

Sources of Stress and Stress Management Strategies of University Teachers

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Abstract

The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the sources of stress and stress management strategies of university teachers. And then, the difference on sources of stress across university, subject, service and designation are of next interest. Finally, the differences in stress management strategies adopted by male and female university teachers are also explored. Design of this study was cross sectional in nature. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in this study. Questionnaire survey method was used to measure university teachers' sources of stress. This study was conducted at Yangon Region and Ayeyarwaddy Region, Myanmar. Simple random sampling technique was used in this study. The total of 488 university teachers from Yangon Region and Ayeyarwaddy Region participated in this study. Teacher Stress inventory and Stress management strategies inventory were used as the research instruments. Alpha reliability for Teacher Stress Inventory revealed at 0.82.

In this study, 68% of university teachers were found to be normal whereas 17% of university teachers were low and 15% of university teachers were high. There was no gender difference among university teachers' sources of stress. It was found that there was significant difference among university teachers' sources of stress on university. It was found that there was significant difference among university teachers' sources of stress on subject. It was found that there was no significant difference among university teachers' sources of stress on designation. It was observed that there was no significant difference among university teachers' sources of stress on service. It was found that a slight variation on stress management strategies adopted by male and female university teachers.

Key words: Sources of stress, stress management strategies

Introduction

Modern living has brought with stress, not only innumerable means of comfort, but also a plethora of demands that tax human body and mind. Nowadays everyone talks about stress. It is cutting across all socio economic groups of population. In the fast changing world of today, no individual is free from stress and no occupation is stress free. Everyone experiences stress whether it is within the family, business, organization, work or any other social or economic activity. Thus, in modern time, stress in general and occupational stress in particular has become part of life and has received considerable attention in recent years (Nayak, J., 2007).

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Literature Review

Nature of stress

Stress occurs when there are significant changes in our lives whether it is positive or negative (Hoel et al., 2002). Stress is any external or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium (Selye Hans, 1956). All people experiencing similar life conditions do not experience similar level of stress as their access to resources and use of support systems tend to vary. By understanding ourselves and our reaction to stress provoking situation, we can learn to handle stress more effectively.

Sources of stress

The stimuli that produce stress are called sources of stress (Nayak, J., 2007). There are three major sources of stress- environmental, individual and organizational.

Sources of Occupational Stress

Stress has been considered as one of the major factors in work organization (Agrawal et al., 1979). Occupational stress occurs when there is a discrepancy between the demands of the workplace and that of individual's (Tsutsum et al., 2009). Sources of stress in the employment organization are work, role, personal development, interpersonal relations and organization climate.

Sources of teachers' stress

There are five sources of stress in teachers- poor pupil behavior, time pressure and work overload, poor school ethos, poor working conditions and poor prospects (Kyriacou, 1998). Teacher/pupil relationship, relationship with colleagues, relationship with parents and the community, innovation and change, school management and administration and time factors are work related factors that produce stress in teachers (Brown & Ralph, 1998).

Stress Management Strategies

As stress is universal and of relevance to all, a more understanding of stress management strategies is essential for preventing stress and enhancing health overall (Linden, 2005). So, we can adopt more effective behaviors for meeting the demands of the situation (Barlow et al., 2001; Greenberg, 2005).

Methodology

Research Design

Quantitative perspective was used in this study. Questionnaire survey method was used to measure teacher sources of stress. Four aspects of teacher sources of stress such as time management, work related, professional stress, discipline and motivation, physical and emotional reaction to stress were measured. Simple random sampling technique was used in this study. First of all, five universities namely, Yangon University of Education, Yangon University of Foreign Languages, Yangon University of Economics, Yangon University and Maubin University were selected. A total of 488 university teachers participated in this study. Specifically, 106 University teachers from Yangon University of Education, 111 from Yangon University, 87 from Yangon University of Foreign Languages, 71 from Yangon University of Economics and 113 from Maubin University.

Instruments

The present study examined sources of stress and stress management strategies of university teachers. To be specified, stress management strategies were assessed in this study including physical stress management strategies and mental stress management strategies. Moreover, a demographic data, gender, age, designation, university, subject, qualification, service and marital status were also assessed. There are two instruments used in this study. The items of sources of stress inventory were adapted from Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) developed by Fimian and Fastenu (1990). TSI contains five subscales such as time management, work related, professional stress, discipline and motivation and emotional and physical stress. The instrument consists of 26 items of a 5-point Likert scales. Stress Management Strategies Inventory was designed by Nayak Jayasheree(2007). Item 1 to 4 stands for time management. Item number 5 to 8 stands for work related. Item number 9 to 13 stands for professional stress. Item number 14 to 16 stands for discipline and motivation and item number 17 to 26 stands for emotional and physical stress. All of the items in this study were adapted to Myanmar version. After preparing the items for each category, expert review was conducted for face validity and content validity by 13 experts who have special knowledge and close relationship with the field of Educational Psychology. And then, items were revised in length and wording. Therefore the pilot testing was done during the first week of December in 2014 to test whether the wording of items, statements and instructions had their clarity in Myanmar version and was appropriate and relevant to university teachers. The target participants must answer five points Likert scales (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=

not sure, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree). Stress Management Strategies inventory was used to examine the stress management strategies adopted by university teachers. This instrument was developed by Nayak Jayasheree (2007). This instrument is divided into two factors, with a total of 14 multiple choice items. These two factors are physical stress management strategies and mental stress management strategies. Item number 1 to 7 stands for physical stress management strategies. Item number 8 to 14 stands for mental stress management strategies. These 18 multiple choice items are qualitative in nature. As an initial phase of this study, the pilot testing was carried out at the first of December, 2014. Pilot testing was conducted and 30 university teachers were selected in various universities and in the light of their responses, some items are revised. Based on the result of the pilot study, the researcher improved the weakness of wording and changed kinds of questions which are inappropriate and could get incomplete responses. With the permission of administrative personnel of universities, two questionnaires were administered to the university teachers from Yangon University of Education, Yangon University of Foreign Languages, Yangon University of Economics, Yangon University and Maubin University. This study explored university teachers' sources of stress, level of stress and which management strategies they used to reduce their stress.

Data Analysis and Result

Stress Level of University Teachers

Frequency and Percentage of University Teachers' Stress Level

| Stress Level | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| High | 76 | 15% |
| Moderate | 331 | 68 % |
| Low | 81 | 17% |
| Total | 488 | 100% |

Based on descriptive analyses of sources of stress questionnaire, university teachers' stress were identified into three levels: 15% of university teachers whose scores lie above ($X+1SD$) were considered as high level of stress, 68% of university teachers whose scores exist between ($X+1SD$) and ($X-1SD$) were considered as moderate amount of stress and the remaining university teachers of 17% who score were below ($X-1SD$) were identified as low level of stress.

Comparison of University Teachers' Sources of Stress by Gender
Mean Comparison of University Teachers' Sources of Stress by Gender

| Sources of stress | Gender | Mean | S D | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-------------------|--------|-------|--------|----------|----------|
| Mean | Male | 71.95 | 17.381 | -0.892 | 0.373 |
| | Female | 73.82 | 14.419 | | |

The mean score of female university teachers is slightly higher than that of male on sources of stress. However, significant difference was not found in overall scale. It can be said that university teachers' sources of stress were not depend on gender.

Comparison for University Teachers' Sources of Stress among University
ANOVA Results of University Teachers' Sources of Stress by University

| Sources of Stress | YUOE | YU | YUFL | YU(Eco) | MU | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------|----------|--------------|
| Time Management | 12.14 | 12.02 | 13.77 | 14.17 | 12.07 | 8.800 | 0.000 |
| Work related | 11.59 | 10.92 | 12.58 | 11.83 | 11.24 | 3.635 | 0.006 |
| Professional Stress | 14.65 | 14.46 | 14.7 | 15.49 | 14.94 | 1.057 | 0.377 |
| Discipline and Motivation | 9.02 | 9.1 | 9.57 | 9.39 | 9.31 | 0.809 | 0.52 |
| Emotional and physical | 24.1 | 24.36 | 27.82 | 26.72 | 24.26 | 5.769 | 0.000 |
| Total | 71.5 | 70.86 | 78.44 | 77.61 | 71.82 | 5.769 | 0.000 |

Regarding the university, the mean score of university teachers from YUFL was the highest among the four universities. There is a significant difference among universities on sources of stress. The result evidently showed that university teachers in YUFL had more sources of stress among the four universities. This may be due to the fact that university teachers from YUFL have to perform many duties such as morning and evening diploma courses as well as regular courses, conferences with foreigners, many seminars and plays to improve their students' language ability.

Comparison for University Teachers' Sources of Stress among Service
ANOVA Results of University Teachers' Sources of Stress by Service

| Sources of Stress | 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------------|
| Time Management | 12.28 | 12.77 | 12.92 | 13.51 | 1.642 | 0.179 |
| Work related | 11.88 | 11.39 | 11.54 | 11.31 | 0.76 | 0.517 |
| Professional Stress | 15.1 | 14.78 | 14.79 | 13.6 | 1.788 | 0.148 |
| Discipline and Motivation | 9.46 | 9.38 | 9.1 | 8 | 3.896** | 0.009 |
| Emotional and physical | 25.79 | 25.04 | 25.28 | 23.86 | 0.77 | 0.511 |
| Total | 74.51 | 73.35 | 73.63 | 70.29 | 1.132 | 0.341 |

However a slight variation of mean score was found in all factors as well as overall scale, significant difference was found to be only on discipline and motivation factor. The result showed that university teachers who have less than 10 years of teaching service had more

sources of stress on discipline and motivation factor. This finding was consistent with the previous finding of Bhadoria and Singh (2010). They found that younger and less experienced teachers were more stress than more experienced teachers.

Comparison for university teachers' sources of stress among subjects

ANOVA Results of University Teachers' Sources of Stress by subjects

| Sources of Stress | Science | Art | Edn: | Lang: | Eco | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------|---------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Time Management | 11.48 | 11.3 | 13.29 | 13.71 | 14.74 | 20.416 ^{**} | 0.000 |
| Work related | 11.01 | 11.17 | 12.15 | 12.04 | 12.03 | 2.852 [*] | 0.023 |
| Professional Stress | 14.61 | 15.01 | 14.63 | 14.61 | 15.61 | 1.166 | 0.325 |
| Discipline and Motivation | 9.35 | 9.06 | 8.68 | 9.33 | 9.47 | .931 [*] | 0.027 |
| Emotional and physical | 24.56 | 23.98 | 24.27 | 26.2 | 27.05 | 2.765 | 0.000 |
| Total | 71.01 | 70.52 | 73.02 | 75.89 | 78.9 | 5.149 | 0.000 |

Concerning the subjects, the mean score of university teachers who teach economics discipline was the highest among others. The result revealed that there is a significant difference among discipline on sources of stress. It can reasonably be said that university teachers who teach economics subject had many sources of stress. This may be due to the fact that university teachers who teach economics subjects are under pressure because they have many duties such as diploma courses as well as regular courses, many conferences and seminars.

Comparison for University Teachers' Sources of Stress among Designation

ANOVA Results of University Teachers' Sources of Stress by Designation

| Sources of Stress | T/D | AL | L | AP | P | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|-------------|
| Time Management | 12.08 | 13.37 | 12.38 | 12.29 | 12.83 | 1.911 | 0.107 |
| Work related | 11.88 | 11.44 | 11.73 | 10.71 | 10.71 | 1.678 | 0.154 |
| Professional Stress | 15.38 | 14.73 | 14.55 | 14.94 | 14.56 | 1.156 | 0.33 |
| Discipline and Motivation | 9.71 | 9.1 | 9.19 | 9.55 | 8.32 | 2.855 [*] | .023 |
| Emotional and physical | 26.22 | 25.74 | 24.88 | 25.42 | 23.49 | 1.357 | 0.248 |
| Total | 75.26 | 74.39 | 73.18 | 72.9 | 69.9 | 1.132 | 0.341 |

Although a slight variation of mean score exists in all factors as well as overall scale, significant difference was found to be only on discipline and motivation factor. The overall mean score of tutors' sources of stress are the highest among other designations. The result showed that tutors were weak in discipline and how to motivate their students.

Comparison of University Teachers' Sources of Stress by Marital Status

ANOVA Results of University Teachers' Sources of Stress by Marital Status

| Sources of stress | Single | Married | Widow | Divorce | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------|--------------|---------|-------|---------|----------|----------|
| Time Management | 12.69 | 12.68 | 11.75 | 14 | .200 | .897 |
| Work related | 11.66 | 11.46 | 10.5 | 10.5 | .353 | .787 |
| Professional Stress | 15 | 14.54 | 13.25 | 13 | 1.120 | .340 |
| Discipline and Motivation | 9.25 | 9.26 | 9.25 | 9.00 | .008 | .999 |
| Emotional and physical | 25.52 | 24.89 | 22.75 | 22 | .572 | .634 |
| Total | 74.13 | 72.85 | 67.5 | 68.5 | .597 | .617 |

The total mean score of single teachers were the highest among other groups of marital status. But there was no significant difference on sources of stress among marital status. This finding was consistent with the previous finding of Chona (2009). Chona found that there was no significant difference among the marital status on stress.

Physical stress management strategies adopted by university teachers

Physical stress management strategies include reducing physical stress, relaxation, correct posture, diet, physical exercise, medicinal therapy and natural care. To reduce the physical stress, 48% of the male and 47% of female university teachers adopted keeping ready well ahead whereas 35% of the male and 33% of the female adopted setting priorities as physical stress management technique. Further, 11% of male adopted use of time and labor saving devices whereas 10% of female university used take hired help. Regarding relaxation technique, majority of male and female university teachers adopted take rest followed by taking out time for leisure. Further, gender wise analysis revealed that 54% of male and 60% of female university teachers adopted take rest as a relaxation technique followed by taking out time for leisure (33% of male and 27% of females). Concerning correct posture, 50% of male and 38% of female used avoid strenuous posture. A little percentage (9% of male and 11% of female) adopted using ergonomically designed furniture. In case of diet as a strategy for minimizing physical stress, 74% of male and 56% of female university teachers considered taking balanced diet as an effective strategy followed by consuming food many times in small quantities (15% of male and 17% of females). About 65% of males and 68% of female university teachers preferred to use walking as a stress management strategy. 20% of males used playing games and 12% of female used physical exercise to reduce their physical stress. A little percentage (5% of male and 2% female) used swimming as a stress management technique. Majority of university teachers did not adopt any medicinal therapies

such as sleeping pills, mood altering drug, tranquilizer, smoking and alcohol consumption as stress management strategies. Among these techniques, male university teachers sometimes used smoking and alcohol consumption to reduce their stress whereas none of the female used these techniques. Majority of female (7%) used sleeping pills when they suffered sources of stress. It was evident that higher percentage of university teachers (80% of male and 61% of female) practiced color therapy whereas a little percentage (6% of male and 10% of female) used hot water therapy to reduce their physical stress.

Mental Stress Management Strategies Adopted by University Teachers

Mental stress management strategies consist of reducing physical stress, psychotherapy, social support, altering situation, reducing responsibilities and performing most liked activities. It was evident that meditation was practiced by the majority of the male (50%) and females (40%). 26% of the male used religious activity and 36% of the female used changing of mantras. It was evident that a little percentage of male and female university teachers did not use yoga as a stress management strategy. Psychotherapy was adopted as a mental stress management technique. Positive thinking was used as an effective method for minimizing mental stress by 65% of the male and 54% of the female followed by recreation with family (33% of the male and 34% of the female). Females tend to cry to relieve stress (8%) whereas male did not use this technique. Concerning social support, majority of the university teachers (43% of the male and 57% of the female) used talk to someone as an effective method for reducing their mental stress followed by taking counseling (37% of the male and 25% of the female). Very few percentage of the teachers (2% of the male and 1% of the female) adopted attending parties. Regarding altering situation, high percentage of male (54%) used adapting to distress situation whereas 39% of the female used avoiding painful reminder as an effective strategy. A little percentage (20% of the male and 9% of the female) used change of place technique when they face stressful situation. Concerning reducing responsibilities, majority of the university teachers (46% of the male and 37% of the female) used changes in preferences of job. 31% of the male used legitimately avoid disliked tasks whereas 31% of the female used postponing certain tasks. Very few percentage (11% of the male and 8% of the female) adopted delegating the work as a stress management strategy. Regarding most liked activities, majority of the university teachers (52% of the male and 49% of the female) used walking as an effective mental stress management strategy followed by 33% of the male and 35% of the female used watching T.V. Further, 31% of the male and 21% of the female used spending time in park. It was found that 11% of the male and 16% of

the female used cooking. A little percentage (6% of the male and 2% of the female) sometime paint when they have sources of stress.

Conclusion and Discussion

Individual recognize themselves by their occupation as occupation is the major focus of their energy, skills and ambitions. Their occupation, family and society throw various challenges and stress and it demands problem solving. It can also be the means to find pleasure, satisfaction, growth and fulfillment in life or it can be the cause of stress, boredom, worry, humiliation and a sense of helplessness when the desire and performance do not go hand in hand.

People are constantly faced with a sense of the pressure to accomplish more and more in less and less time. Stress from the environment and job, work overload, traffic congestion, job deadlines and teacher conflicts are increasingly present in everyday lives. Each of us develops characteristics ways of responding to such pressures. To a large extent, person's responses to stressful situations determine how adequately person adjusts to life.

Events or situation is not stressful itself. It becomes a source of stress only when the focal person appraises it as to be a threat and exceeds his or her capability to deal with. The person makes the best possible and actively defines and shapes stressful transactions by means of his cognitive appraisals and coping strategies. This is the reason that same situation or event is differently responded by different persons. Recurring demands in jobs lead to significant level of stress among the teachers.

So, the primary purpose of the study is to investigate the sources of stress and stress management strategies of university teachers. Then, to study the university teachers' level of stress is of next interest. Finally, this study explored the difference in stress management strategies adopted by male and female university teachers. A total of 488 university teachers (54 males and 434 female) from Yangon University of Education, Yangon University, Yangon University of Foreign Languages, Yangon University of Economics and Maubin University. Two instruments such as teacher stress inventory and stress management strategy inventory were used.

In this study, results revealed that 68% of university teachers were found to be normal whereas 17% of university teachers were low and 15% of university teachers were high. Concerning gender, the mean score of female university teachers is slightly higher than that

of male on sources of stress. However, there was no significant gender difference on sources of stress.

Regarding the university, the mean score of university teachers from YUFL was the highest among the four universities. There is a significant difference among universities on sources of stress. Post-Hoc results by university cluster showed that time-management, the mean score of YUFL and YU (Eco) were significantly higher than those of university teachers in YUOE, YU and MU. And then, work related, the mean score of YUFL were significantly higher than those of university teachers in YU and MU. Finally, emotional and physical reaction to stress, the mean score of YUFL was significantly higher than those of university teachers in YUFL, YU and MU.

Concerning the subjects, the mean score of university teachers who teach economics discipline was the highest among others. The result revealed that there is a significant difference among discipline on sources of stress. It can reasonably be said that university teachers who teach economics subject had many sources of stress. Post-Hoc results by subjects showed that the time management factor, the mean score of university teachers who teach science and art subjects were significantly lower than that of university teachers who teach education, language and economics subjects. Moreover, work related, the mean score of science teachers was significantly lower than that of university teachers who teach language subjects. It may reasonably be said that university teachers who teach language subjects suffered more sources of stress concerning work related factor.

Looking across the different service groups, a slight variation of mean score was found in all factors as well as overall scale, significant difference was found to be only on discipline and motivation factors. The result showed that less experienced teaching staffs may have more sources of stress concerning with discipline and motivation factors. Regarding the designation, a slight variation of mean score were found in all factors as well as overall scale, significant difference was found to be only on discipline and motivation factor. The overall mean score of tutors' sources of stress are the highest among other designations. The result showed that tutors were weak in discipline and how to motivate their students.

Next, physical stress management strategies involve reducing physical stress, relaxation, correct posture, diet, physical exercise, medicinal therapy and natural care.

To reduce the physical stress, 48% of the male and 47% of female university teachers adopted keeping ready well ahead whereas 35% of the male and 33% of the female adopted setting priorities as physical stress management technique. Further, 11% of male adopted use of time and labor saving devices whereas 10% of female university used take hired help.

Regarding relaxation technique, majority of male and female university teachers adopted take rest followed by taking out time for leisure. Further, gender wise analysis revealed that 54% of male and 60% of female university teachers adopted take rest as a relaxation technique followed by taking out time for leisure (33% of male and 27% of females).

Concerning correct posture, 50% of male and 38% of female used avoid strenuous posture. A little percentage (9% of male and 11% of female) adopted using ergonomically designed furniture as a stress management strategy.

In case of diet as a strategy for minimizing physical stress, 74% of male and 56% of female university teachers considered taking balanced diet as an effective strategy followed by consuming food many times in small quantities (15% of male and 17% of females).

About 65% of males and 68% of female university teachers preferred walking. 20% of males used playing games and 12% of female used physical exercise to reduce their physical stress. A little percentage (5% of male and 2% female) used swimming technique to reduce their stress.

Majority of university teachers did not adopt any medicinal therapies such as sleeping pills, mood altering drug, tranquilizer, smoking and alcohol consumption as stress management strategies. Among these techniques, male university teachers sometimes used smoking and alcohol consumption to reduce their stress whereas none of the female used these techniques. Majority of female (7%) used sleeping pills when they suffered sources of stress.

It was evident that higher percentage of university teachers (80% of male and 61% of female) practiced color therapy whereas a little percentage (6% of male and 10% of female) used hot water therapy to reduce their physical stress.

Mental stress management strategies include reducing physical stress, psychotherapy, social support, altering situation, reducing responsibilities and performing most liked activities.

It was evident that meditation was practiced by the majority of the male (50%) and females (40%). 26% of the male used religious activity and 36% of the female used changing of mantras. It was evident that a little percentage of male and female university teachers did not use yoga as a stress management strategy.

Psychotherapy was adopted as a mental stress management technique. Positive thinking was used as an effective method for minimizing mental stress by 65% of the male and 54% of the female followed by recreation with family (33% of the male and 34% of the female). Females tend to cry to relieve stress (8%) whereas male did not.

Regarding social support, majority of the university teachers (43% of the male and 57% of the female) used talk to someone as an effective method for reducing their mental stress followed by taking counseling (37% of the male and 25% of the female). Very few percentage of the teachers (2% of the male and 1% of the female) adopted attending parties.

Regarding altering situation, high percentage of male (54%) used adapting to distress situation whereas 39% of the female used avoiding painful reminder as an effective strategy. A little percentage (20% of the male and 9% of the female) used change of place when they face stressful situation.

Concerning reducing responsibilities, majority of the university teachers (46% of the male and 37 % of the female) used changes in preferences of job. 31% of the male used legitimately avoid disliked tasks whereas 31% of the female used postponing certain tasks. Very few percentage (11% of the male and 8% of the female) adopted delegating the work technique to reduce their stress.

Regarding most liked activities, majority of the university teachers (52% of the male and 49% of the female) used walking as an effective mental stress management strategy followed by 33% of the male and 35% of the female used watching T.V. Further, 31% of the male and 21% of the female used spending time in park. It was found that 11% of the male and 16% of the female used cooking. A little percentage (6% of the male and 2% of the female) sometimes used painting technique when they suffered sources of stress.

To sum up, most of the university teachers used keeping ready well ahead, take rest, avoid strenuous posture, take balanced diet, walking and color therapy as physical stress management strategies. Meditation, recreation with family, talk to someone, take counseling, avoiding painful reminder, changes in preferences of job, listening songs and watching T.V are adopted by most of the university teachers as mental stress management strategies.

Suggestion for Future Research

There is no doubt to take additional research on sources of stress among university teachers. In this study, the sample of participants were chosen from Yangon Region and Maubin Region so further research should be carried out by selecting participants from other states and regions so that sample might be more representative. This study pointed out the necessity to explore more detailed differences between public and private universities.

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Appendix Sample Item of Teacher Stress Inventory