

**Experienced Stressors by Educators in Public High Schools of Malamulele, Vhembe
District**

By

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DECLARATION

I, **Clothilda Tsakani Nkuna** hereby declare that the mini-dissertation titled: 'Experienced Stressors by Educators in Public High Schools of Malamulele, Vhembe District' has not been submitted previously for any other degree at this university or any other institution. It is my original work in design and in execution and that all references used herein have been duly acknowledged.

Signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my mother Eunice Nkuna for her love and support. My source of inspiration and pillar of strength. Whenever I felt I had no strength remaining in me she gave me reasons to raise and believe I was capable of doing anything. May the good Lord continue to bless her.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: It has been noted that stress is considered a major global health challenge. This is because it affects the well-being of service providers, especially those working in the human service sector, such as educators. The sources of stress are attributed to social factors, discipline of students, occupational pressures and workload. Studies have shown that stress is a silent killer that affects the health and productivity of educators, leading to mental, physical, emotional and behavioral illnesses. Educators in the Malamulele North East Circuit are confronted with work challenges and continue experiencing stress.

Purpose: The study aimed at finding out the experienced stressors by educators in public high schools of Malamulele North East circuit, Vhembe District.

Method: The study was conducted in Malamulele North East public high schools. Malamulele North East is situated in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. A qualitative approach using explorative and descriptive design was adopted for the study. A sample of twelve educators was chosen from the target population by means of convenience sampling and data was collected through a face to face individual in-depth interview. Interviews and discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed and coded into larger themes, categories and sub-categories.

Results: The following themes were derived from data analysis: factors considered to be sources of stress, perceived effects of stress among high school educators, strategies that educators use to cope with stress and strategies to manage the experiences of stress for educators. The study showed that different factors at schools have a great impact on educators. All the educators were affected by stressors in their work daily and adopted some coping strategies. However, these educators required continued intervention to manage the stress.

Conclusions: The findings showed that all educators were experiencing stress in their work environment and were affected personally as well as professionally. Hence, the DOE needs to design strategies for continues support in order to manage the stress.

Key words: Educator, Experience, High school, Public school, Stress

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABET	: Adult Basic Education and Training
CAPS	: Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DOE	: Department of Education
EAP	: Employee Assistance Programs
GAS	: General Adaptation Syndrome
HOD	: Head of Department
ILO	: International Labour Organization
OBE	: Outcome-Based Education
PPN	: Post Provisioning Norms
QP	: Qualify to Progress
SEC	: Social and Emotional Competence
SGB	: School Governing Body
USE	: Universal Secondary Education
WEF	: World Economic Forum

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background

Stress has been identified as the major cause of a decrease in productivity. It is believed stress costs businesses and institutions in Europe over \$200 per year, according to the International labour organization (Nnuro, 2012). Further, indicated that these costs include salaries for sick days and costs of hospitalization. In America, according to the American Psychological Association in 2011, more than half of Americans would identify their level of stress as greater than 5 on a scale from 1 to 10 (Miller, Chen & Parker, 2011). Stress occurs as a result of family or personal issues. However, stress at work has become a greater problem because of job restructuring and globalization (Nekzada & Tekeste, 2014). So as to keep pace with this competitive world, employees in the work-place spend most of their time striving to meet their job obligations, this ignoring the “stressors” that have adverse effects on employees domestic, social and personal life (Yaacob & Long, 2015).

In the educational sector, stress is increasing day by day. This is because teaching today’s young people is not only difficult but stressful (Mehta, 2013). Educators not only have the stress of dealing with so many diverse children on a daily working environment; they also have the responsibility of educating and molding children into productive members of the society. Kaur (2011) stated that educators’ job is very demanding, as quite often educators must take their work home overnight or on weekends in order to prepare for the next class section. The demands, pressures and conditions they work under can stifle the zeal of present educators (Naidoo, Botha & Bisschoff, 2013).

A study conducted in Asia by Brown and Uehara (1999) in the mid-west area of the United States of America showed that any changeover to the new education system has a direct impact on the schooling system, educators and learners’ performance. In addition, these changes add to educators’ stress and their performance decreases, as a result. An increased demand placed on educators by students and parents, as well as the job requirements by Malaysia’s Ministry of Education, also contributed to the readily increasing levels of stress (Samad, Hashim, Moin & Abdullah, 2010). As a result, a total of 237 primary and secondary

educators out of 36, 000 educators, sought psychiatric treatment because of stress from work and personal problems (Yaacob & Long, 2015). The researcher further, stated that the Malaysian State Education Department views occupational stress as serious, although the number may appear small. Factors such as work pressure, financial problems, depression and loneliness, were outlined to be the leading causes of stress (Yaacob & Long, 2015).

A study conducted in Madurai District, Tamil Nadu (Indonesia) showed that 17.70% of the total number of teachers from government and aided schools reported that they had been victims of high levels of occupational stress, of which a high percentage of the aided school teachers (17.70%), compared to government teachers (15.80%), felt that the occupational stress level was high. It was perceived that, lack of interaction, time pressure for completing the syllabus, social status, heavy work load, poor working conditions, sufficient and mutual cooperation are the major sources of occupational stress (Jeyaraj, 2013). Educators' stress affects the learning environment at schools and ultimately prevents achievement of the educator's educational goals. This leads to disinterest, negligence, bitterness, and absenteeism, and can result in educators leaving the profession (Sprenger, 2011). In North Carolina, about 28% of educators who resign each year leave the profession due to a career change, health, being dissatisfied with teaching, or for unknown reasons (Sprenger, 2011).

South Africa is a developing country and, like other developing countries, it is striving to ensure quality and accessible education for all its citizens. It can be said that democratization has led to changes in the education and school system in South Africa (Naidoo et al, 2013). It was noted that though the South African government invests highly in the country's education (8% of the gross domestic product), the quality of education provided in public schools seems to remain a problem (World Economic Forum, 2013 cited in Sprenger, 2011). As in studies in other countries, studies on educators stress in South Africa reveal that educators face a variety of stressors in their work. Since democracy in 1994 South Africans in the working environment have been facing major changes which trigger stress (Naidoo et al, 2013). The South African education system has gone through many changes in the last few years as a result of internal and external factors in the education system (Steenkamp, 2013).

Following the introduction of a new curriculum in schools throughout the country, educators' responsibilities have expanded dramatically. Adjusting to the new curriculum, as well as educators' increased workload have become a challenge for most educators (Bila & Roestenburg, 2011). Occupational stress has been occurring at an alarming rate, as in other

occupations, teaching has been stressful work in many countries around the world Alhazmi (2012). The work demands and pressures, conditions educators work under, poor organizational support, poor leadership, poor remuneration and a lack of growth opportunities, can stifle their zeal and productivity (Naidoo, 2012; Naidoo et al, 2013).

High schools under Malamulele North East Circuit have challenges such as overcrowded classes and other factors that remain a problem for most educators. Such circumstances make some educators fail to cope and consider resigning or requesting for a transfer to other schools. It thus remains a concern for most schools that there is a shortage of educators. As a result, educators have to deal with workload challenges and such pressure appears to have an impact on their wellbeing. According to Nnuro (2012) long-term stress or traumatic events at work may lead to physical, behavioral and psychological problems, which can be conducive to psychiatric disorders. Hence educators' wellbeing should be considered to be crucial.

1.2 Problem statement

Over the years, it has been noted that there has been an increase in the number of educators leaving the profession. It was reported that educators' stress is ubiquitous in a variety of teaching contexts, ranging from primary and secondary educational institutions (Bowen, 2016). A report obtained from the circuit office in Malamulele North East indicated that there has been an increase in the number of educators who have resigned and/or requested to be transferred from schools under the circuit between 2010-2016. This has led to a shortage of educators. The report showed that educators have to deal with overcrowded classes. Such challenges appear to have an impact on educators' wellbeing. Educators around this circuit continue to experience stress, hence there is a need to explore the stressors experienced by high school educators in Malamulele North East Circuit.

1.3 Rationale for the study

Several studies have been conducted in South Africa in relation to educators stress. However, there appears to be no known study that has directly focused on exploring the stressors experienced by public high school educators working in Malamulele North East Circuit, Vhembe District. The present study aimed to fill this gap.

1.4 Significance of the study

The results of this study may supply the nation with information about different factors that educators are confronted with in the workplace that result in them experiencing stress. Furthermore, the results of the study may provide standard information that will assist the Department of Education to design effective strategies directed towards managing stressors experienced by public high school educators.

1.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the stressors experienced by educators in public high schools of Malamulele North East Circuit, Vhembe District.

1.6 Objectives

The following were the specific objectives of this study:

1. To investigate the sources of stress among high school educators
2. To describe the perceived effects of stress among high school educators
3. To explore the coping strategies employed by educators as to manage stress
4. To explore the strategies for managing the stress experienced by educators' profession

1.7 Definition of key terms

- **Experience:** Experience is a term loaded with signification and meaning. It refers to the actual lived through event or the real life as contrasted with the ideal. Experience can also be referred the sum total of the conscious events which compose an individual (Enrich, 2003). In this study experience refers to the events lived daily at work by educators of Malamulele North East Circuit.
- **Educator:** An educator refers to a person who is appointed to exclusively perform extracurricular duties, who teaches, educates or trains other persons at a school (Gauteng Province, Department of Education, 2011). In this study an educator refers to personnel employed by the Department of Education who are working as educators at high schools in Malamulele North East Circuit.

- **High school:** A school that is intermediate in level between elementary school and college and that usually offers general, technical, vocational, or college-preparatory curricula (Houghton, 2011).
- **Public school:** A school that is maintained at public expense for the education of the children of a community or district and that constitutes a part of a system of free public education (Oxford Online Dictionary, 2014). In this study a public school refers to a school under Malamulele North East Circuit that is maintained through public funds.
- **Stress:** Stress is a feeling that's created when we react to particular events. It's the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet a tough situation with focus, strength, stamina, and heightened alertness (Kaur, 2011). In this study stress refers to a state of mental or emotional strain or a tension that an educator experiences, resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.

1.8 Delimitation of the study

The study only focused on educators working in public high schools at Malamulele North East Circuit, Vhembe District. The study did not include respondents from other Circuits.

1.9 Summary

The study has been contextualised with specific reference being made globally related to educators' stressors. For most educators school environment is one of the most stressful environments to work and survive in. Stress lead to physical, behavioural and emotional effects. It has been reported to contribute in educators' poor performance, which then increases the staff absenteeism and other effects due to unhappy educators in public high schools. The chapter also outlined the problem statement, rationale for the study, significance of the study, purpose of the study and objectives. The chapter include the definition of important constructs being investigated in the study, and conclude with delimitation of the study, that only focused on educators working in selected public high schools under a specific circuit.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review is a systematic method of identifying; evaluating and synthesizing that existing body of literature completed and recorded work by different scholars (Fink, 2009). In this chapter, the researcher examines different literature on various stressors and factors that influence educators to experience stress globally. In this section literature is divided into two sections, namely: data-based literature and conceptual literature.

2.2 Data-based literature

2.2.1 The concept of stressors and Occupational stress

2.2.1.1 Stressors

These are situational inducements that require adaptive responses from employees (Zimbowora, 2013). According to Sprenger (2011) educators spend most of their time at work. Hence most stressors can be found in the work environment, which include unfavorable working conditions, heavy workloads, organizational problems, paucity of resources, lack of support or autonomy and decision making. Educators face high amounts of stress during teaching and handling students. In developing countries such as South Africa, classrooms remain overcrowded and educators face intensive verbal communication, prolonged standing as well as a high volume of work-load (Kaur, 2011). It was found that overcrowding, lack of classes with about 80 learners per educator, can easily become unmanageable (Baruth, 2010). The working conditions include cases where at some schools, lessons are held outdoors, under a tree, with no desks, stationery, electricity, sanitation, or running water. In some schools, learners are taught in building with cracks on the walls and roof leaks. Lack of discipline among educators and children, as well as situation where educators inadequately trained or not appointed according to the training they have received and heavy workload, all lead to educators experiencing burnout.

According to Bila and Roestenburg (2011) educators feel overwhelmed by the workload, have a sense of inadequacy to the tasks given to them, withdraw from colleagues or engage in conflicts with co-workers and also feel irritated. Kyriacou (2001) stated that teaching pupils who lack motivation, maintaining student discipline, time pressures, coping with change, staff relationships, lack of resources, being evaluated by others, dealing with colleagues, self-esteem and status related issues, poor administration and management, role overload, conflict and ambiguity, and poor working conditions, can serve as stressors.

2.2.1.2 Occupational stress

Occupational stress is any force that pushes a psychological or physical factor behind its range of stability, producing a strain within the individual (Jeyaraj, 2013). As in cases of stress, which refers to the combination of physiological and psychological reactions that negatively affect an individual as a result of environmental conditions (Kwaku, 2012), Stress is a common feature in most professionals' lives, especially as the pace of development in most institutions increases. Work is a basic condition for most people and is an important component for human survival (Jeyaraj, 2013). People spend half of their lives in work-related activities. Hence experiencing work-related stress due to tension or strain in the body or mind of professionals, is expected at some point (Jeyaraj, 2013). Working not only provides individuals with life-sustaining income but also exerts its own pressures on them. In the teaching profession occupational stress has increased because of occupational complexities and increased economic pressure on individuals (Kaur, 2011).

Failure of schools to meet the social needs and job demands of the educators and being overburdened with regular teaching load may be stated to be the source of distress among educators (Kaur, 2011). Occupational stress also arises from the working conditions or environment of a system, which has harmful effects on the well-being of the employees. This can ultimately have negative consequences both for achieving the goals of the organisation and meeting the needs of the individuals working in them (Kaur, 2011). Occupational stress is a universal and frequently disabling human phenomenon. Stress arising at work has detrimental effects on the behaviour of people, which ultimately results in personal and organizational inefficiency. Stress that makes the employee work under pressure to the point that the employee is not able to deal with the situation, affects both the employee and the company in a

negative way (Nekzada & Tekeste, 2014). Occupational satisfaction is a necessary condition for the healthy growth of a teacher's personality

2.2.2 Sources of stress among educators

2.2.2.1 Problems associated with class size

A study designed to measure stress by Griffith, Steptoe and Cropley (1999) found that teachers of large classes had higher levels of stress than those with smaller class sizes. Younghusband (2005) stated that educators reported that larger classes meant a heavier workload with more preparation and grading and that less time was available for relating to individual students. Dibbon (2004) also found that teachers believed that large classes were a barrier to effective teaching and that resources, already at a premium, were further decreased in large classes. Having to teach in large classes was also found to contribute to behavioral problems (Biddle & Berliner, 2014; Dibbon, 2004). These can also leave the educator feeling stressed and less motivated to go to work. The experience of teaching less motivated students who are not willing to learn, and who fail to show respect or pay attention to their educator, increases the stress level of most educators. Holloway (2002) stated that educators in smaller classes spent less time disciplining students and had more instructional time for both group and individual work. Both Dibbon (2004) and Naylor (2001) emphasized that class composition should be taken into consideration when determining class size.

2.2.2.2 Change

In the past decade schools have undergone a period of constant reform and restructuring, which have been identified as sources of job pressure (Younghusband, 2005). These included, lack of support from the central government (DOE), constant changes within the profession (restructuring and curriculum changes), lack of information as to how changes are to be implemented (inadequate professional development), and diminishing social respect for teachers. Troman and Woods (2001), in a study where educators were diagnosed with stress, found that stress was positively related to restructuring. They reported that the restructuring of schools and education resulted in changes in work patterns and relationships in schools. Such changes led to new roles and responsibilities for teachers that went well beyond classroom teaching. Educators were personally and professionally overwhelmed by such demands and

their emotional well-being was negatively affected (Ben Jaafar, Freeman, Spencer & Earl, 2005).

Educators reported that changes in the educational system occurred too often and too quickly, causing them to resist. They felt that their professional knowledge was not valued. Hence, uncertainty and change were identified as critical issues leading to stress (Donnelly, Eburne & Kittleson, 2001; Wilson & Hall, 2002). Secondly school policies and changes are being made by people who are not exposed to the realities of the classroom, and educators have to abide by such major changes. This leads them to perceive themselves as being unimportant. Consequently more should be done to change the conditions under which educators work. Educators need to be supported and celebrated, and professional development is important in order to deal with change and to encourage intellectual activity (Younghusband, 2005).

2.2.2.3 Family Implications

A study conducted by Dibbon (2004) found parallel concerns about the impact of work demands on educators' families. Duxbury (2003) stated that educators reported feeling overloaded at work, and felt that work demands interfered with family responsibilities. Harvey and Spinney (2000) found that educators were worried about not spending enough time with the family and friends consequently, they felt guilty, resented the pressures and demands of work, and experienced feelings of anxiety, fearing they could not meet the expectations. Inability to balance the pressures and demands of work and the demands of family was significantly associated with reduced work performance, increased absenteeism, higher turnover, lower commitment and poorer morale, reduced family and life satisfaction, depression, increased incidence of perceived stress, and stress-related illnesses (Younghusband, 2005). Hence educators must learn to set boundaries for work and be selective in taking on additional responsibilities.

2.2.2.4 Task demands

Task demands are factors that are related directly to the educators job. These include the design of the educator's job, which involves the working conditions and the physical work layout (Naidoo et al. 2013). The school environment includes the physical setting as well as the policy, administrative and psychological environment. Physical conditions that play a role in stress and the overall learning process include school size, lighting, and temperature (Naidoo & Botha,

2014). These researchers further, stated that the cut-backs on subsidies and re-grouping of schools have had a direct impact on the work environment, resulting in deteriorating working conditions and educators' performance. Stress also resulted from scarcity of physical resources, such as textbooks, teaching aids and equipment, and the lack of furniture. These hinder the progress of learners but have concomitantly exacerbated the performance of the educators (Naidoo et al. 2013).

2.2.2.5 Role and interpersonal demands

This relates to the pressure placed on educators as they function in a particular role in the school environment. A heavy workload with little time generally features as a stressor (Naidoo et al. 2013). Most often educators are not able to achieve the standards of teaching and learning they would like to achieve due to the large student numbers present and the unfavourable post provisioning norms (PPN). As a result, poor academic performance manifests in the form of poor pass rates, poor discipline and an increased drop-off rate at schools. This also contributes to low levels of educator job satisfaction and high educator turnover (Jackson, 2004).

Poor learner discipline also includes disruptive behaviour, negative attitudes towards work, aggression and violence towards educators. Lack of student motivation may lead to poor academic performance, which impacts negatively on educators, resulting in stress and a decline in work performance. In addition, a lack of parental support is also identified as a possible stressor. The apathy of parents and the distinct absence of parental commitment and involvement in education have resulted in the poor performance of learners and increased frustration, and poor performance of educators (Naidoo et al. 2013)

2.2.2.6 School climate

School climate refers to a set of measurable properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by people who live and work in this environment, and is assumed to influence their motivational behaviour (Khoza, 2006). These include educator professionalism and positive attitude, which addresses the relationship between educators, students and achievement motivation within the school. Research done internationally and in South Africa, has identified school climate as an important factor influencing educator attributes and school performance (Milner & Khoza, 2008). The introduction of rationalization and the new learner-

educator ratios has resulted in educators having to deal with extremely large classes, resulting in major complaints by teachers because of having to deal with large numbers of learners and lacking space, infrastructure and resources (Steenkamp, 2003). Such situation results in disciplinary problems and educators have to tolerate a high noise level and general rowdiness among learners in the classroom (Olivier & Venter, 2003).

Violence at schools is increasingly characterizing the unsafe education environment for both teachers and students (Steenkamp, 2003). It has been found that educators are often exposed to violent behaviour of learners. This has drawn media attention to the crisis in most public schools (Verdugo & Vere, 2003). However, harassment and bullying among learners themselves at schools is not something new. Verdugo & Vere (2003) further indicated that external factors such as drugs, poverty and ethnic, racial or religious conflict create an environment of violence, which may have a negative impact for teaching and learning.

Sporadic incidents of violence at schools which arise from firearms used against educators and other learners result in educators feeling unsafe (Steenkamp, 2003). A study in the Western Cape, where gangsterism, divorce, drugs and other substances are rife aggravate the stress levels of educators. According to Khoza (2006) indicated that the productivity of educators may also be experienced due to a good and safe working environment. When educators feel safe in their working environment in terms of psycho-social variables and school behavior, their performance will improve.

2.2.2.7 Individual factors

Individual sources of stress refer to stressors that can arise from a person's personality, tolerance of ambiguity as well as skills levels and ability. These may explain why employees vary in the extent to which they perceive or experience stress, that is their stress vulnerability (Khoza, 2006). A situation that is stressful to one individual may not necessarily be stressful to another. The personality of hardiness may determine how individuals perceive stress. Dolbier, Sderstrom and Steinhardt (2001) demonstrated that hardy individuals have the ability to bounce back and readily recover from situations requiring their adaptation and remain healthy during times of stress.

Individual sources of stress in the workplace include the following, unrealistic expectations of self, inability to set limits, inability to delegate, under or overestimating abilities as well as inability to manage time effectively (Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elber & Hatfield, 2011). According to Klassen and Chiu (2010) stated that although the teaching profession can be very stressful, accounting for individual differences is crucial for understanding the variation in teacher stress. If teachers within a particular comparable setting are exposed to similar job factors and environmental stressors, not everyone will suffer from distress.

Personal values can cause stress, as they are internal demands that educators expect of themselves and those around them (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Individuals' current resources, perceptions and past experiences will dictate whether the impact of a potential stressor can be overcome. An understanding of one's own personal values, with an open-minded approach to adjusting values in situations of internal conflict, or similarly recognizing which values are of high importance and striving to maintain them, can help to reduce the impact of negative stress (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2013). Research within the medical world indicates that reflecting on personal values can lower the impact of psychological and neuroendocrine responses to distress. In addition, self-affirming activities can buffer the adverse effects of stress and reduce the development of physical and mental disorders (Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage & McDowell 2003). The inter-relationships between professional context, personal lives and individual characteristics, give rise to distress (Gu & Day, 2007) Perceptions of stress are dependent on individual characteristics and contextual situations.

2.2.2.8 Economic problems

Economic problems are also stressors in the family, due to the salary grading system. Salary scales have been adjusted with major gaps between different educators. Although many educators try to live within their means, with the recent economic downturn, many have to succumb to bank loans. This additional burden creates disharmony both at home and manifests itself in poor performance in the school situation (Jackson & Rothman, 2006).

2.2.2.9 Personality

Some individuals appear more likely than others to interpret events and situations in a more stress-provoking way (Naidoo et al., 2013). These are generally categorized as personality Type A (extremely competitive, strive for achievement and may be aggressive, hasty, impatient, restless, very alert, with explosive speech) and Type B (easy going, take difficulties in their stride, spend time on what they do and maintain a careful balance between events and actions demanding their energy) and it also helps in determining the educators' perceptions and reaction to stress (Michael, Marsh and Johnson, 2007; Jackson, Rothmann and Van de Vijver, 2006). In addition, studies conducted by Schultz and Steyn (2007) have shown that coronary risk factors were associated with patterns of behavioral of traits in different types of personalities.

2.2.3. The rural educational environment as a workplace for educators

According to Harber and Davies (2005), the working conditions of educators in rural schools in developing countries can be described as being more complex and stressful than in developed countries. Multiple factors influence the way schools are structured, the way teaching is conducted, schools attendance, how educators perform and how schools are managed. The educational environment is frequently influenced by macro-conditions, such as the economic context and amount of resources available at the school. In most government high schools, school violence, constant presence of health issues of students or their parents and cultural factors such as beliefs regarding what should or should not be learned traditionally, are factors that cause stress (Harber & Davies, 2005).

Harber and Davies (2005) stated that some beliefs, such as those discouraging female children from attending school, or children being absent from school during periods when they have to assist their parents in earning an income, are some of the realities that were found to impact on school attendance and performance (Bila & Roestenburg, 2011). It was also found that factors, such as behavioural problems in children; unemployment and lack of education of the parents, child-headed family constellations and unpredictable home circumstances with emotional problems, further contribute to unstable working conditions (Bila & Roestenburg, 2011). It was also found that weak discipline structures and lack of skill in dealing effectively with child

behavioural problems, often contribute to increased occurrence of stress among teachers (Bila & Roestenburg, 2011).

2.2.4 Effects and Consequences of Stress among educators

Educators' overall well-being and efficacy as well as factors such as friendships, marital relations, and degrees of life stress in a educator's personal life, might also affect the performance of social and emotional abilities in the classroom (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Excessive stress is linked to a wide range of illnesses, which affect the physical, behavioural and emotional states of affected people (Willis, 2005). Also, stress produces a range of undesirable, expensive, and debilitating consequences (Ross, 2006), which affect both individuals and organizations. In an organizational setting, stress is becoming a major contributor to health and performance problems of individuals, as well as unwanted occurrences for organizations (Kendi, 2012). Consequences of occupational stress can be categorized into those on individuals and those on their working settings.

2.2.4.1 Physical Effects

It was found that work overload was positively associated with physical and mental health problems Duxbury (2003). Further, estimate that 85% physical illnesses are stress-related. Physical exhaustion may present in the form of headaches, shaking, inability to think clearly and relax, lack of natural communication and anger, resulting in explosive talk (Sagara, 2013). In the teaching profession, educators' inability to relax leads them to easily get irritated and behaving inappropriately in class.

According to Willis (2005) states that stress ages the immune system by boosting one of its chemical regulators known as interleukin, the increase of which is related to age and age-related conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis. Teaching can be physically straining and leave teachers feeling exhausted after school and having to deal with other duties than just to teach, such as marking papers for a large number of students who are not performing well (Kendi, 2012). This will affect teachers' productivity, which often leads to physical illness, an increase in health care costs, loss of productivity and creativity and the probability of making mistakes at work (Kendi, 2012).

2.2.4.2 Behavioural and Relational Effects

The wider costs of stress include low tolerance of frustration, regressive behaviour, lowering of aggression threshold and morbid aggression, alcohol and drug abuse and diseases related to stress (Willis, 2005). Stressful events that are continuously experienced may result in behavioral changes. Adaptations such as increased substance consumption and less productivity provide an important pathway through which stressors influence disease risk (Cohen, Janicki-Deverts & Miller, 2007).

Various studies have showed that stress may contribute to the development of negative, unhealthy and unproductive escapist individual and organizational behaviours, such as desire to reduce tension by drinking, smoking, self-medicating with drugs, using sleeping pills or tranquilizers to relax, sleeping too much, over-eating or under-eating, withdrawing from activities, promiscuity and destructive life styles (Kendi, 2012). These behaviours contribute to death, disability, depression and suicide. Unwanted feelings and behaviours such as job dissatisfaction, lower motivation, low employee morale, less organizational commitment, lowered overall quality of work life, absenteeism, turnover, intention to leave the job, lower productivity, decreased quantity and quality of work, inability to make sound decisions, theft, sabotage and work stoppage, occupational burnout, alienation, and increased smoking and alcohol intake, are believed to be effects of occupational stress (Poloski & Bogdanic, 2007).

2.2.4.3 Emotional and Psychological Effects

Emotional stress leads to lack of enthusiasm, feelings of losing control as well as an experience of unexplainable grief (Poloski & Bogdanic, 2007). It results in loss of productivity and creativity, fuels negativity and cynicism, with quickness to get angry, lack of sleep, blame and detachment from others. Prolonged chronic stress has a psychological consequence called burnout. Burnout occurs when the body's defensive coping is exhausted, leading to reduced productivity and energy, leaving the victim feeling increasingly hopeless, powerless, cynical and resentful. It can eventually threaten one's job, relationships with others and lead to death.

According to Kendi (2012) psychological conditions such as psychological distress, depression, anxiousness, passiveness or aggressiveness, boredom, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, loss of concentration, feelings of futility, impulsiveness and disregarding of social norms and values, dissatisfaction with job and life, loss of contact with reality, and emotional fatigue, are mostly due to teachers' experience of occupational stress. Mental illnesses linked to stress

include schizophrenia, claustrophobia, agoraphobia and depression. Persons suffering from these conditions are likely to be hospitalized, as they are mostly a danger to themselves and others (Willis, 2005).

2.2.5 Coping strategies of stress among educators

The Prosocial Classroom coping strategy

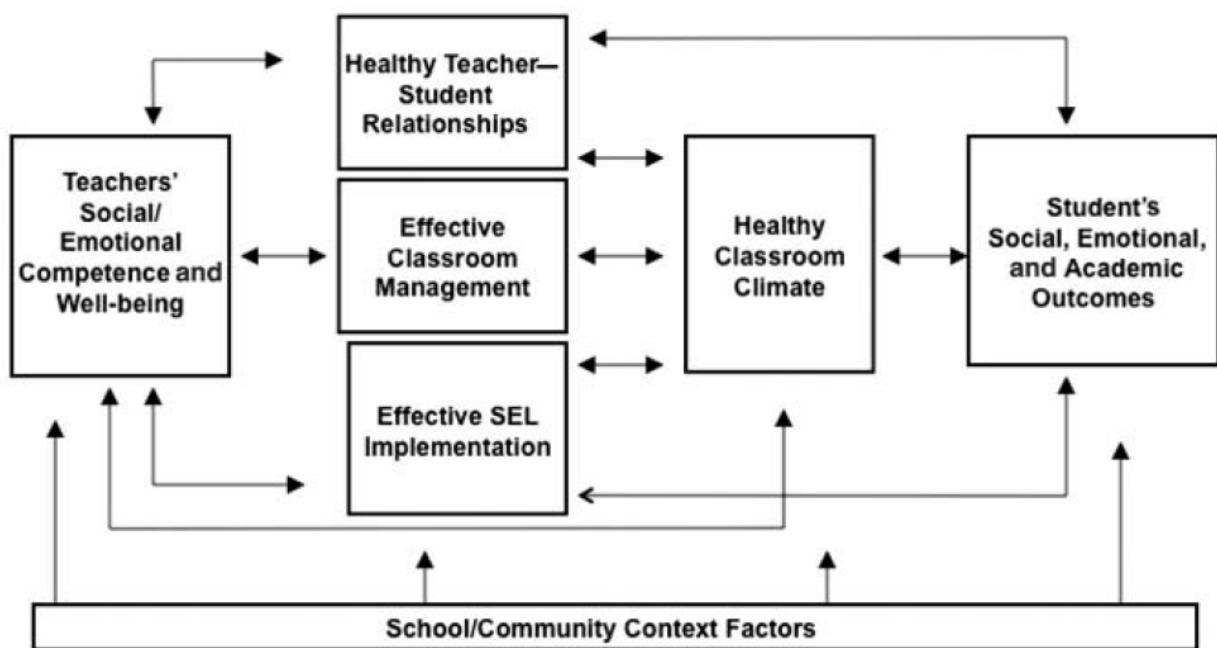


Figure 1: The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence and classroom and student outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Figure 1 illustrates a model in which educators' social and emotional competence and well-being influences the prosocial classroom atmosphere and student outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Educators' SEC is an important contributor to the development of supportive teacher–student relationships. An educator who recognizes an individual student's emotions, understands the cognitive appraisals that may be associated with these emotions, and how these cognitions and emotions motivate the student's behavior. These will assist the teacher to effectively respond to the student's individual needs (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

In cases where a student's challenging behaviour and difficulty with self-regulation results from problems faced at home, the educator may show greater concern and empathy and be better able to help the student learn to self-regulate rather than resorting to punitive or coercive tactics. Educators higher in SEC are likely to demonstrate more effective classroom management. They are also likely to be more proactive, skillfully using their emotional expressions and verbal support to promote enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning and to guide and manage student behavior (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) believe that educators with high SEC will implement social and emotional curriculum more effectively because they are outstanding role models of desired social and emotional behaviour. Their social and emotional understanding support their ability to apply extensive process-based activities in everyday situations, as they naturally occur in the classroom. Various contextual factors, inside and outside the school building, may influence teachers' SEC. These include factors such as co-teacher support, principal and district leadership, school climate and norms, school district values and in-service opportunities, community culture, and local and federal education policy and demands (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). An educator's overall well-being and efficacy, as well as factors such as friendships, marital relations, and degrees of life stress in an educator's personal life, might also affect the performance of social and emotional abilities in the classroom.

2.2.6 Conceptual framework

The response-based model of stress

The model reflected in Figure 2, alternative terms from the environmental stress-producing stimuli, are shown on the left hand side box. Koslowsky, Kluger and Reich (2013) identified a universal patterns of stress known as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) to understand how the body handles stress over time. There are three theoretical stages of the GAS (alarm, resistance and exhaustion). He further defines stress as a state manifested by a specific syndrome. It consists of all the nonspecifically induced changes within the biological system. He proposed that such changes were measurable and occur at both the system and local level. The environment as a working place for an individual contains stressors. These produce stimuli of which an individual's first encounter will lead to a response to such stimuli differently, depending on their coping abilities. According to Colquitt, Lepine and Wesson (2011) negative stress has a poor influence on work or job performance in that the stressors that result in strain

and negative emotions reduce an employee's physical, psychological and behavioural abilities that they would bring to their jobs. An individual's response to a stimulus he or she is confronted with is stated to be presented in three phases.

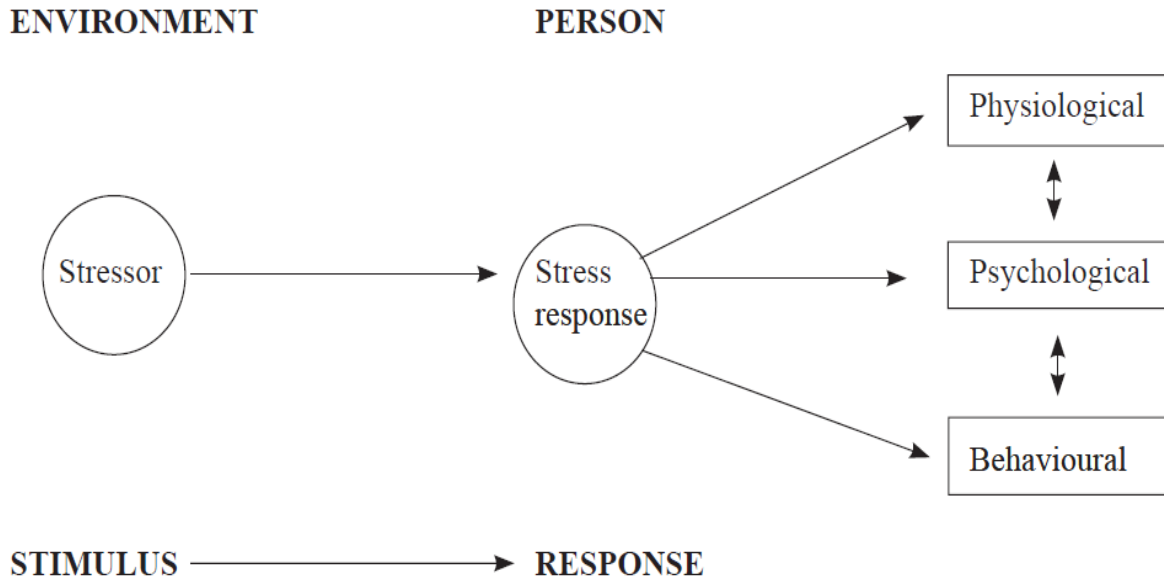


Figure 2: Response-based model of stress (Rout & Rout, 2007; Cooper Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001)

When the body first encounters the stress, it responds with an alarming reaction, resistance and exhaustion.

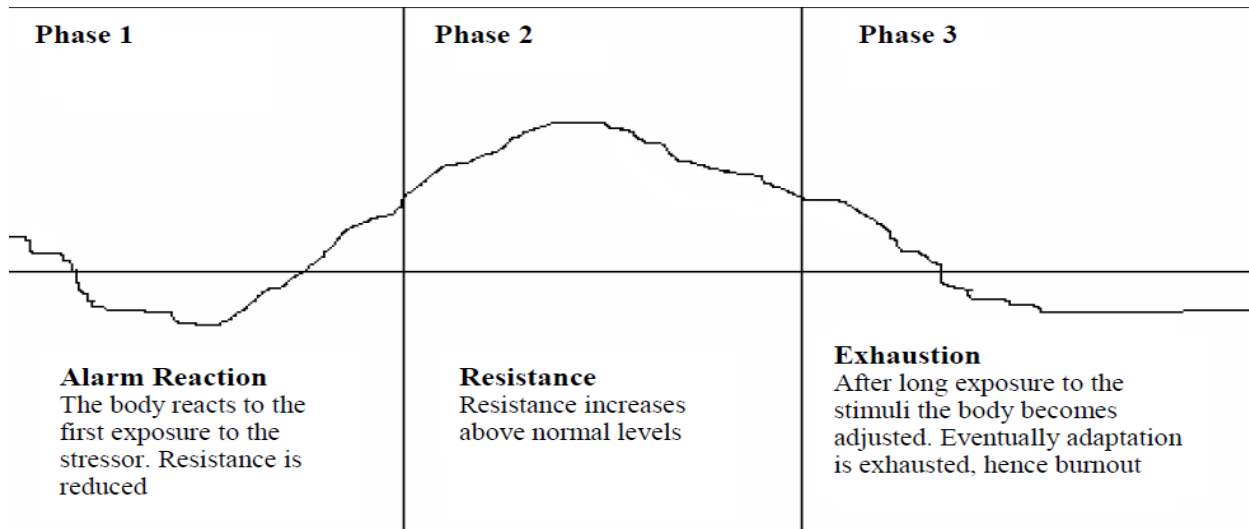


Figure 3: Theoretical stages of the GAS (Melgosa, 2004)

The alarm phase: This is the first phase where the body initially identifies and reacts to the stress by releasing hormones in defence against the stressor (Nagel & Brown 2003). The body's stress level's resistance is reduced. However, after some time it starts to increase. This phase is further characterized by acute anxiety and fear if the stressor is a threat or grief and depressive mood if the stressor is a loss. Other common characteristics of this phase include silence, withdrawal, loneliness or aggressive, lack of self-control among, others (Melgosa, 2004).

The resistance phase is the second phase where the body develops defense and problem-solving behaviours to handle the stress. The resistance rises to the highest note to clear the stress and the person seems to have regained a sense of self-control, though the stress is still there. The stress has not been solved. If not handled, it overwhelms the body's resistance mechanism, which starts to depreciate, leading to the exhaustion phase (Melgosa, 2004).

The exhaustion phase is the extreme case of stress which affects the body and is characterized by mental and physical disorders. This is the burnout effect which leads to illnesses, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, low personal accomplishment and in extreme cases, leads to death (Kendi, 2012).

The model illustrate the environment as schools which are the workplace for educators. This environment consist of stressors such as workload. When the body first encounters stress it responds with an alarming reaction. This is characterized by acute anxiety. Educators fear they are unable to complete a given task and remain behind the scheduled time. During the resistance phase, educators develop defense mechanism to regain sense of self-control, though the stress is still there. They procrastinate and often shift the blame to others. If educators are experiencing burnout, referred as the exhaustion stage by Nagel and Brown (2003), it impacts negatively on work performance and wellbeing, resulting in physical, psychological and behavioral effects, which might lead to severe illnesses. Hence, it is important to develop programmes to aid educators in developing mechanisms to identify stressors at an early stage, and also to develop coping mechanisms, as well as employee assistance programmes that assist valuable employees in dealing with stress (Grobler et al., 2011).

2.2.7 Summary

The aim of chapter two (literature Review) was to explore what other authors and researchers are saying about the stressors experienced by educators in public high schools. Most authors from several continents including Asia, Africa, Europe and America indicated that educators are experiencing challenges in the school environment including task demands and school climate and this has a negative impact in educators work performance and wellbeing, resulting in physical, psychological and behavioral effects, which might lead to severe illnesses.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section discusses the research design, study setting, study population, sampling method, and plan for data collection, instrument, data analysis and measures to trustworthiness, ethical considerations and dissemination of results.

3.2 Research design

A qualitative approach using an explorative and descriptive design was used in this study. The qualitative approach is used to gain a deeper understanding about the problem in a particular area of a researcher's interest and it seeks to explore the phenomenon (de Vos, Strydom, Founche & Deport, 2011). The qualitative approach allowed educators to express their feelings, emotions and experiences on the challenges they were confronted with on their daily working environment. The researcher gave accurate information that was provided by educators to describe their responses. A descriptive design was used to provide an accurate description on a single variable completely, accurately and thoroughly (Woodbridge, 2014). An explorative approach is aimed at establishing facts, gathering new ideas and determining whether there are patterns in the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The study used an exploratory approach in order to gain more information on educators' perceptions of the stressors they were confronted with, that lead to stress.

3.3 Study setting

In this study a natural setting was adopted as the researcher went to high schools and collected data in a natural setting. A natural setting is an uncontrolled, real life situation or environment. Brink, Vander Walt and van Rensburg (2012) concur that data must be collected in a specific place where the participant lives and has experiences.

This study was conducted at public high schools under Malamulele North East Circuit, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province in South Africa. Malamulele North East circuit comprises of 9 high schools, namely: Nwanati High, Ripambeta High, Adolph Mhinga High, Basopa High, Jim Chavani High, Xikundu High, Alfred Ngwedzeni High, Madhadzhe High and Ngula High. The

schools under this circuit consist of Xitsonga and Venda speaking educators. They are located in Malamulele town in different villages of a rural settlement. They are situated along the Punda Maria Road, which leads to Punda Maria Gate of the biggest national park in the world, the Kruger National Park. Figure 4 depicts the map



Figure 4: Malamulele area

3.4 The study population and sampling

In this study the population were all high school educators working in public high schools under Malamulele North East Circuit Vhembe District in Limpopo Province. The circuit is composed of nine high schools. The researcher did not interview the entire population, a sample was drawn to determine participants for this study.

Table 1 shows the number of schools, educators and those who left in Malamulele North East Circuit. There are a total of 296 educators.

Table 1: Population of Schools and Educators

Names of schools	Total number of educators	Number of educators who left
Nwanati high	53	5
Ripambeta high	45	4
Adolph Mhinga high	25	3
Basopa high	37	3
Jim Chavani high	60	5
Xikundu high	35	4
AlfredNgwedzeni high	11	4
Ngula high	11	5
Madhadzhe high	19	6
Total	296	39

3.4.1 Sampling

Strydom (2005) defines a sample as an element of the population considered for inclusion in the study. In this study a sample of twelve educators was drawn using non-probability convenience sampling. Non-probability is a procedure in which all of the persons, events or objects have an unknown and usually different probability of being included in the sample (Grinell & Unrau, 2010). The participants were sampled because they are “convenient” sources of data. Therefore, the researcher chose the sample according to ease of access. The participants were determined by availability of the respondents at the schools. The criterion of data saturation was applied to discontinue data collection (de Vos et al., 2011).

3.4.1.1 Sampling of Schools

Purposive sampling was used to select the four high schools under Malamulele North East circuit. The schools were purposely selected due to the small number of educators. A purposive sampling method is based on the judgment of the researcher regarding the subjects or objects that are representative of the topic being studied (Brink et al., 2012).

3.4.1.2 Sampling of participants

Convenience sampling was used to select educators to participate in the study, such as educators who were available at the schools during data collection. According to Paxton (2002) in de Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2011) there are no rules for sample size in qualitative studies. Polit and Beck (2003) stated that the sample size is determined by the quality of data collected. The inclusion criterion was educators who were permanently employed by the Department of Education for more than two years, principals and educators who are on contract were excluded. In this study a sample size of 12 participants was interviewed

3.5 Research Instruments

The researcher used an interview guide as a data collection instrument. The interview guide was designed based on the objectives of the study. The interview guide gave the researcher opportunities to probe the lived experiences of the participants. Probing is a way for the interview to explore new paths which might not have been considered initially (Gray, 2004). The interviews were conducted in English as all participants understood the language.

3.6 Data collection procedure

According to Greeff (2005) stated that interviews allow the researcher to understand the world from the participant's point of view and uncover lived experiences. This study used an in-depth individual interview to collect data. Permission to collect data was granted by the District Administrator of Vhembe District DOE. In addition, the circuit manager of Malamulele North East Circuit also allowed the investigator to proceed to schools. Before data was collected, the researcher met with the principals of schools under study in order to make an appointment with the educators appointments were made with educators. The researcher arranged to meet them after school or during free periods for data collection. This was done to avoid class disturbance at school.

Data was collected through an in-depth individual interview. The study was explained to individual participants and each participant signed a consent form (Appendix B). The time for interviews was set to suit each participant. Data was collected within 7 days. Data saturation was reached after a total of twelve participants were interviewed. Pseudonyms were used so as to maintain confidentiality (Alston & Bowels, 2003). The participants were told the main reason

for the use of pseudonyms. All participants were asked one main question: namely, "What are the experienced stressors you are confronted with as a high school educator?" However, the researcher probed to seek clarity in order to gain a clear understanding of the responses participants were giving.

The following questions were asked:

- What is your general experience of stress?
- What are some factors you consider to be the sources of stress at your work?
- What are the negative experiences of stress that you have encountered while teaching?
- How do you cope with the experiences of stress?
- What can be done to manage the experiences of stress for the educators' profession?

The interviews were conducted individually in a private, comfortable environment. The interviews were conducted in English by the researcher, as all participants were professionals. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim within 24 hours of the interview. The interviews were then transcribed. Field notes were written immediately after each interview to describe the physical setting and the activities which occurred during each interview. An independent coder was provided with a clean set of transcribed data to help identify themes, 13 categories and sub-categories and discussions were held to reach a consensus regarding these. The collected data was analysed using Tesch's Open Coding Method.

3.7 Data Analysis

Tesch's Open Coding Method of Data Analysis was used to guide the researcher in this study (de Vos, 2005). The following steps were followed:

- All documents having data was read carefully, with understanding to obtain a sense of the whole and the ideas were written down as they came to mind by the researcher.
- The researcher picked one short interesting document from the interviewed documents, read it and checked the meaning and also wrote thoughts that aroused in mind in the margins.
- The researcher's thoughts were written in the margins and a list was made of all themes and similar themes were clustered together

- The researcher applied a list of the themes to the data and themes were abbreviated as codes which was written next to the appropriate segments of the transcripts.
- The researcher organized themes to check whether new categories and codes emerge and searched for the most descriptive wording for the themes and categorize them.
- The lines were drawn between categories to show the relationships and the researcher made a final decision about the abbreviations for each category and the codes were arranged in alphabetical order.
- The researcher recorded the existing data, where it was possible, as indicated by (Creswell, 2009). The researcher in qualitative research transcribe the audio tape interview and field notes. She also ensured that the transcriptions are accurate; that they reflect the totality of the interview experiences, and they facilitate analysis. After transcription of the data the researcher then converted the data to smaller and more manageable units that can be retrievable and reviewed. The researcher developed a category scheme and then to code data according to categories. Once a category scheme was developed, the data were read in their entirety and coded for correspondence to the category.

3.8 Measure to ensure trustworthiness

Granehein and Lundman (2004) stated that research findings must be evaluated in relation to the procedures used to generate the findings so as to ensure trustworthiness. The model proposed for criteria for developing trustworthiness of a qualitative study includes conformability, credibility, transferability and dependability.

3.8.1 Confirmability

Confirmability establishes whether the data represents the information provided by the participants and that the interpretations of the data are not influenced by the researcher's imagination (Brink et al., 2012). Confirmability in this study was ensured by the use of an independent coder. This was reflected by the voice of the participants and not the researcher's perceptions. This was supported by integration of an audit procedure, where the researcher described all the research processes, explained and justified what they intended to do and made presentations on the reasons for undertaking decisions.

3.8.2 Credibility

Credibility refers to assurance in the truth of data and the interpretation. The aim is to show that the enquiry will be conducted in a way that ensures that the subject is accurately identified and described (Brink et al., 2012).

The confidence in the truth can be established through the following techniques:

Prolonged engagement: It is achieved by staying in the field until data saturation has been reached. In this way the researcher will gain an in-depth understanding of the study, perception of the participants and their experiences. This will build trust and support between the researcher and the participants (Brink et al., 2012).

Persistent observation: This means the researcher will consistently pursue interpretation in various ways. In this study the researcher ensured persistent observation by, paraphrasing, summarizing, observing non-verbal cues and consistently pursuing interpretations in various ways. (Brink et al., 2012).

Triangulation: In this study, the researcher ensured triangulation by using different methods following the central question, seeking different sources such as field notes, observations and audio-tape (Brink et al., 2012).

3.8.3 Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (2012) mention that the description of data gathering must be inclusive enough to enable findings to be transferred to other situations. The descriptive interpretation resulting from the data analysis should apply to other areas. The researcher provided a complete description of the research methodology findings and verbatim quotes from individual interviews to ensure applicability of the study to other contexts. The researcher requested someone with research experience to randomly read selected transcripts and to identify major categories, so that readers may have a clear picture of the findings.

3.8.4 Dependability

Dependability involves the provision of evidence in a way that if the study is to be done again with the same or similar participants in an analogous context, the findings would be similar (Brink et al., 2012). In this study dependability was achieved by describing the research findings, interpretations and recommendations, using an auditable trail so as to corroborate that the investigation was supported by data and was internally coherent. A tape recorder was used to increase reliability of all interviews.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics serve as standards, and a basis upon which researchers should borne in mind continuously in research processes, because practicing ethics in research ensures that respect and dignity of participants is considered of importance and should be maintained (de Vos et al., 2011). The following aspects were applied to ensure adherence to ethical considerations:

3.9.1 Ethical clearance

The research proposal was presented at the School Higher Degrees Committee and University Higher Degrees Committee for approval and quality control. Then the University of Venda, Health, Safety and Research Ethics Committee gave ethical clearance to conduct the research.

3.9.2 Permission to conduct study

Permission to collect data was granted by the DOE Vhembe District and the Head of Malamulele North East Circuit, heads of schools (principals) as well as the respondents themselves.

3.9.3 Informed consent

A formal written letter of informed consent was issued to participants before the commencement of the interviews to ensure that they all participate in the study out of their will and knowing what they are involving themselves in. The researcher ensured that the respondents are aware of the type of information needed, why the information is being sought, for what purpose, how they are expected to participate in the study and how it will directly or indirectly affect them. After

thoroughly and truthfully enlightening them on the research process for better understanding, the researcher then gave them the informed consent forms to sign as an indication of agreement of participate in the study.

3.9.4 Confidentiality

The participants were assured that the information provided by them would be treated confidentially and that only the researcher and the supervisors would have access to the data, and that the tapes will be kept in a safe place where no one could reach them.

3.9.5 Harm to participants

The researcher ensured that no physical, psychological or emotional harm was inflicted on the participants. The researcher constructed questions in an appropriate manner as well as not in a judgmental way to avoid inflicting anxiety and psychological discomfort during the process of responding to the questions in the interviews. Other possible dangers were looked at and the research guarded against them.

3.9.6 Anonymity

According to Brink et al. (2012) even the researcher should not be able to link a participant with his or her data. The use of pseudonyms was used to help ensure anonymity.

3.10 Dissemination of results

The findings of this study and recommendations made were kept at the University of Venda library; a copy was also submitted to Vhembe District and Circuit Manager of Malamulele North East Circuit. The findings from the study will be published in peer-reviewed and accredited national and international journals as well as presented at seminars and conference.

3.11 Summary

This chapter outlined the research methodology used in the study, by the researcher in order for her to collect in-depth information concerning the stressors experienced by educators in public high schools of Malamulele North East Circuit. The design, study setting, population of the study, research instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations that were observed in this study were covered.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the methodology and research design that was used to collect data. This chapter presents the findings of Tesch's Model of Data Analysis. The findings are organised in terms of themes, category and sub-category originating from data analysis. The results of the study are presented in line with the objectives of the study as follows:

- Demographic profile
- Summary of findings
- Sources of stress among high school educators
- Effects of stress among high school educators
- Educators coping strategies
- Educators perceived stress management strategies

The discussions of the study are integrated into the results.

4.2 Demographic profile

As shown in Table 3 of the 12 participants in the study over 58% were aged above 40 years. 7 were females and 5 were males. The age of the participants ranged from 30 to 60 years with a mean average of 40 years. Participants in this study were Venda and Tsonga-speaking people and not all participants were residing in the villages, 8 were residing in towns. The majority of participants were married and the participants' highest level of education was a tertiary education. The period that participants had been working was also looked at, and the lowest was 5 years and the highest 30 years.

Table 2: Demographic of the participants

	No=12
Age distribution	
30- 40	4
40- 50	7
50-60	1
Sex distribution	
Females	7
Males	5
Education status	
Tertiary	12
Period of working	
5-20	9
20-35	3
Marital status	
Married	8
Widowed	1
Single	3

4.3 Summary of findings

Data collected from educators experiences of stress in selected public high schools of Malamulele North East Circuit, Vhembe District are summarized in the below table 3.

Table 3: Summary of findings

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
1. Sources of stress among high school educators	1. Student factor	1. Discipline 2. Students late coming 3. Vandalizing of school property 4. Students' substance use 5. Teenage pregnancy
	2. Factors related to space or physical environment	1. Overcrowding 2. Lack of sport activities 3. Use of dangerous weapons
	3. Management and policy issues	1. Curriculum change 2. Termination of corporal punishment 3. Heavy workload 4. Lack of safety and security on school Premises 5. Poor school management
	4. Community and parental factors	1. Lack of parental guidance and involvement

2. Effects of stress on high school educators	1. Physical	1. Being chased out of class
	2. Psychological	1. Burnout
	3. Behavioral	1. Educators developed negative attitude to work
3. Educators coping strategies	1. Religious beliefs	1. Faith and spirit of forgiveness
	2. Availability of support from colleagues and family	1. Having a good relationship with colleagues and students
	3. Ability to adapt to stress	
4. Educators-perceived stress management strategies	1. Availability of support from the DOE	1. Need for career growth or development
	2. Socio-economic security	1. Financial security
	3. Availability of resources	1. Availability of educators

Theme 1: Sources of stress among high school educators

Educators described various factors said to be sources of stress in their daily working environment. Educators explained that working at schools exposed them to stressors and that being an educator was not as easy job as people might perceive. They further, indicated that the teaching profession has challenges similar to other profession. It was stated that South Africa, like other countries, showed that occupational stress is highly prevalent, including the education profession. This was confirmed in the study conducted by Naidoo (2012) in different parts of KwaZulu-Natal. This theme emerged from the data analysis and it was further discussed under the following categories: student factors, factors related to space or physical environment, management and policy issues and community and parental factors. During the analysis of data categories created data were divided into sub-categories.

Category 1: Student factor

During the interviews, educators pointed out that they had some difficulties controlling students at schools. Educators explained that students did as they please at schools and their behaviour in the classrooms was unbearable for most educators. The results showed that in the classrooms some students were presenting a negative attitude towards educators which resulted in class disruption. Some educators were unable to continue teaching due to students' attitude. The following are some of the comments from the educators:

"These students are too problematic, you tell them one thing they do the opposite, they answer back at us (educators); they don't listen." (Participant 03)

"...also there are students who sleep in class and when asked why? They will say you (educator) are boring and you (educator) cannot feel that it is hot ". (Participant 05)

The findings showed that educators were more concerned with students' behaviour at schools. They further indicated that students were not interested in co-operating with their educators in ensuring that there was a good learning environment in the classrooms and that students always made noise, laughed at the educators or commented on what the educator was wearing, such was done to cause disruption during the lesson. However, according to Liberante (2012) the behaviour that students exhibit within the learning environment is determined by their attitude towards the skills required of them, and their willingness and ability to engage in challenging tasks. And Prensky (2005) differs in that the cause of students' misbehaviour in class is considered to be the result of boredom, with routine activities given in the classroom. Educators in this study were concerned because students were not likely to behave appropriately and participate effectively in learning tasks. Such resulted in students being at risk of performing poorly and becoming school dropouts. Hence, it is important that educators make their classroom a good place for students to be. Such would make students want to be in the classroom, and to be well-behaved (Churchill, Ferguson, Godinho, Johnson, Keddie, Letts, Colquitt, Lepine & Wesson, 2013).

During data collection educators expressed the challenges they encountered in their daily working environment, such as students' lack of discipline and respect to educators as well as fellow students. According to Yahaya, Ramli, Hashim, Ali Ibrahim, Raja Roslan Raja Abd Rahman & Yahaya (2009) discipline is a fundamental ingredient that plays a crucial role in school system, which insists on upholding the moral values of students. This category was further discussed under the following sub-categories: discipline, students late coming, vandalizing of school property, students' substance consumption and teenage pregnancy

Sub-category 1: Issues related to discipline

In this study educators working in public high schools expressed different experiences of stress in their working environment such as students' discipline, which was a concern for most educators, irrespective of where they were teaching. Educators in this study explained that students displayed lack of discipline in various ways, such as lack of respect, being forced to go to class, not doing homework, disturbing class activities, making noise, laughing, and sleeping. The following were some of the comments made by educators:

"This other time i asked one of the student why she did not do the task I gave the previous day and she said "I had better things to do" such answer....(shaking head) from a student is frustrating". (participant 01)

"I have been working for some time now but the things these current students doyoooh first they come to school late, they want to be forced to go to class and since this government is saying there should be no punishment ,you can imagine how difficult it can be to control them". (participant 07)

The interviews conducted with educators from different public high schools clearly showed that educators were experiencing stress and they are affected by such challenges. Educators are experiencing these in their everyday work. The experiences entail class disturbance, bad attitude showed by students toward fellow students as well as educators. In this study educators explained that students do not respect them, and that they thought they knew better.

They further expressed that students do not do their homework, which makes it difficult for an educator to know if what he is teaching to students understood and if they are the same level with the educator. There were reported cases such as students cutting the school fence in order

to skip classes. There was also the issue of students who would sit outside after break and expect to be forced to class. It was noted that the very same students who wanted to be forced to get into classes and sit outside during lessons are responsible for cutting the fence, so that they would leave school whenever they wanted and also explained that there were some students who would go out and come in the classroom during lessons, which such caused class disturbance. To discipline means to instruct a person to follow a particular code of conduct (Nakpodia, 2010). Discipline is an important component of human behavior. Without it, an organization cannot function well towards the achievement of its goals (Ouma, Simatwa, & Serem, 2013). In the context of a school system, a disciplined student is that student whose behaviours, actions and inactions conform to the rules and regulations of the school (Ali, Dada, Isiaka, & Salmon, 2014). However, discipline means more than adhering to rules and regulations and entails student's ability to discern what is right or wrong (Gitome, Katola, & Nyabwari, 2013).

According to Yahaya et al. (2009) discipline problems occur when a student refuses to obey rules of the classroom or school. According to Gitome et al. (2013) at schools where there is good discipline, there is improved academic performance. In other words, discipline is vital for students' academic performance (Njoroge & Nyabuto, 2014). Johannsen (2011) stated that disciplinary issues can be challenging to educators, more especially newly-employed educators, since they are often overwhelmed and lack the experience of managing difficult behaviors. Not every educator has coping mechanisms in place, hence situations such as vandalism in schools can inevitably result in stress (Naidoo, Botha & Bisschoff, 2013). When students create disturbances in the classroom, such create an environment in which teaching and learning becomes difficult.

Sub-category 2: Students late coming

During the interviews educators in this study explained that students were not arriving at school on time and that students were expected to be at school before 07:30. Instead, they would come after eight. Some educators indicated that even though they said that they would close the gate and not allow students to enter after the located time they always struggled with late coming in most schools. In most schools the principal as the head of school, is confronted with problems of lateness. The study findings showed that late coming was a challenge in most schools, with educators were failing to manage and the students' lateness seemed to be a

continues problem in most schools. Educators explained that most students failed to arrive at schools on time and appeared unwilling to change this tendency.

According to the participants arriving at school early was of importance because there were activities that schools rendered in the morning such as morning prayers of which in cases where students were not yet at school they failed to attend. In the same way Jumare, Maina and Ankoma-Sey (2015) agree that students' punctuality availed them the opportunity to attend all school programmes and activities. In the morning for instance, the students benefit from morning activities such as the general assembly, where vital information, admonitions and prayers are made. The students could also interact with students other than their classmates. This was showed in the following quotes:

"The number of students who attend morning prayers is small because most students will still be on their way to school, it is problem because the principal usually addresses students during such time and when most students are not there then they fail to receive the information".
(participant 011)

"It is distracting, In the middle of a prayer students will be arriving at school and making noise..."(participant 09)

The participants reported that for some students lateness was due to the long distance travelled from their homes and school, of which students would walk almost 7 kilometers to school, waking up early but still could not arrive at school on time. However, the educators indicated that such was not an excuse for students' lateness as it was their responsibility to ensure that they arrive at school on time. One participant said:

"...for some students at times I pity them because they are from villages too far away and walking such a long distance each day to school I am sure it is not easy". (participant 02)

In the same way Komakech and Osuu (2014) concur that despite the increased number of secondary schools, both government and private, long distance to school is still a challenge for students accounting to 7.6% of students' absenteeism.

According to participants the majority of students in their respective schools were from child-headed families and were not monitored to ensure that they woke up early and prepare for school to avoid lateness. There is a growing evidence of young adolescents taking on elder care responsibilities in single-parent and multi-generational households. Students who are staying with relatives are more absent from school than those staying with their biological parents. In addition in rural areas students are expected to carry out some responsibilities before going to school, then prepare for school, depending on the when the task is accomplished (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). This was explained that when students were asked the reason they were late some mentioned that it was due to student's staying up late and failure to organize themselves on time. In the same way Nakpodia and Dafiaghor (2011) stated that students stay up late watching films and home videos. This could result in waking up late the following day and Bataineh (2014) indicated that poor organization is the most common reason for lateness. Students wait until the last minute, and then do not allow themselves enough time to travel to school.

The participants reported that there were more female students who came to school late, than male students, of which some educators explained that it may be because most female students were young parents and were looking after their children, in addition to their responsibilities and this might be one of the reasons they arrived late. In Delta State it was noted that lateness is common among female students, and as such they should be of more concern to the school management (Famous, 2011). In the same way it was showed in Jumare at al. (2015) that late coming to school is higher among female students, those within the ages of 16-20 are frequent late comers. Such could be related to adolescent stage in the life of the students, because they felt less fear of repercussion of actions. One participant said:

"I questioned a student concerning the time they spend preparing to come to school. She said an hour or so because she puts on makeup and takes time doing her hair so, I thought all that required time, which was why students come to school late. This is because they want to look good, forgetting that this is a school not a fashion show" (participant 07)

"Almost half of female students in my class have kids and before coming to school they prepare their kids for pre-school. By the time they finish there is little time to organize themselves for school plus the walking distance as well..."(participant 012)

The study findings showed that students come late for school. This had an impact on students as well as their academic performance. Students who came to school late found that was in progress of which they remained behind compared to other students and when they entered the classroom late it caused a disruption for both the educator and the students. When students come to class late, it can disturb the flow of a lesson or discussion, distract other students, and disturb the learning teaching process (Bataineh, 2014). In the same way, it was noted In Delta State that both educators and students' lateness to school has posed a problem to school administrators (Famous, 2011).

Educators explained that in some schools they close the school gate as a way of managing lateness. However, it appeared that almost half of the school would remain outside and only few arrived early in such a way such that intervention was not working, as schools would remain with few students to teach. It is important for all stake holders in education to consider students late coming to school as one of the factors hindering the success of quality education. The principal and other stakeholders, such as parents, are responsible for not only punishing late comers but also for developing a strategy for curbing the meanness of students' late coming to school. Parents must take their responsibilities in making sure that students are given all they need to go to school and on time (Jumare at al., 2015).

Sub-category 3: Vandalizing of school property

During the interviews educators explained that they had a concern with students' vandalizing school property. Educators stated that as much as they tried to mould a better youth for the future of the country, students continued with the acts of violence in which they did not care to look after school property in most schools, and it appeared that they enjoyed destroying it. The findings of this study also showed that discipline was a struggle in most high schools. Below are some of the comments educators made with regards to that:

"If you can look around, most windows are broken and you would ask yourself why would students break windows in the classrooms they use, I fail to understand" (participant 04).

"They write on the walls, tables...everywhere but they have books which they can use if they want to write" (participant 06).

“You see.....(pointing) chairs are broken, there is already a shortage of chairs but they destroy the few chairs available.....(shaking head) (participant 08)

Educators in this study explained that they were unable to identify factors that lead to students vandalizing school property. Some educators stated that in their schools there were no sports facilities available for students during their free time at schools. Vandalism is described as an aggressive behaviour caused by students and leading to damage of school facilities (Thawabieh & Al-rofo, 2010). According to Thawabieh and Al-rofo (2010) students spend most time sitting on their seats, so they exhibit vandalism by writing on the table, walls and seats. Students vandalism of school property was based on students grades. The study findings indicated that the older students in grade 11 show noticeable degree of vandalism, compared to younger students on grade 6 and 9 (Thawabieh & Al-rofo, 2010).

Educators explained that students were exposed to violent situations, not at schools only, but at homes and communities as well, of which such experiences had a negative impact on them, to the extent that they perceived violence as something common. One participant said:

“Students show no remorse, they fight each other, they break chairs they seem not to care” (participant 010).

Majority of students had seen people in their family intentionally hurting one another, some students had themselves been assaulted at home. Such situations significantly increased the students' risk for violence in the school environment. However, according to Thawabieh and Al-rofo (2010) the main reason for students' vandalism is due to lack of communication skills and human relationships. Most students who exhibit disruptive behaviour said they do that to express themselves in a violent behaviour, so 61.20% of the participants reported that they vandalize school property because they felt they were not receiving the positive reinforcement they expected for their good behaviour (Thawabieh & Al-rofo, 2010). According to Ngqela and Lewis (2012) the rates of violence in South Africa is high, it has become one of the most significant public concern in the country. In a similar way a study conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013) results showed that by the time young people enter high school many of them have already been exposed to violence, either as victims or witnesses, in their homes or communities

The study findings also showed that educators were apprehensive about students continued violent acts at schools. Students' aggressive behaviour had a negative impact on both students and educators, such as compromise the safety at schools, which in turn, affects teaching and learning adversely in the classroom. The frequent occurrence of aggressive and violent behaviour displayed by students in schools has had a devastating effect on the school system and has become a cause for great concern among the stakeholders involved in the South African school system (Gasa, 2012). According to Ali et al. (2014) acts of indiscipline occasioned by students' misconduct involving violent and criminal behavior, affected the goal of teaching and learning.

The educators explained that due to the rural settlement the schools were situated at, environment was a contributory factor of students' violent behaviour because most students were from families which exposed them to violence and some parents failed to monitor their children and enhance good morals. Empangeni District in KwaZulu-Natal, a rural settlement, showed similarities to this study concerning students' violent behaviour. The findings showed that students aggression leads to many instances of learner violence in schools. In addition, both educators and students have been confronted by incidents of violent behaviour in their schools (Singh & Steyn, 2014).

According to participants, school vandalism was not only a school problem but also a community problem. As a result, educators expected parents and community to participate in managing the problem of vandalism in the schools. Educators further explained that with the intervention from community they were to monitor the school. This should be done as a way of protecting schools during recess, in case not only students were reliable for vandalizing school property. To overcome learner violence and to establish a safe school environment require the cooperation of leaders in education, the government, law enforcement agencies and community leaders (Ramorola & Taole, 2014).

Sub-category 4: Students Substance use

Educators explained that there was a problem of substance consumption at schools. During the interviews, educators indicated that students come to school drunk, and they bring substances to school. High school students at Malamulele North East Circuit were reported to be abusing similar substances, as explained by educators during the interviews, that they were always

having cases of students seen with dagga and alcohol on school premises, which showed that students were drinking and smoking at school. The following are some of the comments from educators.

“Students come to school drunk, I was invigilating during exam and I noticed one student sleeping in class, what do they call that thing black out... yaaaah that, so after all the other students had finished writing, the one who was sleeping remained in class so I had to wake him up”. (participant 02)

“They (students) smell marijuana after coming back from the toilet”. (participant 07)

During the interviews educators stated that some students, when asked why were they drinking alcohol on school premises with the knowledge that alcohol is not allowed at school, participants said they feel good after drinking and everyone does drink. The availability of alcohol and the fact that their parents are drunkards and peer pressure also contributed. Substance abuse amongst high school students in South Africa is of great national concern (Mothibi, 2014). The most common substances that high school students abuse was alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana (Simatwa, Odhong, Juma & Choka, 2014). According to Simatwa et al. (2014) the availability of alcohol and advertisements in the electronic and print media fuels substance abuse amongst young people.

In this study educators found that substance consumption by students was a problem because it has an impact on teaching and learning. Students who were reported to consume substance would cause disruptions in class. Some would fall asleep during lessons. It is assumed that there is a link between substance abuse and lack of concentration by students during lessons (Mothibi, 2014). Substance abuse amongst students is at an alarming rate and requires effective interventions of which failure to that may result in school dropouts, indiscipline and compromised academic standards (Simatwa et al., 2014).

Sub-category 5: Teenage pregnancy

The participants in this study stated that amongst other social factors teenage pregnancy was one of the challenging problems they were confronted with. Educators explained that they faced some difficulties when dealing with students who are pregnant. They further indicated that at times those pregnant students are absent for week or longer from school and as an educator, they were expected to make follow up as to why a student was not coming in school.

Educators felt that they were burdened with other responsibility: looking after pregnant students instead of doing their work as educators. Such challenging experiences were made clear in these quotes:

“In my class there are two ladies who are pregnant, one of them was not well this other time in class she was vomiting and was unable to walk, I tried to call her mother but was unable to get hold of her.....(shaking head). Such situations add to my responsibility as an educator I had to see that she received medical attention, I took her to the clinic and made sure that she was feeling better and that she got home safely”. (participant 01)

“I would be busy teaching in class, only to find a student sleeping and mostly it is girls who are pregnant. These students sleep in class, they do not do their homework and their performance is poor”. (participant 03)

Educators were concerned with the increasing number of teenage pregnancies in their respective schools. The findings from this study showed that most students are from poor background families, while some are from child-headed homes. Teenage pregnancy in such circumstances only worsens the situation. Educators explained that when looking at the poor performance of girls who are pregnant in the classrooms, it was noted that there was a relationship between academic failure and teenage pregnancy. Hence, the Department of Education should play a role in implementing pregnancy prevention strategies. Some studies conducted indicated that there was a high proportion of unintended pregnancies for teenagers in South Africa. These studies further indicated that the following provinces: Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal were identified to have a high rate of students pregnancies (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod & Letsoalo, 2009). Teenage pregnancy and childbearing have adverse academic consequences for teen parents and lead to a higher drop-out rate for the young mothers. Early parenting limits a young mother’s likelihood of a getting the post-secondary education.

Category 2: Factors related to space or physical environment

During the interviews educators explained that working at schools exposed them to different hindrances, such as traumatic events. They further, stated that schools were not safe, because they often witnessed fights amongst students and that students used knives and stones to hurt one another on school premises. The findings showed that there were cases in most schools of students threatening to harm educators. Educators indicated that being exposed to such events was traumatic and made them not to feel at ease when they were at schools. One educator said

“I sometimes wonder...(shaking head) is this a school or a crime zone because of what I see students doing everyday”. (participant 03)

The findings from this study showed that the experiences of traumatic events at schools resulted in some educators withdrawing from their daily working activities. Some educators said they experienced anxiety attacks. It was found that almost every victim of trauma experienced severe anxiety and that most victims are troubled by clinical depression (Namie, Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Trauma results in an ongoing psychological and physical distress, which can affect a person for the duration of his or her life span (D’Andrea, Sharma, Zelechowski & Spinazzola, 2011).

According to educators, schools should be a safe environment for both students and educators and that it should not impose threatening events in any way. However, schools where educators in this study worked were said to contain situations that were life threatening to both students and educators. This was showed in the following quotes:

“I had a student who threatened me in front of other students when I was about to leave class he followed me and continued shouting even though I was not responding. I remember him saying “you think you are better than us....heeehh I want to sort you out, you do not know me I can stab your car tires and we’ll see how you will to get home”. (participant 02)

“I have developed anxiety I no longer feel safe at this school because you never know what these students are thinking. Not so long also I was threatened by a student. He said that he would deal with me and that he knows the places I go to and relax after workyou see.... (pointing) I would not know what the student might do to me” (participant 09)

The educators indicated that they spend most of their time at school. It was a concern to them that the school environment was not conducive for work because of old school buildings and lack of resources. They further, stated that a working environment should be comfortable for employees, which was not the case in schools where the educators in this study worked.

Sub-category 1: Overcrowding

The findings revealed that due to a large student numbers, teaching and learning was difficult. Overcrowding at schools is alarming. One educator answered as follows:

“...and also because our school is big and there is a shortage of classes students are crowded in one class(shaking his head) marking is stressful when students write tasks it takes time for me to finish marking scripts even during exam time ‘my God’ i cannot do anything at school or home besides marking scripts”. (participant 02)

In this study, most of the educators reported that classes are overcrowded and that it has been like this for years. They further, explained that it is difficult to control a large number of students because not all students understand why they are at school. Some educators teach more than one grade and in some schools a grade has more than five classes. Therefore, for an educator to teach all those classes in a day was stressful. Similar challenges of overcrowding were experienced in the Eastern Cape. A study conducted by John (2013) reports that in some schools three or four students are forced to sit together in a desk, thus obstructing traffic flow in the classroom and obstructing the educator from moving around in class.

The maximum recommended learner-educator ratio for South African secondary schools was 35:1 (Marais, 2016). However, overcrowded classrooms are a major problem in some schools in South Africa. It was noted that large class sizes can be an overwhelming experience for newly appointed educators, due to lack of exposure to overcrowded classrooms during their training years (Opoku-Asare, Agbenatogbe & DeGraft-Johnson, 2014). Hence in March 2013, a document entitled Policy Brief (Modisaotsile, 2012) requested better teacher training to address teaching challenges, one of which is overcrowded classrooms. The document further stated that educator-training institutions should offer appropriate educator training programmes that will enable newly appointed educators to deal with the critical problems of teaching in overcrowded classrooms (Marais,2016).

The educators reported that teaching in an overcrowded class was never exciting. This was because educators would spend time controlling students instead of teaching. Student discipline in such crowded classrooms was a challenge, which has an impact on students' performance. Mustafa, Mahmoud , Assaf , Al- Hamadi and Abdulhamid (2014) indicated that, large numbers of learners in one classroom also interferes with classroom management. They further stated that larger classes are noisier, to the extent that it impacts negatively on classroom discipline. It appears that an educator struggles to cope with such situations on his/her own. Educators lose valuable lesson time in such circumstances because they spend most of the lesson time trying to control students (Imtiaz, 2014). The performance of students taught in large classes is negatively affected, as shown by, research conducted by Cortes, Moussa and Weins-tein (2012). It highlighted that class size affects student performance, due to misbehaviour and other disciplinary problems in large classes. Chingos (2013) believes that students are able to learn more effectively in smaller classes than in larger classes. This is due to the educator's ability to control and reach out to his or her students as well as an opportunity for students to receive individual attention and instruction from the educator in the classroom.

A memorandum from the organization, called Equal Education in the year 2013, was handed to Parliament in Cape Town and the Department of Basic Education in Pretoria, in which overcrowded classrooms were criticized (Davis, 2013). It stated that the challenge of overcrowded classrooms in South African high schools required immediate intervention to avoid the continued negative consequences of overcrowding.

Sub-category 2: Lack of sports activities

Educators explained that due to less availability of activities such as sports, students used their available time engaging in unnecessary things like substance abuse. Sport is perceived as a good approach for students in secondary schools, in order to channel their thinking and disposition towards worthwhile goals. Sport provide students with the opportunity to learn or acquire qualities such as self-discipline and obedience (Orunaboka & Nwachukwu, 2012). The following are some comments said by educators:

“During breaks they just sit around outside, teasing each other, while some start fights because they know there is nothing else to do at school”. (participant 02)

“...and I think the discipline issue we have in our school of discipline would be reduced if students were engaged in sports and be kept busy”. (participant 011)

Students influence each other negatively peer pressure was a concern in most schools. The educators stated that students form groups, especially boys, of which if there were sporting activities in schools, the groups would be a team of my be soccer instead of gangs. Educators further explained that the unavailability of sports centres to keep students busy at schools might be having a negative impact because students misuse the available leisure times. Hence engagement students in sports activities could be beneficial for them, not only for their physical wellness but for social interaction, too.

The participants further indicated that students in secondary schools seems less motivated, which they believe sports correct by channeling their thinking and dispositions towards worthwhile goal. According to Orunaboka and Nwachukwu (2012) sporting activities in schools could be the safety valve through which problems such as obedience could be addressed. When participating in sports, students get the opportunity to recognize and express one's individual qualities (Orunaboka & Nwachukwu, 2012).

Sub-category 3: Use of dangerous weapons

The study finding showed that students took dangerous weapons to school, such as knives and screwdrivers. The participants explained that they had cases in their schools of students threatening other students with these weapons. Educators explained that previously the police would come to school to search the school premises and students' bags, and weapons were found in the school yard. Students' use of weapons to force educators and innocent students into submission was of serious concern (Singh & Steyn, 2014). Below are some of the comments that participants made with regards to that:

“You know...(chuckling) just yesterday as a head of grade there was a case of a student who was reported to have brought a knife, so his parents were called to school. A young girl reported that a fellow student pointed a knife at her”. (participant 012)

“Last year I had to take a student to the nearest clinic after he got into a fight and the other student threw a stone and hit him on the forehead”. (participant 05)

The participants reported that student violence was such that fights which started on school premises continued after school. Educators explained that students who were involved in fights and were defeated showed a change in their interaction with other students as well as their behaviour. According to Marsh, McGee and Williams (2009) physical violence and bullying at schools may affect the learning environment in the school and have a direct impact on the quality of education as well as deterioration in students performance. In the same way Shaffer and Kipp (2013) indicated that victimized children are at risk of developing a variety of adjustment problems, including loneliness, anxiety, depression, further erosion of self-esteem and avoidance of school.

According to the participants some of the fights at schools were related to food. This is because schools under the circuit were part of the government's feeding scheme, and the participants reported that students fight over food. Students are served the same food however, some students who were said to be bullies threatened other students verbally or pointed a weapons demanding that they hand over their food. The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (Republic of South Africa 1996a:ch. 2:24a) guarantees a safe environment for all citizens. Schools are integral community-based organizations that ought to be safe for both educators and students in order for teaching and learning to take place without interruption. However, this was not the case in most schools (Singh & Steyn, 2013).

Category 3: Management and policy issues

During data collection the participants reported that they were not receiving enough support from their employer (DOE). The DOE did not ensure that educators felt comfortable and received support in terms of proper classrooms as well as staff rooms in most schools. The environment where educators were working was also not in good condition; the school buildings were old and required to be repaired or demolished in order to build a new school. The surroundings and environments in which educators and students find themselves in, Influence teaching and learning (Isaiah, 2013). Further, stated that educational environments in which students learn have a definite influence on their learning process, behavioural and cognitive development. In the same way Peterson (2011) agrees that due to the fact that school buildings were dilapidated learning was hindered in schools. Considering the amount of time students and educators spend in school buildings, it is of concern that academic achievement would be

influenced by the condition of the facility. A concern of students and educators poor academic performance may result from dilapidated school facilities, which lead to student absenteeism a decrease student's likelihood of receiving a quality education (Lumpkin, 2013). One participant said:

"The department is not looking after us properly (educators) as our employer. The school environment is not safe, you can see for yourself....(pointing)...look at the walls there are cracks the roof leaks, as if it is about to collapse it is terrible to work under such conditions. I do not know....(shaking head) maybe the department is waiting for an incident to happen first, then they will renovate these buildings". (participant 04)

"...and I do not think by looking at our (educators) offices you would wish to become an educator because there are no resources. How does the department expect us (educators) to work without computers, amongst other things". (participant 09)

"...look would you call this an HOD's office no...(shaking head). This is a joke...(pointing) the department does not care, they only expect better grade 12 results". (participant 02)

Educators are held responsible for students' achievement. However, their working environment such as school buildings, where teaching and learning takes place, is not acknowledged. The school's physical environment plays a key role in influencing teachers' level of dissatisfaction and their level of performance or productivity (Isaiah, 2013). Participants explained that the school buildings were old and they no longer felt safe using the classrooms. This is because the walls have cracks all over and the floors have holes, which was exposing them to injuries. Findings of a study conducted by Isaiah (2013) revealed that the state of school buildings educators work in tends to positively influence their level of job dissatisfaction. The condition of classrooms and staffrooms were perceived as a source of danger to them and students. It further, indicated that school facilities were neglected and this resulted in educators being frustrated. According to Benner (2000) it is important to ensure that for any learning to effectively take place, school buildings must be of good condition and supportive of teaching and learning to take place

The participants explained that it was difficult for them to be effective because of lack of resources to do their work and complete given tasks on time. A report indicated that though the South African government invests highly in the country's education, the quality of education provided in public schools seems to remain a problem (World Economic Forum, 2013 cited in

Sprenger, 2011). The challenges that educators are experiencing such as lack of resources, among other things (Modisaotsile 2014). The participants in this study indicated that the problem of few resources was a daily problem. Educators' challenges due to lack of resources at schools were made clear in these quotes:

".....you see our (educators) school have many students but insufficient text books. I am forced to make copies for them but how will I do that, there are many educators but just one copy machine and is it is a small machine it cannot handle bulk photocopying". (participant 06)

"we use our (educators) own laptops to type work and compile lessons plans, but I think the department should provide us with computers and access to the internet because there is a need for internet access in order to browse current information when preparing for lessons". (participant 010)

"...I decided to postpone the test that I had prepared for my students because the photocopy machine was broken and I failed to make copies of the question papers". (participant 07)

The participants explained that working in public schools without adequate resources such as textbooks and computers, amongst other things, makes their job difficult. South African public schools are still experiencing a serious problem with regard to equality of access to education and availability of resources in many disadvantaged high schools (Sedibe, 2011). Regarding the availability of textbooks and other reading materials, the study conducted by Piper (2010) in Ethiopia revealed that there is a serious shortage, in which only 1 in 6 children had any reading material. Additionally, the study showed that school resources such as computers and laboratories are common problems in most regions. A study conducted from three high schools in the North West Province, examining the availability and equality of access to resources, showed that there was no equality of access to resources in previously disadvantaged high schools and that this was a major problem (Sedibe, 2011). Another research finding from Harari Regional State and East Hararghe Zone in Ethiopia showed that due to the unavailability of school facilities and instructional materials, there were challenges in the teaching and learning activities, which in turn, had a negative impact on the improvement of the quality of education (Afewerk & Asfaw, 2014)

The participants explained that they felt that their working environment was stressing and they felt less motivated because this handicapped them from doing their job adequately because of unavailability of resources. A good school environment and adequate school facility have a significant positive effect on the teacher's motivation and student achievement (Afework & Asfaw, 2014). The two researchers further, stated that the availability of adequate educational resources, a supportive learning environment, and suitable access to basic services in instructional settings, such as sanitation, clean water and electricity, are important for the promotion of learning and educational performance. Adequate and quality school facilities are basic ingredients for quality education and ensuring that the intended goal of the school program were achieved. However, Hedges, Konstantopoulos and Theoreson (2000) argued that, the adequacies of school facilities do not guarantee satisfactory academic performance, but rather the proper utilization of the facilities has a great value in the same way. Sedibe (2011) also argued that the availability of adequate learning materials is an extremely important condition for the achievement of good-quality education, as much as it required proper utilization and monitoring.

Sub-category 1: Curriculum change

The participants in this study explained that they were concerned with curriculum changes. They said when the DOE introduced a new curriculum, educators were not included in decision making. Further, they stated that they are not consulted or given an opportunity to give their own views concerning the curriculum and that they were not happy with the way the department conducts training whenever a new curriculum was introduced. Educators complained that they are not given an active role in the determination of curriculum change (Handler, 2010). Below are some of the comments that the participants made with regards to that:

“our department is unfair to us as educators. They always change the curriculum and educators like me find it challenging. It means when we get used to a curriculum the next thing they change it...we currently have CAPS (Curriculum assessment policy statement) and who knows maybe...(folding hands) next year they will bring a new curriculum soon”. (participant 06)

“I am the one teaching students and any curriculum changes has an impact on my performance so I think the department should give educators an opportunity to give their opinions on the curriculum because it is a struggle to adjust to changes and I cannot be going to class without knowing what I am doing because students will not take me seriously”. (participant 011)

The participants explained that they struggled when Outcome-based education (OBE) was introduced, but they got used to it and it started to work well in schools. They indicated that it was never easy to change from one curriculum to another because each curriculum has its own procedures of teaching as well as preparation of lesson plans. The participants during data collection indicated that currently, the curriculum used at schools was CAPS. They further explained that when CAPS was introduced most educators were frustrated and worried that the current curriculum would not be effective. They felt it was too early to introduce a new curriculum, and having to deal with many changes and differences compared from the previous curriculum and the challenge of school environment, as well as lack of resources. The school environment, classrooms and students performances were said to play a role in ensuring the effectiveness of a curriculum.

The study findings showed that when a new curriculum was introduced, the department conducts workshops to train educators. However, participants in this study complained that the trainings the department conducted was never effective or had little impact because the period of the training was too short for educators to master and understand. Also, educators found it difficult to take in too much information about a new curriculum in a short period of time. Below are some of the comments they made with regards to that:

“I went to training but if you ask what they were teaching ...aaaah and I am sure it was not just me who felt the training was not beneficial because they teach us so many things in a short period of time. I am not a computer, so when i came back to school I had forgotten everything”.
(participant 03)

The participants explained that it was less motivating to attend training because, when a new curriculum was introduced there were changes and educators struggled to adjust and understand what was expected of them, as well as a new procedures to teach and prepare for lessons.

Sub-category 2: Termination of corporal punishment

During the interviews the participants seemed to be dissatisfied with the abolition of corporal punishment. The further, explained that schools had turned into play grounds students lack respect for each other as well as for educators. They added that they had lost control over students at schools because there was no corporal punishment at schools currently. They said because of that, students behave any way they wished such as being outside the classroom during lessons and late-coming. Students are aware that corporal punishment is not allowed at schools, and no matter what they do at school they will not receive corporal punishment. One participant said:

“Whether in the classroom or in the school yard, if I see a student misbehaving or refusing to go back to class after break, I just look at him....(Pause) what can I do because students know if an educator hits a student a case can be opened for that educator so my hands are tied”. (participant 011)

“Students will tell you that Sir I have rights so if you hit me, I will go to the police....so it is difficult. I talk to them but do they listen? no...(Shaking head) no matter how you can shout at them, it won't help”. (participant 02)

The study showed that educators were unable to control students or had no effective way of punishing students. Educators complained that before corporal punishment was abolished the DOE should have implemented an effective way of punishing students at schools. In the African culture a child should be lashed once in a while as a way of disciplining them, but if educators do so at schools they are afraid losing their jobs as the policy states that corporal punishment was not allowed at schools. However, Kilimci (2009) disagreed that the use of discipline is necessary to provide obedience at school. However, the use of corporal punishment to provide discipline might bring more harm than benefit. Below are some of the educators responses on how termination of corporal punishment was a problem at schools:

“...and i will be thinking that I am disciplining a student by lashing him only to be arrested and losing my job”. (participant 05)

“You know...(pause) sometimes I just do not know how to control students in my class because talking to them is not helping at all”. (participant 012)

According to educators corporal punishment was an effective method used at schools to discipline students. Further, some participants indicated that they were aware that previously educators were misusing the method instead of disciplining. However, the participants still believed that corporal punishment was an effective way of controlling students at schools. Students knew that if an educator gave them a task at school for submission the following day and they failed to do so, a student was expected to provide an appropriate explanation and, if not, it meant they would be punished. Both mild and severe corporal punishment have negative effects on students' confidence. It creates fear and hesitation, hindering learning and resulting in poor academic performance (Naz, Khan, Daraz, Hussain & Khan, 2011).

Sub-category 3: Heavy workload

Participants indicated that they were confronted with a heavy workload in their daily work environment. They complained that the experience of having so much to do in a day, such as compiling educators' file, marking, lesson plan, teaching different classes and grades of students, as well as other responsibilities expected from them, was too much for them to handle. Educators explained that their work was stressful and that factors such as limited time was a concern. These are captured in the following quotes:

“as I said....(pause) classes are overcrowded with almost 90 students in a class so it means I am stuck with a pile of scripts to mark, preparing for lessons and mind you I teach different subjects and grades and compiling this thing they have introduced, called educator's file”. (participant 011)

”As for me.... (pointing to self) I have so many classes, I am an English educator and my subject has three papers so, preparing for lessons and tests for three papers in a class of students close to 90, is just too much aaah....(pause) I tell you it is not easy for me”. (participant 09)

Participants also complained that there was so much paper work to be compiled, some of which they thought was not necessary. Educators explained that going to class to teach students, attending meetings and lesson preparation were challenging and because the schools environment is not favorable, such makes their work even more difficult.

Educators are expected to comply with the demands that their job offers, such as creating lesson plans, grading assignments, attending school-wide meetings and conferencing with parents, meaning at some point educators use time outside of the prescribed work day to complete the required tasks (Johannsen, 2011).

Most participants explained that they were concerned about the workload. They are given daily, which contradicts with the policy that an educator is supposed to have 95% of workload. Most often educators are not able to achieve the standards of teaching and learning they would like to achieve, due to the unfavourable working conditions Naidoo et al. (2013) as well as Pelsler and van Wyk (2016) agreed that factors such as shortage of educators, changes in education profession result in educators confronted with difficult working conditions, whereby available educators at any school have to do work which requires more than one educator.

Sub-category 4: Lack of safety and security at school premises

Lack of security at schools was one of the challenge educators were confronted with. The participants expressed their concerns about safety on school premises. Educators were exposed to violence both directly and indirectly which resulted in fear to attend the classroom or try to avoid the school environment in an attempt to avoid exposure to violence. Violence in schools has drawn media attention in South Africa in recent years, where in violence has been escalating at an alarming rate and something needs to be done about it (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Results from a study conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013) indicated that educators were victims of verbal violence, physical violence and sexual violence perpetrated by learners. It further showed that due to lack of security and exposure to violence in high schools has an impact or affect those are directly victimized as well as those who witness the violence occurring at schools. This is captured in the following quotes:

“I do not have assurance at all that I am safe at this school...”(participant 01)

“At times I feel reluctant to go to the toilet alone as they are too far away from the staff offices, because I would not know if I am a target or not, these students are unpredictable”. (participant 07)

The participants felt that they were not safe from physical violence and that their safety was not ensured by their employer. They further, indicated that in any institution, the work environment should provide a sense of security and safety and if such is not present, there would be little effectiveness on the part of the employees. The interviews conducted with educators from different public high schools showed that lack of security made educators feel their work environment exposed them to danger. They further complained that students are violent with each and with educators. Some students were reported to bring dangerous weapons to school and hid them in their school bags. When the school security guards wanted to search their bags, they refused. There is a great need to intensify security measures within school premises to promote an effective environment of learning and teaching and therefore ensuring the right to education (Ngqela & Lewis, 2012). A safe school could be characterized as one without physical violence (Bosworth Ford & Hernandez, 2011).

Sub-category 5: Poor school management

In this study, the participants were concerned about the school management's lack of leadership skills. Educators explained that the management team in their respective schools neglected their responsibilities as leaders. A leader in an organization is expected to perform certain tasks for the smooth-running of the organization and failure to do so might hinder the improvement of organizational performance (Jay, 2014). According to Naidoo & Botha (2014) a school with no proper management structure can hinder the pass rates and the efficiency of the educators.. One participant said:

“The management lacks leadership skills. We report issues that we come across but they just sit in their offices. What they do is to delegate and fail to be in control. As for the principal, we do not get to see him often. Students only see him twice a week during morning prayers. He even fails to walk around the school to monitor things”. (participant 08)

The findings of this study revealed that some educators were not happy with the management of the schools. They felt that they were not considered when decisions were made. Employees were concerned with not being involved in decision-making that influences their work life (Hamid, Bisschoff & Botha, 2015). Educators explained that management in most schools were leading or running things at schools through delegation, instead of being responsible of their duties. Leadership should be dispersed throughout the school and management, activities should be delegated to stakeholders such as educators (Christie, 2010). According to Somech

(2010) educators' participation in school management is of importance, particularly when it is believed that the effects that educators' participation might have positive outcomes at schools. One participant said:

“There are so many Issues which the school management is not considering as being significant. The working environment is not pleasing at all. There are certain things the management does which I think is not benefiting educators, like appointing heads of grades, but when you go to consult they are not available to offer support. So such adds to the pressure that we already have”. (participant 011)

The participants explained that they would be pleased to see some changes at schools; for example if the management could be more effective in their work and ensure that the working environment at schools is conducive for education. Educators explained that they were not involved in decision-making at schools and were affected by certain decisions, they felt that they would like to be involved and consulted because decisions made at school have an impact on their work. Wadesango (2011) found that there were benefits that a school could have when educators were given the opportunity to participate in decision-making. Jay(2014) also confirms that educators' participation in school governance in order to improve decision-making concerning teaching and learning is vital Mokoena (2012) indicated that when management fails to involve educator at schools such has an effect on the trust level. There is a positive relationship between leadership style, and educators performance (Jay, 2014). He further, stated that leadership is the most operational tool which can influence people so that they strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the accomplishment of goals.

Category 4: Community and parental factor

The participants explained that working in schools required stakeholders such as parents and the community for the better functioning of a school. According to the participants a school required support from parents as well as the School Governing Body in ensuring that teaching and learning were effective. Findings from this study showed that most educators were concerned that there was little support from parents and the surrounding community. The following are some of the comments from the participants.

“...and the community would complain why a student was expelled from school no matter what offense a student might have committed at school”. (participant 04)

“ I am sorry to say this...(chuckling) but the SGB in this school ...aaay they are useless, I really do not see the impact they are having in our school because when there are issuesm they are not available”. (participant 010)

“You send a student home to put on a uniform and he (student) comes back with the parents and instead of asking why a student was returned, the parent start shouting that we (educators) are denying their child the right of receiving education because of a school uniform.” (participant 06)

During the interview the participants explained that both the homes and the community had an impact on students behaviour and that some parents did not any show interest in social or educational activities in which their children were involved. Such was a concern for most educators. Non-involvement of parents is a contributory factor for students to perform poorly at school. Providing learning support serves as a motivation for students to foster greater academic engagement (Gasiewski, Eagan, Garcia, Hurtado & Chang, 2012). This category is discussed under the following sub-categories: Illiterate community and Lack of parental guidance or Involvement

Sub-category 1: Lack of parental guidance and Involvement

The participants explained that, when parents were called for school meetings they did not attend some parents were reported to be away; many students lived/stayed alone at homes. Similarly in a study conducted by Singh and Steyn (2013) in rural secondary schools in the Empangeni District, KwaZulu-Natal participants complained about the non-involvement of parents in school-related matters. An educator commented that parental support is lacking. Parents either refused to attend or said that there were committed. Many participants held the view that it is important that parents take part and responsibility to assist principals and educators to reduce issues such as disciplinary problems in the school through their active involvement. However, educators explained that most parents cared less about their children’s education. This was showed in the following quotes:

“ When we send meeting invitations letters to parents, they always give excuses when asked why they failed to come to a meeting they say they had better things to do than coming to a meeting sit and listen. Where else they would be doing something better at home”. (participant 07)

“I called a parent for a disciplinary hearing after a student fought and hurt another student. The father was angry when he arrived at school, saying that I was wasting his time and that I was failing to control a student and that there was no need to call him to school”. (participant 03)

“I was disappointed the other day when a parent came to school after I had complained that a student had been absent from school for some days and the mother said to me that she had enough of her daughter and that the student was a problem at home as well, so it was up to me (educator) to decide on what to do with the student”. (participant 06)

The participants further complained about lack of parental involvement in their children's education and that most parents were illiterate. Lack of parental commitment and involvement in their children's education have resulted in poor performance of students increased frustration, and poor performance of educators (Naidoo et al. 2013). Participants complained about lack of involvement from parents, which became a problem for the educators, as they deal with bad students behaviour at school, which requires parental intervention. It was found that parents who are unable to instill proper discipline in their children contribute to their disruptive behaviour (Singh & Steyn, 2013).

Theme 2: Effects of stress on high school educators

The study findings showed the challenges faced by educators in their daily working environment, which was said to have a negative impact on educators' personal life and their productivity at work. Stress at work may hinder employees health and lead to illness or injury, and also changes in educators' behaviour and lifestyle. Occupational stress has been found to be related not only with loss of productivity at work but with the arousal of diseases and occupational accidents (Moustaka & Constantinidis, 2010). The theme is further discussed under the following categories: physical, psychological and behavioral. During the analysis of data, categories created were divided into sub-categories

Category 1: Physical

The study findings showed that educators were under immense pressure to meet the expectations of students in their respective schools. Educators stated that they were forced to take work home in order to reduce the demand. They stated that having scripts to mark as well as preparing for lessons in a specified period of time was straining and affected their well

beings. During the interviews educators explained that due to the daily physical strain they noticed changes in their health which had an impact on their performance at work and home. According to de Vos (2012) educators' ill-health experiences result in a negative impact on their social, family and professional interaction. The following are some of the comments the participants made:

...and you know I feel tired, having more than four periods in a day was exhausting" (participant 05)

"My health is at risk, I have to take it easy, overworking will not do me any good" (participant 09)

"...lately i am struggling to sleep and had to consult a doctor and was told my blood pressure was high and the doctor said I should slow down at work but it is not easy. Who will teach my subjects after all I have many classes to teach". (participant 08)

During the interviews the participants explained that getting in one class to another and standing almost the whole day teaching was not easy. Further, they stated that attending to students and their queries was also exhausting. Some female educators indicated that they had swollen feet because of standing in class for a long period. One educator said

"I started to notice that my legs were swollen when I arrived home and at first I did not understand, I was worried that maybe I was sick but then during weekends my legs were fine, so when I was talking with colleagues I heard one saying she had the same problem". (participant 05)

The findings showed that majority of educators got sick due to work problems, even though some educators stated that at times they did not know that their sickness was associated with stress as well as the demands that the teaching profession brings. Participants explained that in most cases they would experience back pain due to standing for a long period, headaches and tiredness. Roche & Haar (2011) also stated that some physical symptoms of stress in educators' professions include fatigue, tiredness, headache, chest pains, and stomach aches.

Sub-category 1: Being chased out of class

During the interviews the participants indicated that students behaviour at schools was frustrating for most educators. Most of the participants found it difficult to go to class and teach because students in some classes students were not willing to learn and would make noise and said that they do not want a certain educator in their class. The motivation to go to class was low. According to the participants in this study, it was discouraging to teach certain classes because they were aware that there was a possibility that students would chase them out before they entered the classroom. The participants said that students were uncontrollable and they chose if they wanted to learn or not and the kind of an educator they would allow to get into class. Workplace bullying is perceived as a psychological hazard (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011), which implies that it is a devastating experience that poses a threat to the psychological health and wellbeing of employees and the organization. This is expressed in the following quotes:

“I was chased out of class by students because I withheld their scripts, I had planned on giving all my students from different classes their scripts at ,but some students were furious that I was taking too long, so they started shouting at me. There was a chaos they stood on tables and the whole class was saying I should leave class. Some students were swearing, I was shocked did not know what to do...” (participant 01)

“I was in class teaching, I think I had two periods and from the back seats I heard a voice that my time in class was over so I asked who it was, they all kept quite so I continued teaching...in a few minutes a student stood up and he said “your time has expired you have been in this class for a long time as you can see we are tired so, you should leave” I looked at him...could not say a thing so I just took my books left” (participant 07).

“ while teaching one student at the back started a song and the rest of students joined. The was a chaos in the classroom. I tried to control them but they did not listen....(shaking head) I do not stay in such a class....I leave...”.(participant 08)

The majority of the participants in this study reported that arriving at work each morning and the thought of going to class was stressing, because they could not predict whether the students would cooperate or not in the classroom. They further, stated that students could make educators' work easier by cooperating in class. However, students were disrespectful, they

make teaching a difficult mission. The participants explained that it was impossible to find a class which had students who were quiet and willing to learn.

Category 2: Psychological

During the interviews the participants lamented about how complex teaching profession can be. They explained that their work required more than going to class to teach. In the same way Lenka and Kant (2012) indicated that teaching was the most arduous and complex profession, compared to artisans and craftsman. This is because the most sensitive subject matter, such as grooming a future leader and the responsibility for instructional programme in assessment a student capacity to provide new knowledge, and evaluate as to how much he or she has learnt.

Participant who had a few years working experience as educators indicated that when you are newly employed you have expectations of how schools or working environment would be only to start going to classes and facing the realities in the classroom, which was different. They further, explained that the difficulties faced in the classroom made some educators rethink why they chose the profession. The findings of a study conducted by Nahal (2010) on newly-employed educators showed that before participants started working they believed that students would understand the lessons taught in the classroom and that students would naturally be motivated to learn. It further, indicated that first-year educators experienced difference between expectations of teaching and realities of the classroom, and how such difference affected retention rate. Below are some of the comments they made with regards to that:

*“I get worried and wonder why i chose this profession because I am failing to adjust”.
(participant 05)*

“It makes me sad....(pause) because i thought I would enjoy my job but students at this school are difficult to teach”. (participant 010)

“... and going to work to teach students who are not willing to learn that in itself for me is stressing”. (participant 03)

The majority of participants stated that as much as they loved their work and have been trying so hard to handle the challenges, they felt that experiencing difficult situations as students chasing educators from the class, fights amongst students, being threatened by students, had an impact on educators' well-being and some educators said that they wondered if continuing with their work was worth compromising their physical and mental well-being. Educators encounter many potentially negative events in their everyday professional lives over which they have little or no control, such as students' behaviours, job security and policies amongst other factors which educators may have little or no control to minimize or change at schools. Thus, negative events which educators are unable to change or control create distress (Ferguson, Frost & Hall, 2012). According to Gaudreault and Woods (2013) the perceptions of not being able to control or change the situations at schools that caused educators' stress influenced not only how educators feel about their jobs, but also their effectiveness, interactions with students, experience burnout and compromised programme quality at schools.

Sub-category 1: Burnout

During the interviews the participants complained that their work exposed them to challenges that was said to have an impact on both their physical and psychological wellbeing. They stated that having to stand in a class writing notes for students on a black board was physically straining to the extent that some educators were experiencing backaches and swollen legs. The stress from a particular job is what causes burnout in a body, being an educator has its own stress. Such results in educators physical or physiological responses (Roche & Haar 2011).

The participants identified different factors that left them feeling exhausted such as job demands and pressure. Educators are expected to teach a crowded classroom, and to teach more than one subject in different grades. They further explained that in most school there were receiving little support from the parents and community. In the process of meeting the expectations of students, educators are exposed to certain unwanted internal or external environmental factors which hamper their routine abilities in development of exhaustion and strain (Shoaga, Bukki & Obiyomi, 2015). A study conducted by Ferguson et al. (2012) in Northern Ontario also indicated that workload, student behavior and work condition were significant predictors that lead to depression in educators.

The participants in this study were experiencing negative emotions, such as anger, frustration and depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as educators and also felt the department was not concerned with their well being. They further explained that at times the experience of stress made them wish they were working in a different environment. Some stated that they at times considered leaving their job or taking an early retirement. The experience of burnout lead to employees reacting in different ways, like showing job dissatisfaction, less morale, weak performance and general exhaustion (Shoaga et al. 2015). This was showed in the following quotes:

“i have tried to be strong but I cannot, i have thought of changing jobs and going to a primary school maybe students there are not as difficult to teach. I feel tired the students at this school are not serious, my job is frustrating, if it was not for the salary, I would leave”. (participant 01)

“My husband complained just yesterday concerning my temper. I get irritated easily these days, I feel frustrated....(pause) my work is killing me”. (participant 05)

The majority of female participants in this study indicated that being public servants, working at schools required certain skills, but at times they felt their well being was being compromised. They indicated that they were exposed to situations which were stressful. They further indicated that the thought of going to work was a night-mare because the school environment and student discipline were amongst the most difficult challenges educators dealt with in their daily working environment. Teaching profession was not interesting and pleasing, as they would want, educators indicated that it was difficult to be patient with students, and going to class was frustrating. Some female educators said that the experiences of stressful situations at schools resulted in deviant behaviour as it caused them to become impatient and irritated. Similarly, it was found that there was a positive relationship between job stress and counterproductive behaviour (Salami, 2010).

Category 3: Behavioral

During the interviews most of female participants stated that the stressing situations that were occurring at schools resulted in a change of behaviour, and because of the anger and frustration they encountered at schools, they were failing to control their feelings when they reached home. Educators explained that they were unable to communicate well with their children and other

family members. Due to the overwhelming of challenges, educators take home with them the stress encountered at work, such had an effect on their children and partners through displaced anger. The following are some of the comments from educators.

“...and when I get home after work I find fault in everything I see or that is said by my children, I shout at them for no reason”. (participant 01)

“I am a mess I cannot think straight, I get irritated by small things I cannot have a normal conversation without getting angry...” (participant 010)

“...and when you try to be nice to them (students) they think your (educator) is too soft and would take advantage, I'd rather be rude that is what they want and they hate you all the same”. (participant 05)

According to the participants in this study is frustrating to witness students' aggressive behavior, such as assault and destruction of school property. Such was said to lead to alienation between educators and students at schools. Findings showed that educators' behaviour in schools had changed, in that educators have lost interest in their work, because of students' negative attitude. Thawabieh and Al-rofo (2010) also stated that aggressive behavior, among students in most schools, showed lack of respect and the use of bad words has a disturbing and psychological effects on educators and schools. The majority of participants explained that their attitude has changed towards teaching and students, compared to when they first started working because of different incidents that occurred in schools which were not pleasant and made their work difficult. According to Al Harthy, Jamaluddin and Abedalaziz (2013) a change of attitude is represented by either a change in its intensity (increasing or decreasing) or a change in its nature (positively or negatively).

Sub-category 1: Educators developed negative attitude to work

The study findings showed that the participants developed a negative attitude towards students and their work due to challenging situations they are confronted with in their daily working environment. According to the participants it was less motivating to prepare for lessons, only to be chased out of the classroom by students who seemed unwilling to learn. The participants explained that some classes had too many students who would close the door and not allow

any educator to get in, which led to most educators not bothering themselves with students in such classrooms. During the interviews, the participants showed that they had lost interest in their work. They explained that teaching was less exciting than it used to be, because students lacked of discipline, focus and did not know why they were in school. Educators' negative attitudes may exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and impact negatively upon direct interactions with students (Scanlon & Barnes-Holmes, 2013). This is showed in the following quotes:

“Teaching a class full of students, who are not willing to learn was demotivating for me because students in these school do not know what they want”. (participant 02)

“...and i ask myself why I chose this profession because I am not happy with my job”. (participant 05)

“I would not wish that my children will choose this profession, I actually advice them not to...” (participant 07)

“I have lost interest in preparing for lesson and going to class is no longer exciting anymore” (participant 012)

According to the participants in this study it was difficult to be effective at work because their work environment was not adequate. They explained that they feared being blamed whenever things were not going well at school. They further, stated that parents were not supportive, when their children were not performing well at schools instead of parents approaching educators to understand the reason behind their children's poor performance. Instead they blamed educators for not doing their work. Such has led to educators developing a negative attitude and losing interest in their profession.

There is a relationship between educators' attitudes towards teaching and their performance in teaching as a profession (Ispir, 2010) in the same way Nadeem, Rana, Lone, Maqbool, Naz and Akhtar (2011) also found that there is a relationship between teachers' attitudes and that their performance in teaching is significant.

The participants identified certain aspects in their daily work, such as poor school environment and work pressure, to be responsible for developing loss of interest in their work and impacting on their work performance. Educators' attitudes toward teaching and educators professional performance are two important issues. Hence, changes in attitudes affect educators'

professional performance (Harthyet al. 2013) Some participants stated that when they go to class, they no longer cared if students wrote, the given tasks or not, and identified students who required individual attention. One participant said:

“When I give them homework and only few students submit, I do not bother myself with those who do not write. They will submit whenever they want”. (participant 05)

The majority of participants explained that it was not motivating to go to work because, they felt the situation at schools was stressing and that as much as educators tried to create an environment where students would be motivated to learn, it was not working because students were not co-operating and educators received less or no support at schools. Hence, they had a negative attitude towards their work. According to Harthy et al. (2013) attitudes affect behavioral intention, which affects the person’s actual behavior towards the object.

Theme 3: Educators coping strategies

The study findings showed that participants had strategies they used to manage stress. The participants mentioned different coping methods they were using to manage the experiences of stress they encountered daily at schools. Most educators indicated that identifying aspects which lead them to experience stress was important. They further explained that they spend most of their time at school, which serves as their working environment, contained situations which were said to be stressors and having identified those stressors able them to implement better ways of coping with stress.

According to Baciú (2007) stress management refers to all the means used to objectively or subjectively respond to a stressful situation perceived by the individual. The theme is further discussed under the following categories: religious belief, availability of support from colleagues and students and ability to adapt to stress. During the analysis of data, categories created were divided into sub-categories.

Category 1: Religious beliefs

During data collection some participants explained that the fact that they were guided by their religion (christianity) was helpful to cope with challenges experienced at work. They further, stated that students' behaviour frustrated them, Students started fights and conflict amongst themselves and with educators, which at times would develop into hatred on students. However, educators explained that they always reminded themselves that their religion did not allow them or they were not supposed to hold grudges. According to the participants, it was difficult to remain calm when confronted with challenging circumstances at work. This is showed in the following quotes:

“Students would say things that get me frustrated and I'd decide not to speak to that student ever again, but at the same time I know holding grudges won't help me”. (Participant 02)

“...and i can say that because I am a spiritual person I always remind myself that I chose this profession because I wanted to make a difference in young people's lives. There is a verse in the bible that I like I Joshua 1:9 it says “be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified and discouraged for the lord your God will be with you”...this verse keeps me going” (Participant 08).

The participants indicated that they were aware of the role they were expected to play at schools in order to help students in becoming better people in the society. Some also stated that they did not become educators by mistake, and that God had a reason for using them to change students' lives. They explained that being religious was helpful for most educators to cope with the stress experienced at work and that they believed that God was their protector and helper in times of trouble or difficulties. Religious people seemed to have a better self-control and self-regulation (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). According to Abdel-Khalek (2007) religion was related to better health and well-being and less anxiety.

Sub-category 1: Faith and spirit of forgiveness

The study findings showed that most participants agreed that the teaching profession required courage and if an educator lacked courage he or she will not be able to survive in the profession. They explained that their profession was demanding and a person should choose the teaching profession for a salary but because of passion and as a calling from God to be an

educator. They further stated that they learned to believe in God and prayed for strength whenever they were at work, in order to cope with the challenges at school. They also explained that because of their faith, tried not to hold grudges and forgave students who intentionally offended them in the classroom. One educator said:

“Whenever I am in class and a student misbehaves I try not to mind such a student and forgive him or her. At the same time I avoid being angry the following day when I come to class and face that student and start thinking of what they did the previous day. I prefer to start afresh each day when I get to class”. (Participant 012)

Participants indicated that educators who loved their job were better able to cope better with the experiences of stress at schools, compared to educators who were not certain of their teaching profession. The majority of participants in this study indicated that, one should take up this profession because God chose one to be an educator, you will develop a good attitude when going to class and working in an adequate environment with lack of resources and work pressure. According to Johannsen (2011) when educators have the passion and are being empowered in the workplace, they are in a better position to manage the stressors of the workplace, and in turn contribute to greater school wide effectiveness. And Lee, Chao and Chen (2011) stated that an educator’s good attitude plays an integral part in the effort to improve learning outcomes.

According to educators they needed to be motivated to be effective at work. Findings from this study showed that educators got to a point where they felt their work was no longer satisfying them and would want to be transferred to other schools. However, they often prayed for guidance and it was comforting, and they felt reminded why they chose the profession. Motivation has been a centre of attention among educators throughout the years because it constitutes the backbone of learning process (DİŞLEN, 2013)

Category 2: Availability of support from colleagues and family

During the interviews participants in this study explained that availability of support from different stakeholders was important. The majority of them explained that for them to be productive at work, depended on the support received for personal motivation and professional performance. Receiving sufficient emotional support are some of the strategies for lowering job stress in order to achieve the objectives of an organization. They indicated that for them to work well would be impossible if support was not provided either by their family members, colleagues at work, school management, students and parents. The School Governing Body (SGB) also played a role at schools, their intervention and engagements with the community was said to be supportive in the effectiveness running of schools and reduced educators' responsibilities such as arrangements of parents meetings. One educator said:

“Either the principal or educators should help we cannot cope with stressors in this school on our own we do require support, if our families are not supporting us, then I do not think we’ll be productive at work or function well”. (participant 011)

The majority of participants said that they felt less work pressure because support was received from colleagues, which enable them to remain focused in their work. Some participants indicated that the fact that they had supportive family members who understood the challenges that the teaching profession has would be supportive when they got home. According to the female participants, being a mother and a professional was not easy, sometimes after work they felt tired to an extent that when they went home they could not do anything or attend to their children. Some explained that they were grateful to their husbands who were supportive and would help with the children and other tasks at home. According to Glozah (2013) social support softened the effects of occupational stress and enhance wellbeing. However, Siewert, Antoni, Kubiak and Weber (2011) argued that social support not does not always have a positive impact on employees, that there was a possibility that the support received might not match the needs or expectations of the support recipient. One educator said:

“My husband is supportive, he understands that at times I will be exhausted to a point that when I get home I do not do anything I just sleep, so he helps our children with school work” (participant 01)

“My eldest son helps me to mark students scripts, at times I wonder if I would be able to finish making on time if he was not assisting because i would have piles of scripts to mark in a short space of time”. (participant 02)

The findings showed that educators required support for most problems occurring at school, because in order to resolve them, one needed the involvement of other stakeholders. The participants indicated that in some schools parents and community members showed less of support due to not being actively involved in school activities. Most participants indicated that because of supportive colleagues and family, it was a relief to know that there was support available from their colleagues and family members. Hence, in most cases they were able to cope with certain stressors. Social support is effective ways to help employees cope with stress through their work environment (Karimi & Alipour, 2011). However, stress occurs in a wide range of circumstances in schools but is often made worse when educators feel they have little support from parents and colleagues, as well as little control over work processes and its challenges (Hamid at al. 2015).

Sub-category 1: Having a good relationship with colleagues and students

The participants in this study explained that having a good working relationship with colleagues at work was comforting. They said that the ability to communicate and share experiences with their colleagues was important because they felt that someone understood what they were going through and sharing their experiences helped them to understand that problems experienced by them at their schools was similar to those of other schools. Gaudreault and Woods (2013) also agree that a healthy school climate is characterized by positive relationships between educators, principals and students. The participants explained that it was a good idea that the schools they worked at showed create an environment which allowed them to freely communicate with the principal whenever an educator had challenges either at work or home. This is captured in the following quotes:

“The principal introduced group meeting, we meet as grade educators where all educators who teach a certain grade or subjects participants. It does help because we share our challenges”. (participant 06)

“I had a problem of how to reach out to other educators because our (educators) school is big but now I got to know other educators through meetings and had developed some friendships”. (participant 03)

“...and also talking to someone who understands your situation or why you are going through is the best. It is easy for me to share with other educators because they help me understand and explain how they previously handled the same situation I am going through”.(participant 02)

The majority of participants stated that it was beneficial for them to have discussions and exchange points of views with colleagues because it served as a way of managing stress. Any advice or encouragement received from colleagues was helpful. Developing positive relationships with colleagues can provide a sense of community that not only encourages excellence in teaching but also helps to mitigate the feelings of stress (Johannsen, 2011). In a similar way Min and Yong (2014) also found that when at work, it is important that colleagues should cooperate with each other, so as to ensure a good working relationship and the completion of their work. Participants explained that they understood that occupation stress occurred in other profession not just teaching only, however, because educators provided support and assist each other either through workload at schools and being there in case someone is going through challenges created a good relationship amongst educators.

During the interviews participants explained that when they are at work they do not only teach students but they have an educator and student relationship. Teacher and student relationships have been found to have immeasurable effects on students' learning and their schooling experience (Liberante, 2012).The findings showed that educators initiated to create a good relationship with their students in order for a better communication and control in the classroom. However, they were careful and created a boundary that students should not take advantage of them. According to Johannsen (2011) educators were concerned about developing strong relationships with their students and being equipped to effectively manage the classroom.

The findings of the present study showed that there was an improvement in classroom management, looking at classes where educators had a good relationship with students. It was also observed that students would be disciplined and showed some motivation during lessons. Educators have a responsibility to support student motivation and learning through the provision of warmth and involvement. A good relationship is considered to be a foundation for the

continued development of healthy self-perceptions, motivational resilience, and increased ownership of the learning process for students (Furrer, Skinner & Pitzer, 2014). In the same way Hughes and Chen (2011) also found that educator–student interactions influence a student’s academic outcomes and behaviour. A supportive and positive relationship between teachers and students promote and encourage students to participate cooperatively in classroom activities. This is showed in the following quotes:

“I relate well with my students, I’ve realized that I have become more than just an educator to some students. They are free to talk to me about their personal issues and I help them where I can”.(participant 09)

“Students are pleased when I give them attention in class, so I think when I show interest in what they say when we are in class they also cooperate and would listen when I am teaching”.(participant 04)

Participants in this study indicated that in cases where the learning environment was not adequate, due to poor relationship with students, there were difficulties in maintaining classrooms which led to stress. According to Hughes and Chen (2011); Roorda, Koomen, Spilt and Oort (2011) schools are a social context where learning takes place, hence students’ development, school engagement and academic motivation would be affected if educators and students’ relationships were not nurtured. However, poor relationships in the classroom are not only hard on students but also a source of stress for educators (Chang, 2009)

Category 3: Ability to adapt to stress

The majority of participants in this study mentioned that the number of years of working as an educator and the experiences that an educator has gathered through the years of working, provided them with a sense of normalizing. They further indicated that challenges at high schools vary per school however most of them are similar. Most of the participants had more than five years working experiences, some had worked in more than two schools. However the experiences of stress appeared to be the same. A longer working period enabled educators to develop a sense of normalizing the situations and controlling or coping with difficult situations at their respective schools. In the same way Smith (2012) also indicated that the length of the teaching career, age, type of teaching certification, and hours spent on teaching, all enhance coping mechanisms.

According to the participants, continuous experiences of a similar situation, such as poor working conditions, due to lack of resources and student discipline was a daily struggle in most schools. Hence, educators got used to such challenges and learned to accept and get used to it, to the point that it was no longer a concern. This is showed in the following quotes:

“I love teaching... It is a very busy job and yes stressful at times but I am coping so far”.
(participant 012)

“Whatever problems I encounter here at school I leave them here for that day...and tomorrow when I come to work, I start on a new page because each day has its own struggles at this school”. (participant 04)

“I had to adjust, when I started working at this school because I knew that this was my job and had to make a plan so that I enjoy my work, regardless of the challenges I was having”.(participant 08)

The study findings showed that younger educators were experiencing difficulties adjusting to the challenges teaching profession has, as they had different expectations when they started. Young employees who are new to teaching profession may be eager to perform and progress professionally (Louw, George & Esterhuysen, 2011) and, as a result, they experience shock because their perception appeared to be different when they arrive at the schools. In the same way Haley, Mostert and Els (2013) also indicated that younger employees when entering work may have less experience in a working environment. Hence, they lack the coping skills necessary to deal with everyday stressors.

In this study the majority of participants explained that having adjusted to the daily challenges at work helps them to cope. Teaching becomes better and less stressing as the years pass and experience is gained. Hence, the findings of this study showed that the longer an educator remained in the profession and the experiences obtained, the better the coping skills and job satisfaction, compared to newly employed educators. One educator said:

“I have been teaching for almost 20 years now, I cannot see myself working anywhere else(smiling) I love my job”. (participant 02)

The teaching profession becomes more satisfying as teachers gain more experience (Ferguson et al. 2012). Further, stated that more experienced educator may be more likely to have had more opportunities for motivational factors and learned along the years of being in the profession than newly employed educators. However, Johannsen (2011) indicated that new educators have the same achievement requirements to fulfill in their work as do veteran educators, but they do not have the same experience to manage the day to day stressors related to the position.

Theme 4: Educators perceived stress management strategies

The majority of participants in this study indicated that school management should identify challenges that educators were confronted with in their daily work and explore strategies that could help to manage the experiences of stress for them. The findings showed that educators felt their schedule was demanding and that the idea of devoting time to relax was not available. The participants explained that they were aware of the stressors their work exposed them to and the effects it had on their well-being.

The majority of educators in this study felt there was nothing they could do about their situation, they continued experiencing stress without proper stress management strategies implemented. According to the participants in this study management of stress should start with the educator, and also support amongst educators, school management and DOE. According to Addison and Yankyera (2015) it is essential to note that we can only manage what we know, meaning that if an individual finds out what his or her stress status is, such helps to eliminate stressors and find a better practical and emotional ways to better handle stress.

During the interviews participants explained that the implementation of stress management strategies would address educators' individual needs and create a culture of caring and relatedness that has a positive impact on the education process. The theme is further discussed under the following categories: availability of support from the DOE, Socio-economic security and availability of resources. During the analysis of data categories created were divided into sub-categories.

Category 1: Availability of support from the DOE

During the interviews participants explained that they believed that their profession was important to the country and that government should ensure that their well being was considered. The DOE has the responsibility to ensure that educators received adequate support and resources to ensure educators' well-being. These include programmes to manage stress. They further, stated that the DOE should intervene by improving the education system in the country as well as educators' well being which was an area left out. This supported by a report from the National Treasury Republic of South Africa (2007), which showed that the South African government has increased efforts to improve the state of education in the country with the aim of improving learner performance by overcoming the weaknesses in the education system. One educator said

"...and for me I don't think the Department cares of our work situations and challenges. They only want good results, the process of how such happens is not their problem". (participant 04)

The study findings showed that participants want the DOE should implement programmes, workshops and training as a way of educating educators as well as offering continuous help to educators who require continuous stress management intervention in order for their well being both physical and psychological to be enhanced which would result better performance for most educators. In the same way Kipps-Vaughan (2013) indicated that wellness programmes for educators focuses on promoting healthier, happier educators who in turn promote a productive classroom experiences for students.

Sub-category 1: Need for career growth or development

During the interviews participants explained that their profession offered little opportunity for career growth or development, of which they felt the DOE should look into it and intervene. The findings also showed that the training and workshops offered were limited and only took a few days, of which educators indicated that they were not benefiting much from such trainings because they were expected to learn lot of information in a short period of time. The majority of participants in this study explained that development was required in their career to acquire new knowledge and for enhancing their skills. Training in a workplace plays an important role to enhance competency of employees and a need of fluent and smooth functioning of work (Kulkarni, 2013).

The findings from this study showed that some participants were highly motivated when they entered the education profession, which was no longer the case. They indicated that one of the things that attracted them to teaching as a career was the love for continuous learning and teaching. However, because the DOE was not providing opportunities for career growth or development, the participants stated that it had an impact on improving their attitude towards their work and also uplift their morale. An employee's positive attitude towards work was important to an organization. Hence, employers must provide long-term career development which contributes to career success (Ballout, 2009).

The study findings showed that most participants had thoughts of leaving the profession and some had attempted to request transfers to other circuits. However, the principal had declined. Employees who lack development in their career in an organisation tend to leave the organization and search for better options, It is also suggested that employees can find personal growth in other organizations if career opportunities are perceived to be lacking in their current organization (Biswakarma, 2016). This is shown in the following quotes:

"I do feel like I am stuck in the same place in this job for the past years, it is almost 15 years now...".(participant 08)

"In some departments they go for training and get certificates but with our departments such is not happening". (participant 011)

"It is good to know that there are opportunities available for career growth, I mean you work hard knowing that you might get promoted or get a better job at some point". (participant 010)

The participants indicated that there were changes occurring at schools as well as in the Department at large and that they were expected to adjust to such changes, without receiving proper training. This made it difficult for them to adjust to changes including new curricula. Educators during the interviews participants indicated that the DOE as their employer should considered providing opportunities for career growth. Okurame (2014) also stated that when employees have favourable perceptions of prospects for career growth, they tend to be more willing to go along with work changes and strive to stay up to date on their work activities, even when it is not particularly convenient for them.

Category 2: Socio-economic security

During the interviews participants explained that the Department has not done much to ensure socio-economic security for them. Educators mentioned that they understood that changes were made, compared to in the previous years. However, they felt they were under-paid and were having financial challenges. According to them, having financial challenges was stressing as they had responsibilities, which required money. The findings showed that most educators had financial problems and this affected their families.

Some educators were said to be abusing substances and such hampered their performance at work. According to Naidoo at al. (2013) many educators try to live within their means, but unfortunately with the recent economic downturn, many have to succumb to bank loans. This additional burden creates problems both in the home and work which manifests itself in poor performance in the school situation. The following are some of the comments from educators:

“Things are expensive these days. You find yourself having little money after receiving your salary, It means you will even fail to pay for transport for the kids”. (participant 06)

“...and because I am working then people would expect me to be driving and all that but it is not easy when what you earn is not enough”. (participant 010)

During the interviews participants explained that they did not choose the teaching profession for the money. This is because it is commonly accepted that teacher salaries are low. However, according to Johannsen (2011) insufficient financial compensation in conjunction with other job concerns can leave educators feeling stressed and suggested that salary concern is one of many issues that contribute to work-related stress in the teaching profession.

Sub-category 1: Financial security

The study findings revealed that participants were not satisfied with their salaries. Most participants explained that the department was not offering financial benefits, compared to other departments. They mentioned the issue of rural allowance money and that they failed to understand why were they not receiving the money because the schools where they worked was a rural settlement. However, they have been submitting documents requesting but they have not received the money. They further stated that it was a concern because some

educators who were working in towns where receiving the money whereas their schools were not in a rural setting.

During the interviews the participants explained that it has been years that they have been complaining that their salaries were too low and that they were not satisfied that the effort they were putting in teaching students to become better generation of the country, was not recognized. A study conducted by Usman, Tahir and Ramzan (2013) in Pakistan showed that the fact that the cost of living is increasing in the country, was of importance for an increase in educators salaries to be considered. It further, stated that financial rewards (salary) significantly affect job satisfaction, when employees are not paid proper salaries, they would be highly dissatisfied with their jobs and may ultimately start thinking of leaving the profession. Similarly, Ali and Akram (2012) stated that financial aspects, especially the salary, is the most important variable in order to retain competitive employees and employment security. The following is a comment from one educator:

“I guess we cannot run away from financial challenges but I think such it is better if your salary is enough and you are able to plan well and pay the bills”. (participant 011)

Some participants said they had debts and whenever they got paid the loan shark took their salary. Such had an effect on them and their families because they remain with little money to look after their families. This hindered their responsibilities to support their families financially.

Category 3: Availability of resources

The participants explained that poor supply and lack of resources in schools was a problem which affected their progress in activities conducted at schools. They further, stated that in most school there was a shortage of text books. As a result, a group of students were expected to share one text book. In addition, there was no furniture for both educators and students. They complained that they shared offices and had to use their personal computers at work because there were only few computers available and were not working properly. According to the participants in this study, they had to make copies of lessons and other study materials to be given to students, because there was only one small photocopy machine. It was difficult for educators and delayed them because the machine was unable to make many copies. The following are some of the comments from educators:

“More often we (educators) fail to progress with allocated schedule because we don’t have resources at our school. You take time making copies because there is only one photocopier machine, and mind you our classrooms are large and each student must have his or her study material”. (participant 012)

“There are no computers and internet access but we are expected to compile students’ marks and reports”. (participant 04)

During the interviews the majority of the participants stated that for years they had been requesting the department to build a laboratory for science students but they have not received a response. The findings showed that in some schools computer lessons were stopped because computers were not enough for students. They further explained that schools cannot function effectively with inadequate and unequal access to resources such as laboratories, libraries, toilets, books and computers. One educator said

“You see... we do want our school to have computer lessons but you cannot have 3 students using one computer”. (participant 07)

The findings showed that in most schools students were poorly motivated, most educators indicated that they felt an external person (motivational speaker) could be of assistance to visit their schools and motivate students. Some educators explained that students were presenting with different issues, such as psychosocial problems. There is therefore a crucial need for intervention. In the same way participants in a study conducted by Singh and Steyn (2013) in Empangeni district of KwaZulu-Natal suggested that every ward should have a fully equipped support centre with qualified psychologists and social workers to service the schools within its boundaries. Educators explained that they understood that the department was unable to employ a social worker or a psychologist for every school, because of financial challenges the department has been experiencing. However, such services are crucial at schools to support students. The following are some of the comments from educators:

“Students have issues, I was teaching in a class and one student raised her hand and when I went to where she was her friend was in tears and you could tell that the students was emotional so I had to stop the lesson and took her to the HOD’s office”. (participant 01)

“There are many students in this school and some no longer have parents they stay with their grandmothers or relatives and their foster grant money is not used properly when a student comes to me and complains I can not help but if we had social workers at school they would help our students”. (participant 010)

Some educators identified the availability of resources at schools, as one of the strategies to reduce problems at school because working in an environment with easy access to resources would ease their work pressure. According to Anina (2015) satisfaction with own school is a major aspect for both educator and student, and that schools should provide a supporting settings that they value and enjoy.

Sub-category 1: Availability of educators

The study findings showed that in most schools there was a high enrolment of students, which resulted into crowded classrooms. According to Modisaotsile (2012) amongst other developing countries South Africa also showed a crisis in education, with high enrolment rates of students each year. During the interviews participants explained that their schools were not complying with the teacher-learner ratio. They indicated that they were teaching classes with more than 90 students. The ratio of teachers to learners is 1:32 in South African public schools (Modisaotsile, 2012). The participants explained that they were working in schools with large numbers of students but few educators. They further indicated that their schools had more classrooms per grade due to the large number of students. However, the classrooms remained crowded. An educator was expected to teach more than one grade of which a grade had five or more classrooms.

The findings showed that the majority of schools had a large number of students. However, educators were few. A study conducted by Dabo (2015) in Bauchi State-Nigeria also showed that one of the major problems in schools was inadequate number of teachers. This is showed in the following quotes:

“...when I am in class I remain in front I cannot even move to the back side of the class because there is no space in our classrooms”. (participant 04)

“The number of students increases yearly but the number of educators remains the same. So it makes our work more difficult due to the larger number of students we are expected to teach” (participant 010).

“I teach three grades, and mind you each grade has five to seven classes. I am alone and looking at the number of classes it is too much...”(participant 08)

According to the participants, students seat close to each other in such a way that educators can not work well or move around when in class. According to Dabo (2015) a classroom is said to be overcrowded when the number of students exceeds the optimum level such that it causes hindrance in the teaching- learning process. A study conducted by Kambuga (2013) also showed that the interaction between educator and student was not effective due to a large number of students per class and sitting arrangements. The findings from this study also showed that it was a challenge for educators to identify the absence of a student because the classes were over crowded and educators were unable to know the names of all students in their classroom. One educator said:

“I can not recognize my students when I meet them outside the class because they are too many...how will I manage to know all of them?...”(participant 01)

The findings show that participants have identified factors such as Qualify to Progress (QP) programmes, which was introduced by the DOE as a concern for most educators. They stated that students were not worried when their performance was low because they knew that even if they were to fail eventually they would be promoted to the next grade. The study further indicated that because students were failing this added the number of students in a class and resulted in a challenge for teaching and learning. The quality of education remains very poor, and the output rate has not improved (Modisaotsile, 2012). The majority of participants in this study stated that over-crowded classes had an impact on students' learning. Some said that there should be age restrictions at high schools and that students who exceed such age should be sent to Adult basic education and training (ABET).

4.8 Summary

This chapter presented the data collected from educators working in public high schools of Malamulele North East Circuit. Four main themes were discussed, namely, sources of stress among high school educators, effects of stress among high school educators, educators coping strategies and educators perceived stress management strategies. Literature from several countries including America, Africa and local written by different authors or researchers supported or oppose the discussed themes, categories and sub-categories formulated from the data collected in this study. The next chapter will focus on the limitations, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the results obtained from the data collected of the study, with the control of literature from several continents including Asia, Africa, Europe and America supporting and opposing the discussed study findings, of stressors experienced by educators in public high schools of Malamulele North East Circuit. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this study.

5.2 Limitation of the Study

The study focused on educators working in public high schools of Malamulele North East Circuit only in Vhembe District, which could affect the generalizability of the findings. However, a thick description of the account of the study was given, which gives the readers a choice to decide on the generalizability of the study findings.

5.3 Conclusions

The following were the conclusions of this study:

- The study concluded that most educators were confronted with different factors that resulted in them experiencing stress at work.
- Educators were more concerned with students' behaviour at schools and that students lack of discipline and did not show respect to educators as well as fellow students.
- There is still a concern with safety at schools, fights amongst students and that students used knives and stones to hurt one another on school premises.
- Educators were concerned that the school environments were not adequate for them because of old school buildings and lack of resources.
- Educators has lost control over students and because there is no punishment strategies used to discipline students.

- In most schools there was a problem of substance use. Students were said to use substances in the school premises and would be violent as well as cause class disturbance.
- Schools were overcrowded and educators spent time controlling students instead of teaching in the classrooms.
- The study also showed that how one perceives the possible stressors is influenced by gender and years of experience. This is because educators who had more than 10 years of teaching experience, seemed to be better coping.
- The study showed that educators were challenged with introduction of new curriculum and the training the department provide, which was never effective to improve teaching and learning.
- Educators were confronted with workload, they had so much to do in a limited time, such as compiling educators' file, preparing lesson plans, teaching different classes and grades of students as well as other responsibilities expected from them.
- Though there are some parents who were involved in their children's academic progress, it was a concern for educators that most parents in the surrounding community showed little support in school activities.
- It was shown that the challenges faced by educators in their daily working environment had a negative impact on educators' personal life and their productivity at work. Educators physical, psychological and behavioral well being was affected. The majority of educators had felt sick during their period of working as educators.
- Educators showed that the implementation of stress management strategies would address educators' individual needs and creates a culture of caring and relatedness that has a positive impact on the education process.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the conclusions reached in the study:

- The DOE should design strategies that enhance educators' capacity and interest to utilize available teaching-learning resources within and outside the school.
- The DOE should ensure that security is prioritized in schools to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for both educators and students.
- Government should support educators with infrastructure, to enhance a conducive working environment at schools, such as classrooms, staffrooms, and computer labs and sports facilities.
- The DOE should design policies that enhance a better way of disciplining students at schools.
- The DOE has the responsibility to supply adequate resources such as laboratories, libraries, toilets, books and computers available to all schools equally, in order to improve a culture of teaching and learning.
- Vhembe District Education Department should embark on stress awareness information campaigns that should reach educators in schools irrespective of their location.
- Vhembe District Education Department should provide services for educators, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) which offers different support services as a way of managing stress and ensuring educators well being.
- Efforts should be made by educators, students, parents, school management and community to ensure that schools function well and teaching and learning is of the best quality.
- Parents of students in different schools should be educated about their responsibilities concerning their children's education and the importance of their active participation in school activities. Parents should also be encouraged to support their children in every way possible so as to motivate them to be discipline and take their school work seriously.

5.5 Indications for further research

This study has highlighted a number of researchable aspects that could be pursued further by those involved in occupational stress. The results from Malamulele North East Circuit showed that educators were experiencing stress in their work environment and were affected personally as well as professionally. There is, therefore, an urgent need to address this problem by introducing programmes which will assist in managing stress. This research, has implications stretching far beyond Malamulele North East Circuit, can serve as a point of departure for more intensive analyses. Further, it is believed that this study will be able to enlighten other researchers to conduct further in-depth studies to investigate the occupational health problems of educators.

5.6 Summary

This chapter served as a summary in relation to the aim of the study which was to explore the stressors experienced by educators in public high schools of Malamulele North East Circuit. The study objectives to explore and describe sources, effects and coping strategies to manage stress was also achieved. The conclusions of the study showed that educators were experiencing different challenges, daily in their respective schools or work environment and recommendations which requested the DOE to formulate programmes that will assist in educators stress management, and other stakeholders in order to enhance good teaching and learning environment in schools. The recommendations for further research were also provided, in order to conduct further studies concerning occupational stress.

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Appendix A: Information Sheet

Nkuna Clothilda Tsakani (Student)

Student no : 11583241

Contact No : 082 970 3364

Email address: nkunact@webmail.co.za

Prof H.A Akinsola (Supervisor)

Dr N.S Mashau (Co-supervisor)

Title of the study: Experienced Stressors by Educators in Public High Schools of Malamulele, Vhembe District.

Dear Participants

This letter serves to request for your participation in the study conducted by Nkuna C.T a masters student at the University of Venda, School of Health Sciences in the Department of Public Health. The purpose of the study is to explore experienced stressors by educators in public high schools of Malamulele North East Circuit.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw, if you no longer have an interest to participate in the study. As a participant you should not expect any form of reward during or after participating in this study. The researcher will ensure that issues concerning privacy and confidentiality, data will only be shared with the supervisor and relevant person. Results obtained from the study will be published. However, participants' identity will be protected by not disclosing your names.

Regards

Nkuna C.T

Appendix C: Request to Conduct Research



University of Venda

P.o Box 445
Saselamani
O928
25 April 2016

The Head of Department (HOD)
Department of Education
P/Bag X 9489
Polokwane
0700

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITHIN VHEMBE DISTRICT (MALAMULELE NORTH EAST CIRCUIT)

This serves to seek your approval with regards to my proposal to conduct a study as part of the requirements for Master of Public Health in the School of Health Sciences at the University of Venda. The aim of the study is to explore the Experienced Stressors by Educators in Public High Schools of Malamulele North East circuit, Vhembe District.

It will be appreciated if you would grant me the permission to conduct my study within your department. Attached is a copy of the ethical clearance obtained from the Research, Ethics and Publications Committee, the University of Venda. All personal information will be kept confidential. In other words, anonymity will be assured.

Your permission will be greatly appreciated

Nkuna Clothilda Tsakani (Student)

Contact No: 082 970 3364

Email : nkunact@webmail.co.za

Prof H.A Akinsola (Supervisor) 015 962 8161

Dr N.S Mashau (Co-supervisor) 015 962 8992

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Research question: What are the experienced stressors you are confronted with as a high school educator?

Follow up questions that will be asked to gain deeper understanding of participants experiences of stress are as follows.

- What is your general experience of stress?
- What are some factors you consider to be the sources of stress at your work?
- What are the negative experiences of stress that you have encountered while teaching?
- How do you cope with the experiences of stress?
- What can be done to manage the experiences of stress for educators' profession?

Appendix E: Ethical Clearance