lowering the level of work stress among the teachers. For future study, an empirical study on teachers' stress with substantial amounts of samples could be conducted.

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for providing the necessary resources and support throughout the course of this research. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and peers who contributed valuable insights and constructive feedback, which greatly enhanced the quality of this paper.

Funding Statement: This research did not receive any funding from any parties.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors did not have any conflict of interest in research, writing or the publication of this research.
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All authors have contributed to this work and approved the final version of the manuscript for submission to the International Journal Of Education, Psychology And Counselling (IJEPC).

Ethics Statement: This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The data collected were used solely for academic purposes and with the approval of the university.

Author Contribution Statement: All authors contributed significantly to the development of this manuscript.
Noor Malinjasari Ali: Conceptualization, methodology, interpretation of findings and overall supervision of the study.
Hasmida Mohd Noor: Literature review and research administration, including submission as corresponding author.
Siti Fatimah Mardiah Hamzah: Interpretation of interview findings and manuscript writing.
Suzila Mat Salleh: Literature review, and manuscript writing.
Raslina Mohamed Nor: Literature review, manuscript editing and formatting.
Ruzaidah Sulong@A.Rashid: Conducted in-depth interviews.
Noor Hafiza Mohammed: Conducted in-depth interviews.
Roszainora Hj. Setia: Transcription, manuscript review and English proofreading.
Rahayu Izwani Borhanuddin: Transcription and manuscript review.
Hasmi Mokhlas: Literature review, manuscript editing and formatting.

All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

References

Akgul, G. Y., & Aksoy, N. (2021). The relationship between organizational stress levels and patient safety attitudes in operating room staff, *Journal of PeriAnesthesia Nursing*, 36(4), 499-506. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jopan.2020.11.002

Azita Abdul Rahim. (2012). Beban Tugas Guru Sekolah Menengah Di Daerah Batu Pahat, Johor Darul Takzim. 4.

Bahkla, A. S., Awang, Z., Afthanorhan, A., Ghazali, P. L., & Foziah, H. (2019). Exploratory factor analysis on occupational stress in context of Malaysian sewerage operations. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 2138, 050006. https://doi.org/10.1063/1.5121111

Bete, T., Gemechu, K., Anbesaw, T., Tarafa, H., & Tadessa, J. (2022). Depressive symptoms and associated factor among public school teachers in Jimma town, Southwest, Ethiopia 2020: a multi-disciplinary, cross sectional study. *BMC psychiatry*, 22(1), 19.

Bottiani, J. H., Duran, C. A., Pas, E. T., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2019). Teacher stress and burnout in urban middle schools: Associations with job demands, resources, and effective classroom practices. *Journal of School Psychology*, 77, 36-51. Brazil. Revista Brasileira de Medicina do Trabalho, 18(3), 3.

Dawn, S., Talukdar, P., Bhattacharjee, S., & Singh, O. P. (2015). Stress in school teachers of a school in West Bengal, India. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 19(1), 12–17. https://doi.org/10.5005/EJP-19-1-12 Eee,

Divayani, N. D. B., & Darmawan, A. (2024). The role of organizational commitment as a mediator in work-family conflict and organizational culture on turnover intention. International Journal of Economics, *Business and Accounting Research* (IJEBAR), 8(2). http://dx.doi.org/10.29040/ijebar.v8i2

Edreina Danyal., Shahlan Surat (2025), Punca-Punca Tekanan Kerja di kalangan Guru, *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* (MJSSH) (e-ISSN:2504-8562) 10(3), 1-12, e002912 DOI: https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v10i3.2912

Hizan, N. S. S., & Rodzalan, S. A. (2020). Hubungan antara pengurusan masa dengan tekanan kerja dalam kalangan guru sekolah menengah. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, https://doi.org/10.30880/rmtb.2020.01.01.008 5(1), 92–103.

Hong, O. C., & Ismail, A. (2017). Sokongan pihak pengurusan sekolah terhadap tekanan kerja guru di Sekolah Kebangsaan dan Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina. JuPiDi: *Jurnal Kepimpinan Pendidikan*, 2(2), 42–57. http://e-journal.um.edu.my/publish/JuPiDi

Ibrahim, R. Z. A. R., Zalam, W. Z. M., Daganga, M. M., Omar, K., Bakar, A. A., & Ali, S. N. M. (2020). Psychological distress among teachers in Malaysia. *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine*, 7(6), 505-516.

Kamarudin, S. & Taat, M. S. (2020). Pengaruh Faktor-faktor Tekanan Kerja dalam kalangan Guru di Sekolah Menengah: Satu Analisis Persamaan Struktur (SEM-PLS). *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences* 10.47405/mjssh.v5i11.544. and Humanities, 5(11), 104-115.

Lubis, Z. A., Lubis, Y., & Effendi, I. (2024). The influence of work engagement, organizational culture, workload and work stress on the performance of implementing employees in the Kebun area of Serdang District. *Jurnal Bisnis dan Manajemen*, 11(1), 137-150.

Makhbul, Z. M., & Idrus, D. (2009). Work stress issues in Malaysia. *Malaysia Labour Review*, 3(2), 13-26.

Mathew, L. (2011). An Exploratory Study on Occupational Stress and Coping Strategies of Special Educators in South https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.643192 India. *SSRN Electronic Journal.*

Nasrul, R. N., Zainal, V. R., & Hakim, A. (2023). Workload, work stress, and employee performance: A literature review. *Dinasti International Journal of Education Management and Social Science*, 4(3), 415-422. https://doi.org/10.31933/dijemss.v4i3

Norazlin Mohd Rusdin dan Siti Rohaimah Ali. (2019). Amalan dan Cabaran Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Abad Ke-21. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Islamic Civilization and Technology Management.*

Nur Aishah Binti Mohd Yahaya Khan., & Shahlan Bin Surat (2024), Hubungan Antara Tekanan Kerja dan Kesihatan Mental Dalam Kalangan Guru Sekolah, *Jurnal Psikologi Malaysia* 38 (4), 26-36, ISSN-2289-8174

Nuraini, F., Marliani, A., & Yuliawati, J. (2024). The influence of workload and job stress on employee performance at the Karawang State Attorney's Office. *International Journal of Management, Economic, Business and Accounting (IJMEBA)*, 3(2), 1-17. http://portal.xjurnal.com/index.php/ijmeba

Omar, M. K., Aluwi, A. H., Fauzi, M. W. M., & Hairpuddin, N. F. (2020). Work stress, workload, work-life balance, and intention to leave among employees of an insurance company in Malaysia. *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law*, 21(2), 70-78.

Pattali, S., Sankar, J. P., Al-Qahtani, H., Menon, N., & Faizal, S. (2024). Effect of leadership style on turnover intention among staff nurses in private hospitals: The moderating effect of perceived organizational support. *BMC Health Services Research*, 24, 199. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-024-10674-0

Pau, K., Ahmad, A. B., Tang, H. Y., Jusoh, A. J. B., Perveen, A., & Tat, K. K. (2022). Mental Health and Wellbeing of Secondary School Teacher in Malaysia. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(6).

Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia 2013-2025: Pendidikan Prasekolah Hingga Lepas Menengah. Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. Putrajaya, Malaysia.

Ptáček, R., Vnukova, M., Raboch, J., Smetackova, I., Sanders, E., Svandova, L., & Stefano, G. B. (2019). Burnout syndrome and lifestyle among primary school teachers: A Czech representative study. *Medical science monitor: international medical journal of Jurnal Psikologi Malaysia* 38 (4) (2024): 26-36 ISSN-2289-8174 36 experimental and research, 25, 4974.

Riduan, M., Helmi, S., Gunarto, M., & Trisninawati. (2024). The influence of work stress and workload on work motivation and its impact on the performance of Class II Land Transportation Management Center employees in South Sumatra. *International Journal of Finance Research*, 5(2), 136-156. https://doi.org/10.47747/ijfr.v5i2.1743

Rohman, M. A. (2018, Ogos 28). 4.4 peratus guru stres. Berita Harian. https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/nasional/2018/08/467001/44-peratus guru-stres

Subramaniam, H., & Omar, I. M. (2022). Hubungan tekanan kerja dan pengurusan bilik darjah dalam kalangan guru sekolah rendah di Daerah Klang. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, 47(1), 39–52. https://ejournal.ukm.my/jpend/issue/view/1529

Suhaimi Kamarudin & Muhamad Suhaimi Taat. (2020). Faktor tingkah laku pelajar, kekangan masa,beban tugas dan tekanan kerja dalam kalangan guru. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,* 5(9), 114-124.

Tremblay, M. L., Boies, K., Clausen, C., Frechette, J., Manning, K., Gelsomini, C., Cyr, G., Lavigne, G., Gottlieb, B., & Gottlieb, L. N. (2024). Evaluation of the effectiveness of a strengths-based nursing and healthcare leadership program aimed at building leadership capacity: A concurrent mixed-methods study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies Advances*, 6, 100184. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnsa.2024.100184

International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling
IJEPC
EISSN : 0128-164X
Volume 11 Issue 64 (September 2026) PP. 1954-1969

Zhao, W., Liao, X., Li, Q., Jiang, W., & Ding, W. (2022). The relationship between teacher job stress and burnout: a moderated mediation model. *Frontiers in Psychology*