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The Influence of Workload and Types of Tasks on Emotional Stress among Teachers in the Sibul District, Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have shown that workload and the diversity of task types are among the main factors contributing to emotional stress among teachers. With the increasing demands of the teaching profession, teachers are not only responsible for teaching and learning but are also burdened with various academic and non-academic tasks that can potentially affect their emotional well-being. Therefore, this study aims to identify the levels of workload, task types, and emotional stress, as well as to analyze the relationship between workload and task types with emotional stress among secondary school teachers in the Sibul district, Sarawak. Quantitative research with a correlational methodology according to Karasek's Job Demand-Control Model was used in this study. The study population was made up of teachers at secondary level schools from three schools in the Sibul district in Sarawak, with a sample size of 167 teachers. Results showed that the levels of workload and task types were extremely high (workload $M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.24$; task types $M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.22$). With respect to the emotional stress variable, the results revealed that the emotional stress levels of teachers were extremely high ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.23$). Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between workload and emotional stress ($r = 0.843$, $p < .005$), as well as a significant positive relationship between task types and emotional stress among teachers ($r = 0.974$, $p < .001$). In conclusion, increased workload and excessive involvement in non-academic tasks contribute to higher levels of teachers' emotional stress.

1. Introduction

The teaching profession now faces many complex challenges because of changes and higher demands in the national education system. Teachers are not only responsible for teaching students,

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but they also need to do many extra academic and non-academic tasks. This increase in work demands has made teacher workload an important issue in education studies, especially because it affects teachers' emotional well-being [5,9]. In schools, teachers are the main people who carry out the curriculum and help develop students. Good teaching and learning depend on teachers being able to manage their responsibilities in a balanced way. However, too much work, lack of time, and overlap between main duties and extra tasks often reduce teachers' focus on teaching and increase emotional stress [6]. This situation can affect teaching quality and teachers' mental health if it is not managed properly. Besides that, the type of tasks teachers do also affects emotional stress. Academic tasks such as preparing daily lesson plans, assessments, and checking students' work, together with non-academic tasks such as co-curricular management, documentation, and meetings, increase teachers' total workload [1]. Based on the Demand–Control Model, emotional stress becomes higher when a person faces high work demands but has low control over their job. Other than that, emotional stress among teachers is an important issue that needs serious attention. Previous studies show that teacher stress is closely related to workload, different types of tasks, and lack of control in managing daily work [3]. Although the Ministry of Education Malaysia introduced the Teacher Workload Reduction Action Plan 2023–2025, workload problems still continue, especially in rural areas with limited staff and support [7]. Therefore, it is carried out to identify the level of workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress among secondary school teachers in Sibul, Sarawak. It also examines the relationship between these variables. The findings are expected to give a clear picture of teachers' real work situation and help plan better actions to improve teachers' emotional well-being and the quality of the education system.

Main Objective

1. To identify the level of workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress among teachers in Sibul, Sarawak.
2. To analyse the relationship between workload and emotional stress among teachers.
3. To analyse the relationship between types of tasks and emotional stress among teachers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teacher Workload

Teacher workload refers to the amount of tasks and time pressure teachers face in carrying out their professional responsibilities. Nowadays, teacher workload is not only focused on teaching and learning activities, but also includes administrative work, documentation management, reporting, and involvement in school programmes and co-curricular activities [9]. The increase in tasks causes teachers to face high work pressure and emotional fatigue. Previous studies show that excessive workload can reduce teachers' focus on teaching and lower job satisfaction. As stated by Danyal and Surat [5], an uneven increase in workload will make teachers feel stressed emotionally and psychologically due to lack of motivation while performing daily tasks. The issue becomes even more serious especially if deadlines are set and not much organisational assistance is provided. Also, according to the studies carried out by Amzat et al. (2021), teachers exposed to high levels of workload have a higher probability of suffering from emotional stress, including irritability, exhaustion, and less commitment. Long-term workload without effective control can affect teachers' emotional well-being and give a negative impact on teaching effectiveness.

2.2 Types Of Teacher's Tasks

Teacher tasks are divided into two main categories which are academic tasks and non-academic tasks. Academic tasks include teaching activities, preparing Daily Lesson Plans (RPH), assessments, and checking students' work. Non-academic tasks include administrative duties, co-curricular management, meetings, and school programmes [6]. Previous studies show that non-academic tasks are a major cause of increased teacher workload. Arba'in and Mohd Noor [1] stated that the increase in non-academic tasks forces teachers to divide their time and energy between main duties and extra responsibilities, which affects their focus on teaching. This situation also increases emotional stress when teachers feel tied to many responsibilities outside their main role. Chong and Low [3], also stated that the variety of tasks that need to be done at the same time increases teachers' work demands and reduces autonomy in time management. Limited control over work schedules makes teachers more likely to experience emotional stress, especially when task demands do not match the available resources.

2.3 Emotional Stress among Teachers

Emotional stress can be described as negative psychological responses including stress, emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and depression arising from too much workload. Among teachers, emotional stress has been associated with increased workload, nature of tasks, and lack of sufficient time to undertake professional obligations [9]. According to the Demand–Control model proposed by Robert Karasek in 1979, emotional stress arises when there is a high level of demand in the task but little control over the task. A study by Chong and Low [3] supports this theory by showing that teachers with high work demands and low autonomy have a higher risk of emotional stress. Moreover, according to Amzat et al. (2021), teacher emotional stress can result in adverse consequences for mental wellbeing, work productivity, and the quality of teaching. Poorly handled emotional stress can lead to job burnout and undermine the efficiency of the education sector. As such, it is essential to know what determines teacher emotional stress. Increasing autonomy and organisational support is also important to reduce the negative effects of work demands on teachers' emotional well-being.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative design with descriptive survey and correlational approaches. It was chosen to collect large-scale data and measure the levels and relationships between variables systematically. This study also aims to identify the level of teacher workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress, as well as to examine the relationship between workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress among secondary school teachers in Sibu district. A survey approach using questionnaires was found to be effective because it is a flexible method and suitable for collecting information from many respondents [4].

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of all secondary school teachers in Sibu, Sarawak, from three selected secondary schools which are SMK Rosli Dhoby, SMK St. Elizabeth, and SMK Lanang. The total teacher population from these three schools is 255 teachers. For sample size determination, this study refers to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table, which is still widely used in educational research.

Based on the table, the recommended sample size for a population of 255 is 152 respondents. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure each school was fairly represented according to the actual number of teachers. This method reduces sampling bias and increases the reliability of the findings [8]. Furthermore, in order to counteract the possibility of losing data due to partial questionnaires or no feedback from respondents, the researcher increased the initial sample size by 15%. This is based on the recommendation by Bujang [2], who posits that it is a common procedure to add a particular percentage to the sampling process to ensure that the resulting sample size is adequate for proper analysis of the data. The resulting sample size in this research was 175 teachers.

3.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in this study was a questionnaire based on similar past studies about teacher workload, tasks, and emotional strain. The questionnaire incorporated a Likert scale of five levels that helped the respondents provide consistent responses. The research instrument was composed of various categories including the respondent's background, workload, task types, and emotional strain. To ensure content validity, the instrument was evaluated by two experts in the field of education. In addition, the instrument's reliability was tested through a pilot study using Cronbach's Alpha refer to Table 1.

Table 1
Cronbach's alpha value for each item

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Workload	0.89
Types of Tasks	0.82
Emotional Stress	0.94
Overall Items	0.76

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics 27 (2025)

3.4 Data Analysis

The data in this study were analysed based on the research objectives to determine the most suitable analysis methods. The objectives of this study were to identify the level of workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress among teachers, and to examine the relationship between workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress among secondary school teachers in Sibuluhung. The data collected from respondents were quantitative in nature and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to identify the level of workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress through frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The results were presented in tables to make the data easier to understand and interpret. The level of workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress was determined based on mean scores and standard deviation according to the interpretation scale that had been set. This helped the researcher to ascertain whether the level of each variable was either low, moderate, or high.

In addition, inferential statistical analysis was done using Pearson correlation in order to examine the connection between workload and emotional stress, as well as that between task types and emotional stress of teachers. The correlation coefficient was used to measure the nature of the relationship between variables, while the level of significance helped in determining whether the relationship is statistically significant. This was a fitting approach for the research purposes and

quantitative data collected. The quantitative data collected, allowing the findings to be interpreted in a systematic and focused way.

4. Results and Discussion

This discussion is based on the findings obtained from the questionnaire data analysis distributed to secondary school teachers in Sibu district. From the total number of questionnaires distributed, only 167 questionnaires were fully completed and returned by the respondents for analysis. Therefore, the discussion of this study is based on feedback from 167 teachers only. The findings showed that teacher workload had a significant influence on emotional stress. Descriptive analysis found that the overall workload items recorded mean values from moderate to very high levels. Several workload items recorded mean values above 4.00, while some items were at a moderate level around $M = 3.78$. Items related to completing tasks in a limited time and the increase of non-teaching duties recorded high mean values, around $M = 4.07$ to $M = 4.11$, while some items reached very high levels of $M = 4.78$ to $M = 4.89$. These findings show that teachers face heavy workloads, especially administrative duties and extra tasks outside teaching, which indirectly increase emotional stress [5,9, Amzat et al. 2021]. In addition, the findings for types of tasks also showed a strong influence on teachers' emotional stress. Analysis found that the overall items for types of tasks were at high and very high levels, with mean values above 4.00. Items related to teaching and learning duties, co-curricular management, and involvement in school activities recorded high mean values of around $M = 4.07$ to $M = 4.11$. However, some items recorded very high mean values compared to others, around $M = 4.79$ to $M = 4.89$. The variety of tasks that need to be done at the same time requires high commitment of time and energy, which increases teachers' emotional stress. The findings for emotional stress showed that teachers experienced emotional stress at high to very high levels. Descriptive analysis found that emotional stress items recorded mean values between $M = 4.07$ and $M = 4.89$. Items related to emotional exhaustion and stress caused by workload recorded high mean values, while items related to the ability to control emotions recorded slightly lower mean values but were still at a high level. Table 2 indicate the summary for Objectives 1.

Table 2

Summary for objectives 1 (Level of workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress among teachers)

Objectives	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpertation
Emotional stress	4.52	0.231	Very high
Work load	4.36	0.241	Very high
Types of tasks	4.53	0.225	Very high

Table 3 the results for Pearson Correlation analysis also showed a significant relationship between workload and emotional stress, as well as between types of tasks ($r = 0.843$, $p < .005$) and teachers' emotional stress ($r = 0.974$, $p < .001$). This proves that the higher the mean values for workload and task type items, the higher the mean values for emotional stress items [3,9,Amzat et al. 2021).

Table 3

Summary for correlations between the variables

Objectives	Correlation value (r)	Sig value (p)	Interpretation
Obj 2 : To analyse the relationship between workload and emotional stress among teachers.	.843**	<.005	Positive (strong)
Obj 3 : To analyse the relationship between types of tasks and emotional stress among teachers.	.974**	<.001	Positive (strong and almost perfect)

5. Implications of the Study

Based on the findings that workload and types of tasks have a significant positive relationship with teachers' emotional stress, several important implications can be identified in terms of school administration, education policy, professional practice, and future research. From the school administration perspective, teacher task distribution should be restructured in a more systematic and balanced way to avoid overlapping duties and excessive workload, especially non-academic tasks. School administrators should review administrative tasks that are not directly related to teaching and learning, and ensure that co-curricular and committee duties are given based on teachers' capacity and expertise. Giving teachers more autonomy and time flexibility is also important to increase job control and reduce emotional stress, in line with the Demand Control Model.

From the education policy perspective, these findings support the importance of continuous implementation and monitoring of the Teacher Workload Reduction Action Plan 2023–2025 by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Although the plan has been introduced, the still high level of workload and emotional stress shows the need for better implementation at the school level. The ministry may consider adding more support staff, strengthening digital systems to reduce manual documentation, and conducting regular monitoring of teachers' well-being, especially in rural areas. These steps are important to protect teachers' emotional well-being and improve the quality of the education system.

In addition, this study also has implications for teachers themselves in improving time management skills and coping strategies when facing high work demands. Teachers are encouraged to practise stress management techniques, build positive social support among colleagues, and plan tasks in a more organised way to reduce emotional stress. From the theoretical and research perspective, these findings strengthen the suitability of the Demand–Control Model in explaining teachers' emotional stress in the Malaysian education context. Future studies are suggested to involve a wider scope, use mixed methods approaches, and examine mediating variables such as organisational support and job autonomy to better understand the factors influencing teachers' emotional stress. Overall, this study highlights that joint efforts from schools, policy makers, and teachers are needed to create a more supportive working environment, ensure teachers' emotional well-being, and sustain the teaching profession in the future.

6. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of the study findings, it can be concluded that workload and types of tasks do influence the level of emotional stress among secondary school teachers in Sibu district. The objectives of the study were successfully achieved, and all research questions were answered based on the data analysis from questionnaires involving 167 teachers as respondents. The findings showed

that high workload, especially non-teaching duties and time pressure, contributes to higher emotional stress among teachers. In addition, the variety of tasks that need to be carried out at the same time, including teaching, co-curricular, and administrative duties, also affects teachers' emotional well-being. The significant relationship between workload, types of tasks, and emotional stress proves that these factors should not be taken lightly in managing the teaching profession. The feedback received from respondents showed clear and consistent findings related to the focus of this study. The findings are expected to be useful as a reference for school administrators and related parties in planning a more balanced distribution of teacher duties and providing suitable support to reduce emotional stress. Finally, it is hoped that this study can be continued at a higher and deeper level in the future by involving a wider scope or different research methods. Further studies are important to strengthen the current findings and help improve teachers' emotional well-being, which will contribute to the effectiveness of the education system as a whole.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Data And Material Availability

Data are available upon request from the authors.

Declaration on Generative Ai

The authors declare that there was no use of generative AI in writing this article.

Ethics Statement

Not applicable.

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