

Teachers' issues: A case for mental health



Teachers' Issues: A Case For Mental Health

The sample

“Mental Health”

“Emotional Health”

“Well-being”



Teachers' Issues: A Case For Mental Health

Mental health: “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”(WHO, 2010)



Teachers' Issues: A Case For Mental Health

The Genesis of this Paper



- An assignment for a School Health Promotion course
- Designed for third year teacher trainees at a tertiary institution in Trinidad and Tobago
- Required teachers to develop their personal health plan by identifying and addressing an issue which impacts negatively on their mental health.
- That “issue” could be related to the teachers’ belief, attitude, feelings, emotions, values, behaviour, or lifestyle which they would like to modify or perhaps change entirely. The teachers were also required to describe the particular issue and the actions they will take to effect change.

Teachers' Issues: A Case For Mental Health

The sample

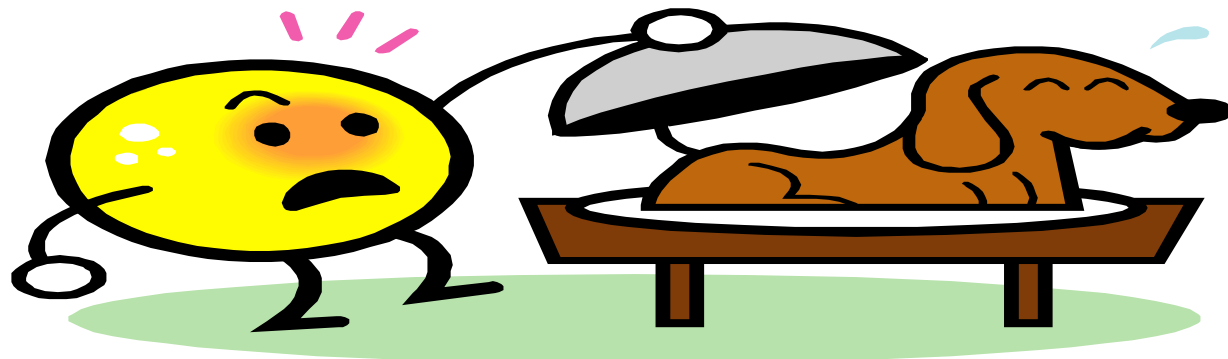
- The sample includes two cohorts of third year in-service primary school teachers.
- Each of the two cohorts included all of the teachers who took the course for a particular semester.
- The first cohort of teachers was selected in 2009, and the second in 2012.



Teachers' Issues: A Case For Mental Health

Purpose of the Research

- The case study presents the findings and analysis of the teachers 'mental health issues and makes recommendations for Caribbean Primary School Health interventions to develop and implement an assessment and management approach to teachers' mental health.



Research questions

To What Extent Are The Issues Which A Group Of Teachers Have Described As Impacting Negatively On Their Lives Correspond To Mental Health Symptoms?

1. What are the issues which a group of primary school teachers have identified as having a negative impact on their lives?
2. How have the teachers been experiencing the negative impact of the issues on their lives?
3. To what extent are the teachers' experiences in congruence with mental health symptoms?



FINDINGS

Research Question #1



WHAT ARE THE ISSUES WHICH A
GROUP OF PRIMARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS HAVE IDENTIFIED AS
HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON
THEIR LIVES?

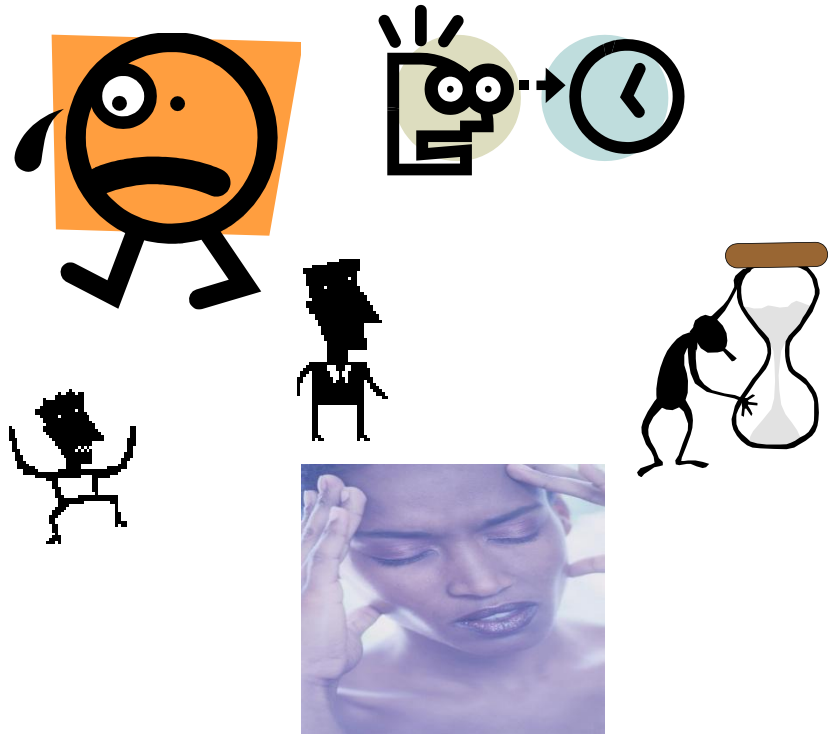
Findings

Research Question #1

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES WHICH A GROUP OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS HAVE IDENTIFIED AS HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THEIR LIVES?

The issues which the teachers have identified are placed in the following categories:

- Poor interpersonal relationships
- Low self-esteem
- Poor management of stress
- Identity issue
- Habitual procrastination
- Poor eating habits
- Mistrust
- Depression



FINDINGS

Research question #2

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN
EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE
IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR
LIVES?

FINDINGS

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	NUMBER OF TEACHERS (77)	EXPERIENCE
Poor interpersonal relationship	Anger	7	<p>“I am snapping at everyone”</p> <p>“I never cared about anyone...I am even afraid of myself when I feel like this because I always want to damage someone or something.”</p> <p>“Whenever something get me annoyed I usually lock it in because I don’t want people</p>

RESEARCH QUESTION #2 cont'd

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	EXPERIENCE
Poor interpersonal relationship	Mistrust	5	<p>My fear is that when I allow someone to get close to me they will use my weaknesses against me and put me in a vulnerable state”.</p> <p>“I don’t socialize...I have fear that I may say something and people may take it out of context ...I only trust my close relatives to an extent ”</p>

FINDINGS

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	EXPERIENCE
Poor interpersonal relationship	Mistrust	‘It is nearly impossible for me to believe that people are” good for their word”’

RESEARCH QUESTION #2 contd'

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	EXPERIENCE
Poor management of stress	Managing stress	6	<p>“When I am in this state (stress), I tend to rearrange my priorities in the wrong order...”</p> <p>“Stress is an enormous issue I face”.</p> <p>“...I have seen how stress destroyed my happiness and health and lead me to a depressive state”</p>

RESEARCH QUESTION #2 cont'd

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	EXPERIENCE
Depression	Coping with feelings	23	<p>“I do not know how to cope with some feeling that I am having because I am hurt..the feeling of sadness and depression is what I want to change”.</p> <p>“...When my parents got divorced I started to degenerate into an emotional disaster.”</p> <p>“I started smoking at the age of twelve years...I have somehow come to the conclusion , that the source of my smoking habit is as a result of me dealing with my brother’s death.”</p>

RESEARCH QUESTION #2 cont'd

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	EXPERIENCE
Depression	Coping with feelings		<p>“The thought of not having a child has weighed on my mind....and has become a major issue in my life, making me feel very unhappy “</p> <p>“In most of my classes I silently pray that the lecturer will not call on me , because I fear that I will get an answer wrong and I will look unintelligent in</p>

RESEARCH QUESTION #2 cont'd

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	EXPERIENCE
Identity issue	Low self-esteem	10	<p>“My life has always been a struggle to lose weight to fit into society’s view of being a man”</p> <p>“I came to terms with the fact that I had completely lost touch with my individuality and that who I ‘was’ was now only defined by the parameters of my family commitments and a career obligations”</p>

RESEARCH QUESTION #2 cont'd

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	EXPERIENCE
Identity issue	Low self-esteem	<p>“I have always suffered from a low self-esteem issue...I doubt myself constantly in any given situation...I am always thinking negative...’am my own enemy’”</p> <p>One issue I would like to change relates to...my belief of not being good enough for other people...not interesting enough, and basically not even worth their time”.</p>

RESEARCH QUESTION #2 cont'd

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	EXPERIENCE
Poor eating habits	Overeating and Fast food consumption	26	<p>"I began eating weird hours of the night and anything I felt like eating ..and the only exercise I got was walking to and from the main road.."</p>
			<p>"I eat excessively, tire easily, and unmotivated at the thought of outdoor activity".</p> <p>"Fast food seems to be my love . I eat</p>

RESEARCH QUESTION #2 cont'd

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	EXPERIENCE
Poor eating habits	Overeating and Fast food consumption	“I weighed in at two hundred and sixty nine pounds. ..I cried...I wondered why I allowed myself to reach that stage...I had a body shape that made me look like a cartoon character...I went into the public because I had to...”
	Eating disorder	“What contributed to my eating disorder is being raped and sexually assaulted for several years of my life. I stopped eating because I wanted to die”.

RESEARCH QUESTION #2 cont'd

HOW HAVE THE TEACHERS BEEN EXPERIENCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE ISSUES ON THEIR LIVES?

BROAD ISSUE	SPECIFIC ISSUE	EXPERIENCE
Poor eating habits	Overeating and Fast food consumption	“I am overweight by 60 pounds...currently I “do not engage in much physical activity”. “I consume too much junk foods”

FINDINGS

Research Question #3

- To what extent are the teachers' issues/experiences in congruence with mental health symptoms?

Research question #3

To what extent are these issues in congruence with mental health symptoms?

General symptoms that may suggest a mental illness in adults include:

- Confused thinking
- Long-lasting sadness or irritability
- Extremely high and low moods
- Excessive fear, worry, or anxiety
- Social withdrawal
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Strong feelings of anger
- Delusions or hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not really there)
- Increasing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Thoughts of suicide
- Denial of obvious problems
- Many unexplained physical problems
- Abuse of drugs and/or alcohol
- Source: www.webmd.com/depression/mental-health-warning-signs



Research question #3

To what extent are these issues in congruence with mental health symptoms?

- General symptoms that may suggest a mental illness in adults include:
- Severe anxiety
- Paranoia
- Displaying stress
- Sudden mood changes
- Suicidal thoughts
- Depressed feeling
- Irritability or anger
- Hypersensitivity to others' criticism
- Little energy or motivation
- Appearing desireless, feeling nothing at all



Source: followme.org “**Schizophrenia, Anxiety, and your Mental Health: What You Need to Know About Mental Disorders**”

Research question #3

To what extent are the teachers' experiences in congruence with mental health symptoms?

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES	SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER
<p>"I am snapping at everyone"</p> <p>"I am even afraid of myself when I feel like this because I always want to damage someone or something."</p> <p>"The problem is I don't know how to deal with my anger"</p>	<p>STRONG FEELINGS OF ANGER</p>
<p>"My fear is that when I allow someone to get close to me they will use my weaknesses against me and put me in a vulnerable state".</p>	<p>Excessive fear, worry or anxiety</p>

Research question #3

To what extent are the teachers' experiences in congruence with mental health symptoms?

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES	SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER
<p>“I have encountered many negative forces that influenced the way in which I think which seems to be always negative”.</p> <p>“When I am in this state (stress), I tend to rearrange my priorities in the wrong order...”</p> <p>When I am <u>very</u> stressed out, I have an extreme fight or flight response; I try to flee from the many tasks that continue to pile on me.”</p> <p>“I suffer from immense stress”.</p>	<p>CONFUSED THINKING/DISPLAYING STRESS</p>

Research question #3

To what extent are the teachers' experiences in congruence with mental health symptoms?

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES	SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER
<p>"Stress is an enormous issue I face".</p> <p>"...I have seen how stress destroyed my happiness and health and lead me to a depressive state"</p> <p>"My life has always been a struggle to lose weight to fit into society's view of being a man"</p>	<p>CONFUSED THINKING/DISPLAYING STRESS</p>

Research question #3

To what extent are the teachers' experiences in congruence with mental health symptoms?

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES	SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER
<p>“Procrastination has become a way of life for me...I spend most of my time battling in my mind tasks that I have to do that I keep putting off.”</p> <p>“I grew up getting anything and everything ...I was never satisfied...I am still not contented...I find myself most of the time without money and have to borrow money from friends and family”</p>	<p>INCREASING INABILITY TO COPE WITH DAILY PROBLEMS AND ACTIVITIES</p>

Research question #3

To what extent are the teachers' experiences in congruence with mental health symptoms?

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES	SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER
"I am overweight by 60 pounds...currently I "do not engage in much physical activity". "I consume too much junk foods"	DRAMATIC CHANGES IN SLEEPING OR EATING HABITS

Research question #3

To what extent are the teachers' experiences in congruence with mental health symptoms?

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES	SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER
<p>"I do not know how to cope with some feeling that I am having because I am hurt...the feeling of sadness and depression is what I want to change".</p> <p>"...When my parents got divorced I started to degenerate into an emotional disaster."</p>	<p>LONG-LASTING SADNESS OR IRRITABILITY DEPRESSED FEELING</p>

To What Extent Are The Issues Which A Group Of Teachers Have Described As Impacting Negatively On Their Lives Correspond To Mental Health Symptoms?

The teachers' issues are related to the following mental health symptoms:

- Strong feeling of anger
- Displaying stress
- Increasing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Dramatic changes in sleeping or eating habits
- Long-lasting sadness or irritability

To What Extent Are The Issues Which A Group Of Teachers Have Described As Impacting Negatively On Their Lives Correspond To Mental Health Symptoms?

NUMBER OF TEACHERS (77)	MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOM	PERCENTAGE
7	Strong feelings of anger	9%
10	Severe anxiety e.g. mistrust And low self-esteem	13%
6	Displaying stress	8%
5	Increasing inability to cope with daily problems and activities e.g procrastination	6%
26	Dramatic changes in sleeping or eating habits	34%
23	LONG-LASTING SADNESS OR IRRITABILITY DEPRESSED FEELING	30%

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

- The findings have implications for teacher-student relationship and therefore provide a rationale for the emergence of this study.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

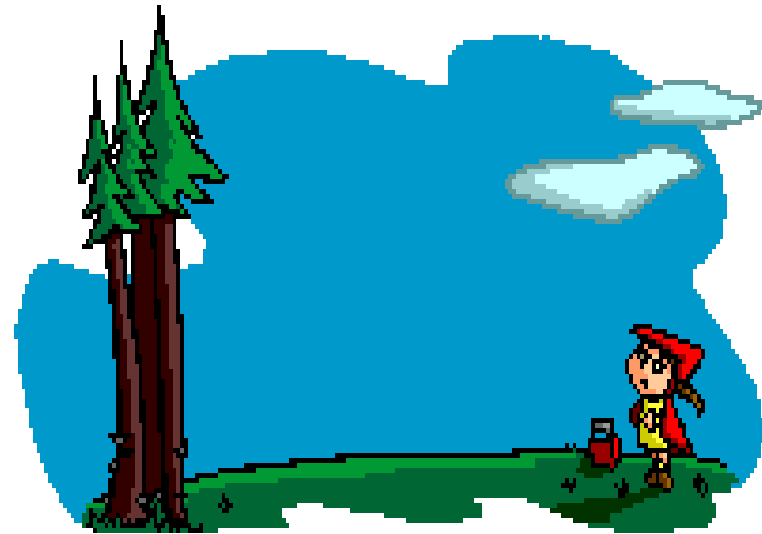
That effective teacher–student relationship in the classroom is necessary for the students’ holistic development and therefore teachers’ awareness and understanding of their own behaviour and by extension their mental health status is critical.



THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

Students are sometimes labeled as:

- PROBLEM STUDENTS
- RETARDED STUDENTS
- RUDE STUDENTS
- INDISCIPLINED STUDENTS
- STUBBORN STUDENTS
- AT-RISK STUDENTS ETC. ETC. ETC.



QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION



As far as the labeling of primary students is concerned:

- Who is really “at risk”, is it the student or the teacher?
- Why is there so much “at-risk students” and not one “at-risk teacher” in Trinidad and Tobago?
- Is the labeling of the students a case of transference?
- If so, who is transferring their labels unto the students?
- Why are students given those labels and teachers are not?
- Does the recruitment process for primary school teachers in Trinidad and Tobago involve their psychological profile
- Should we wait until a teacher “lose it” before initiating some form of intervention?
- What can be done to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago primary school teachers are in a state of adequate mental health?



Teachers' Issues: A Case For Mental Health Problem Statement



There is growing concern for Caribbean teachers' mental health.

Anecdotal reports from a number of Caribbean countries described incidences involving primary school teachers whose allegedly unprofessional conduct during the performance of their duty, might be attributed to their mental health status.

I have used two cohorts of third-year in-service university primary school teachers in Trinidad and Tobago as a case study to enhance my understanding of teachers' mental health. More specifically, I sought to establish the teachers' specific behavioural traits which have been adversely affecting their lives and the extent to which those traits are congruent to mental health issues.

Teachers' Issues: A Case For Mental Health Contextual antecedents



- The main requirement for entry into the teaching profession in Caribbean primary schools is ones academic qualifications There is no procedure to determine the prospective teacher's state of mental health. It therefore becomes relatively easy for individuals with severe mental health issues to be accepted into the teaching profession. According to MacAnespie (1978), "A teacher with a chronic disorder applying for a post can negotiate an interview successfully and take up the job before his personal difficulties come to light..."

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Teachers' Issues: A Case For Mental Health

Contextual antecedents



- Teachers, whose chronic mental health issues are left undetected, could do untold harm to their students. MacAnespie (1978), described four distinct cases related to teachers who were diagnosed with mental health disorders in the performance of their duty. One of the cases was described as inflicting “excessive and unusual corporal punishment on her pupils...” (P.258).

Teachers' Issues: A Case For Mental Health

Contextual antecedents contd'



- Anecdotal reports from Caribbean countries, describe two separate incidences of primary school teachers whose allegedly unprofessional conduct during the performance of their duty, might be attributed to some form of mental health issue.
- In Trinidad for example, there have been allegations of attempts to flush a pupil's head in a toilet as well as spitting on a student.

RECOMMENDATION
ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO TEACHERS'
MENTAL HEALTH

- The rationale for the assessment and management approach to teachers' mental health is to ensure the protection and by extension the health and well-being of students and to assist teachers with mental health problems in accessing timely and appropriate intervention.

RECOMMENDATION

ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO TEACHERS' MENTAL HEALTH

SEVEN STAGE MODEL:

SAGE THEORY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MODEL (Beyer and Truce, 1978).

Stage 1 – Sensing of unsatisfied demands on the system (a problem exists).

Stage 2 – Search for possible responses (solutions).

Stage 3- Evaluation of solutions

Stage 4 – decision to adopt a course of action

Stage 5 – Initiation of action within the system

Stage 5 – Implementation

Stage 6 - Institutionalization

RECOMMENDATION

Adapt 7-Stage Model

- Stage 1 – Conduct assessment to determine scope of mental health related problems among teachers