

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

STRESS AND COPING MECHANISMS OF TEACHERS OF
LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

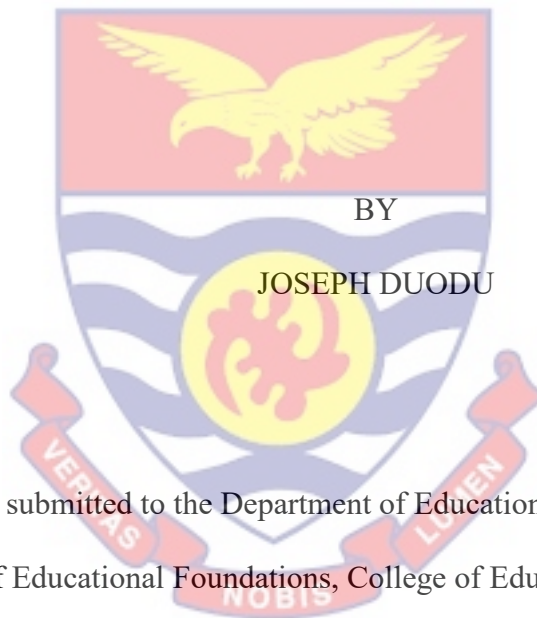


JOSEPH DUODU

2025

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



This thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Psychology of the Faculty of Educational Foundations, College of Education, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Special Education.

June, 2025

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: Date:

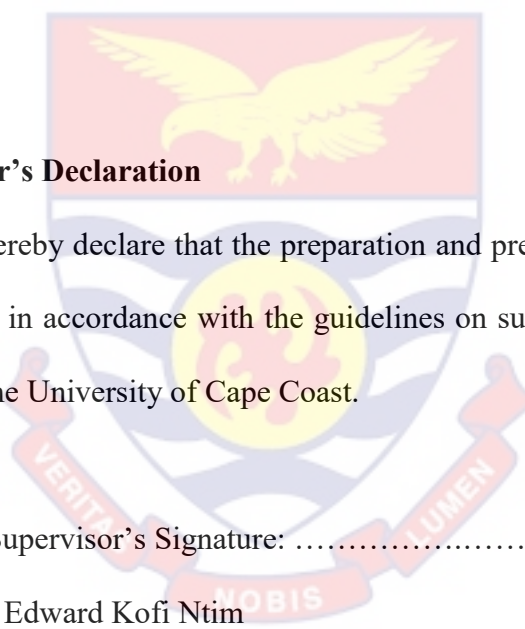
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Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of the thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature: Date:

Name: Dr. Edward Kofi Ntim

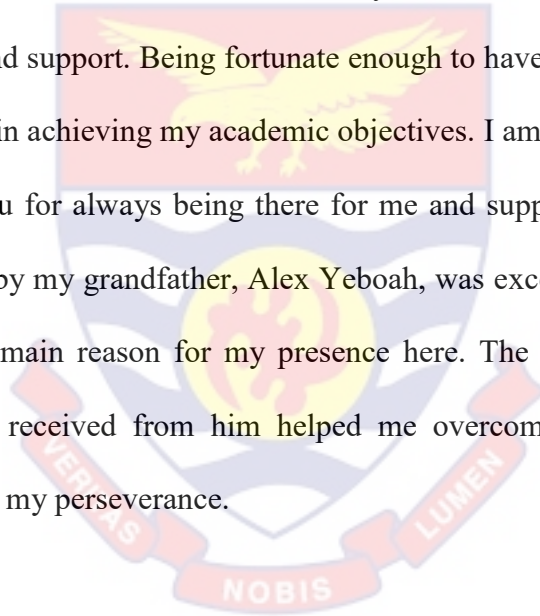


ABSTRACT

This study examines the stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities at Garden City Special School in the Asokore Mampong Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. This study employed a qualitative case study that aims to explore the sources of stress among teachers, the consequences of stress among teachers and the coping mechanisms of stress among teachers. The study employed a census approach to recruit participants. Participants included 18 teachers in the school. The sole means of collecting data involved conducting comprehensive in-person interviews. All 18 teachers in the school gave their permission to be interviewed for the study. The taped interviews were transcribed and analysed using a thematic approach and descriptive language. The final findings revealed that the main sources of teachers' stress in the school were student behaviour, cognitive delays of learners, work environment and large class size. The findings also revealed that the consequences of teacher stress were classified based on physical, emotional, mental and social effects. The findings also revealed that engagement of students, tranquillity (meditation, mindfulness and relaxation), motivation and ability grouping of learners were the best coping mechanisms used by the teachers. It is recommended that the Ghana Education Service should encourage inclusive practices in educational policies that acknowledge the difficulties teachers encounter when working with learners with intellectual disabilities and provide a good and encouraging atmosphere for them. The best coping mechanisms and future study directions will depend on our ability to comprehend stressors and how they impact teachers.

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DEDICATION

To my grandfather, Alex Yeboah



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- i. ID: Intellectual Disability
- ii. STRESS: Situational Triggering of Responses to External Stressors and Stress Management
- iii. COPE: Coping with Overwhelming Pressure in Education
- iv. SPED: Special Education
- v. IEP: Individualized Education Plan
- vi. PD: Professional Development
- vii. SEL: Social and Emotional Learning



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the psychological literature, 'stress' is a well-established term. Teaching is considered a particularly stressful profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Stress management is not usually covered in teacher preparation programmes (Zito et al., 2024). As a result, teachers frequently feel ill-prepared to handle the stressors of the workplace in a healthy way (Payton, 2021). According to Kim, Jörg, and Klassen (2019), teachers' ability to handle professional stress has an effect on their ability to teach and can cause burnout, which further reduces teaching effectiveness. Studies show that ineffective stress management contributes to decreased teaching quality (Hartney 2016). While good stress management enhances teaching competency (Pokhrel, 2025). This introductory chapter of the study begins with the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study and significance of the study. The delimitation and limitations of the study are also covered. Additionally, operational definitions of terms are presented, and the organisation of the study concludes the chapter.

Background to the Study

Intellectual disability (ID) is a condition characterised by significant deficits in cognitive performance and adaptive behaviour (World Health Organisation, 2014). Intellectual disability (ID) is a significant problem in Ghana and around the world, affecting about 15% of the population (WHO, 2014). For people with intellectual disabilities, daily tasks may be difficult. There are many indicators of intellectual disability. Even by themselves, some people fit into society pretty well. Learning is challenging for students with

intellectual disabilities, and the level of the cognitive impairment determines how difficult learning is for them (Sadock & Sadock, 2015). Unlike severe and profound intellectual disabilities, which are usually recognised early due to physical traits and significant developmental delays, moderate intellectual disabilities are typically identified by the preschool years, while mild intellectual disabilities may only become evident at the onset of formal education (DiStefano, Sadhwan & Wheeler, 2020). Due to these deficits in social and cognitive functioning, the majority of individuals with intellectual disabilities require special schooling. Controlling the behaviour of these persons might occasionally pose serious problems for teachers and other caretakers because of the functional deficiencies (Mondal, 2023). Learners with intellectual disabilities require a lot of assistance from teachers, and this assistance may lead to a lot of stress for teachers.

Stress is a psychological and physical condition that occurs when people try to adjust to both internal and external factors are detrimental to their well-being (Yu, Wang & Yang, 2015). The assertion made by Selye in 1976 that to be completely free from stress is to be dead is evidence that stress is a natural component of life. Hans Selye introduced the concept of "stress" in 1936 and referred to it as the body's natural response to any request for change. Stress, according to Fink (2016), is a general physiological response to the body's internal and external pressures. Stress occurs when an individual feels that their own biological, psychological, or social systems do not meet the physical or psychological needs of the situation.

Mathews (2020) opined that teaching is a difficult profession due to the constant requirements to meet the educational and behavioural needs of

learners. Not all forms of stress related to teaching are harmful. Stress can have a severe impact on teachers' motivation, causing disengagement from their work, absenteeism, and turnover. In fact, special education teachers are more likely to leave their employment when they are under acute stress from an unbearable workload. Teachers need to excel and progress in order to pursue other careers. Nevertheless, due to the increasing demands and elevated expectations placed on teachers in the classroom, the work-related stress and the strategies employed by teachers to manage it have emerged as significant concerns (Naghieh et al., 2015).

Wiegner et al. (2015) opined that if teachers' stress is too much for them to bear, it can be harmful. In this instance, previous research has shown that high stress levels brought on by work pressures are connected with psychopathology, such as anxiety and depression, in addition to stress symptoms. Teachers are employed in human service fields that experience significant levels of stress (Van Droogenbroeck & Spruyt 2015). According to some scholarly and governmental studies, teaching is a highly emotionally demanding occupation (Jones-Rincon & Howard, 2019). As a result, it is conceivable that many teachers deal with the effects of anxiety and sadness on a daily basis. High degrees of stress or psychopathology in teachers may have negative consequences on how well their learners are doing academically. Crouse et al. (2021) claimed that stress is a daily problem for most Canadians. The 2001 Canadian Mental Health Survey yielded the following results: 500 Canadians were asked about their experiences with stress. "You are under a lot of stress." Whenever a few times every week, once a month or fewer, occasionally, annually, or never. In response, 9% of Canadians said they

experienced intense stress often, 43% said they experienced it occasionally, and 24% said it happened once a month or less. These findings show that stress is a common occurrence in people's daily lives. In Finland, working as a teacher was linked to health problems and burnout, whereas feeling engaged and supported by the organisation was linked to motivation and well-being (Laitinen, 2022).

In African literature Bakasa (2016) stated that the field of teacher stress studies has grown in prominence during the last 20 years. Many studies have been conducted in Africa, and the findings point to the detrimental impacts of teacher stress. According to Bakasa (2016), Zimbabwean teachers' high levels of stress are a major cause for worry. Stress is generally caused by a variety of factors, such as difficult students, low salary, a heavy workload, a dearth of resources for teaching and learning, problems with supervision and the influence of household responsibilities. Gray, Wilcox, and Nordstokke (2017) found that students who were taught by teachers who experienced extreme depressive and anxious states had 8% worse learning outcomes. Psychopathology contributes to teacher burnout (Yu et al., 2015).

The effects of this burnout include decreased efficacy, a decrease in job satisfaction and absenteeism among teachers (Wang, Hall & Rahimi, 2015). Studies reveal that a considerable proportion of experienced teachers are quitting their jobs as a result of challenges associated with mental health issues. (Clandinin et al., 2015). In conclusion, the research previously discussed has shown that a variety of elements associated with teachers might affect their level of stress.

Findings from studies on teacher stress and coping reveal that the effects of stress include burnout, emotional distress and, in certain situations, quitting the job entirely if coping mechanisms are not used. Travers (2017) explores this notion and emphasises the high levels of stress that have an impact on teachers' internal and external capacities. Travers (2017) explores this notion and emphasises the high levels of stress that have an impact on teachers' internal and external capacities. Travers (2017) opined that effective stress management techniques are needed to help teachers maintain their health and complete their work efficiently due to the physical, psychological, social, and behavioural effects of stress. Since their methods of coping have an impact on their commitment to teaching, as well as their health and quality of life. Travers (2017) describes coping as an individual's efforts to decrease the amount of strain they would suffer as a result of these stressors, alter their judgement of the potential harm these stressors may cause, or eliminate or diminish the stressors in their surroundings.

Mack (2023) identified a number of stress coping techniques, such as focusing on solving problems, getting help from others, going to counselling and abstaining from self-medication. According to Srivastava, Upadhaya, and Jain (2023), more direct and possibly more effective coping mechanisms can be divided into two main categories: Strategies that address problems and emotions. When under stress, those who practise emotion-focused coping work to control their feelings and attempt to alter how they feel or see the issue. Getting social assistance for emotional needs, constructive reinterpretation and growth, denial, acceptance and mental detachment are a few examples of emotion-focused coping. On the other hand, problem-focused coping takes a

practical approach to address the issue or unpleasant situation that is creating stress, directly lessening the stress by doing so. Problem-focused approaches seek to eliminate or lessen the stressor's root cause. Problem-solving, time management and securing effective social support are a few examples of problem-focused coping. Christmann, Hoffmann and Bleser (2017) claim that problem-focused coping aims to change the unpleasant issue or stressor. This coping mechanism results in behavioural adjustments or the creation of a stress-reduction strategy.

According to Richards et al. (2018), teachers with adequate access to coping methods are less susceptible to experiencing burnout compared to those with limited coping mechanisms. As a result, coping mechanisms lessen any negative effects of stress by changing one's feelings and minimising or eliminating its root causes. It involves modifying behavioural and psychological techniques to deal with particular stresses that are beyond one's capacity and own coping mechanisms. Teachers may be able to overcome issues, gain social support and improve their teaching abilities with the use of effective coping techniques (Lam & Lam, 2019). It is against this background that the study is conducted to find out the stress and coping mechanisms of teaching learners with ID in the study area.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers who teach learners with intellectual disabilities have distinct difficulties that can greatly influence their overall well-being and efficacy in the educational setting (Jacobs, 2020). Stress has been recognised as a significant obstacle that teachers encounter in the classroom (Amponsah et al., 2020). When the level of stress surpasses the resources and coping abilities of teachers,

it results in burnout and the departure of teachers from their profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Numerous studies on teacher stress have revealed that a large number of teachers experience burnout (Richards et al., 2018). A House of Commons study in the UK (2004) revealed that health problems related to stress and anxiety were common among teachers, matching problems in other human service sectors like occupational therapy. Nevertheless, the study was small and might not be representative of the teaching community as a whole. Mental tiredness and stress led to a detachment of many compassionate teachers from their students, as well as negative attitudes that had an impact on both the teacher's and the students' psychological well-being (Randall, 2019). According to McCray (2017) study on teacher dissatisfaction in American schools, teachers who endure prolonged stress have physiological problems and lose interest in their work. According to Prilleltensky, Neff, and Bessell (2016), high teacher turnover rates were largely caused by teacher stress, which also had numerous negative effects on teachers' health and well-being. Teachers of special education experience more stress than teachers of general education (Vučinić et al., 2022).

A study by Macmbinji and Pwani (2018) revealed that the primary challenge faced by special education teachers is the inadequacy of instruction for students with intellectual disabilities due to deficits in their behavioural and cognitive functioning. More resources, time and attention are needed for children with intellectual disabilities than regular pupils. In order to effectively convey class instructions, special education teachers need additional time (Bateman & Cline, 2016). Kofidou and Mantzikos (2017) found that teachers hold unfavourable opinions about the teaching of learners with intellectual

disabilities. Learning new skills, communicating, remembering information and applying it to new contexts are all challenges that learners with intellectual disabilities may have and may pose stress to teachers. Memory, particularly short-term memory, is frequently compromised, and some learners could also have issues with long-term memory (Norris, 2017). Numerous teachers who quit their jobs before reaching retirement age do so because of the challenging circumstances they encounter in their schools. Patrawala (2018) also hypothesised that the occupation of teaching is extremely stressful for the teachers in their sample. According to their findings, more than 80% of the teachers who were polled reported feeling moderately to extremely stressed. The study concludes that teachers of elementary and high schools suffer considerable health consequences as a result of their jobs.

According to Adebayo and Ileuma (2023), teachers are suffering due to difficult working conditions, which include a high rate of vandalism and classroom violence. Comparable trends of attrition have been observed among special education teachers in South Africa; however, these findings are not documented in the scholarly literature (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Although teachers perform crucial responsibilities, there is minimal study on the specific stressors they encounter and the coping techniques they utilise (Mahfouz, 2020). There is little research on how special educators perceive stress and how to cope with and manage it (Cancio, 2018). A number of potentially aggravating factors have been identified by prior studies on stress among special education teachers. Travers (2017) examined teachers in a variety of educational contexts in great detail when it comes to stress and coping strategies. Sabherwal and Ahuja (2015) conducted a study which identified lack of infrastructure, time

restrictions, student indiscipline and low-income prospects as variables that contribute to increased levels of stress among teachers. According to Nambei and Mefi (2020), teachers experience significant levels of stress and burnout in the school environment. A considerable portion of stress studies has also been conducted in developed economies, like Australia and Hong Kong (Siu et al., 2020; Spector et al., 2017). However, these identified studies focused on regular education teachers.

In the Ghanaian context, Boakye and Ampiah (2017) discovered in their research that Ghanaian teachers ranked “insufficient housing for teachers”, “absence of free education for teachers' children”, and “low salaries” as the three most frustrating (stressful) occurrences they encountered. According to Issakah, Nyame, and Abu (2021), various variables contribute to stress among special educators, resulting in physical, psychological, and behavioural consequences. Therefore, it is crucial to develop appropriate coping techniques to ensure their safety and well-being. The research undertaken in Ghana has primarily focused on areas other than intellectual disability. Furthermore, the majority of the studies that were discovered primarily utilised a quantitative methodology; hence, there are limited studies on the qualitative approach. It therefore appears that a crucial knowledge gap still persists regarding the complex stressors that teachers notably encounter when working with learners with intellectual disabilities in the Ghanaian context. Hence, the current study sought to investigate the stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities at Garden City Special School.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities at Garden City Special School.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

- A. Find out the sources of stress among the teachers at the Garden City Special School.
- B. Examine the consequences of stress among the teachers at the Garden City Special School.
- C. Examine the coping mechanisms the teachers use to manage stress at the Garden City Special School.

Research Questions

1. What are the sources of stress among the teachers at the Garden City Special School?
2. What are the consequences of stress among the teachers at the Garden City Special School?
3. What coping mechanisms do the teachers use to manage stress at the Garden City Special School?

Significance of the Study

The study is a reaction to numerous scholarly arguments regarding the stress teachers go through when teaching learners with intellectual disabilities. The findings of the study would contribute and serve as a model for academicians who want to add to what has been discovered and discussed or conduct additional research on the subject. The findings of the study would also

reveal the coping mechanisms that teachers employ to manage their stress. By identifying particular stressors that are unique to this teaching group, the study's findings would also help policymakers and educational institutions better allocate resources and tailor support systems. The data collected may lead to the development of targeted training programmes, specialist opportunities for professional development or improved access to mental health resources for teachers.

Delimitations

The study was conducted at the Garden City Special School in the Asokore Mampong municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana and not any other special school. The study was delimited to stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities and not any other type of disability. Findings from the study may not apply to more general educational environments or geographic areas. The study focused on teachers of the school because they can provide insights on the stress they go through when teaching learners with intellectual disabilities. The research predominantly explored specific coping mechanisms employed by teachers in the school. Other potential coping strategies might not be comprehensively addressed in this study.

Limitations

The study has some limitations; while the qualitative case study design gave rich and in-depth insights into instructors' experiences, it restricts the findings' generalizability. The results may not be applicable to other schools, districts, or regions where stressors and coping mechanisms could differ due to varying educational and cultural contexts. Secondly, the small sample size of 18 participants limits the findings' generalizability. Finally, the use of an interview

guide may have influenced participants' responses, creating the potential for bias or incomplete information, which could have affected the overall outcome of the study.

Operational Definition of Terms

Stress: Stress is an idealised construct that depicts the condition of equilibrium between how a teacher responds to environmental demands and the actual environment when teaching learners with intellectual disability.

Source: The response that has an impact on teachers teaching learners with intellectual disability.

Coping mechanism: Strategies teachers adopt to deal with stress when teaching learners with intellectual disabilities.

Intellectual disability: This impairment is defined by profound limits in both intellectual functioning and adaptive conduct, encompassing social, conceptual and practical skills of learners with intellectual disability.

Learners: a person with intellectual disability who is learning a subject or skill.

Special School: Special school is a school that provides an education for children with a special educational need or intellectual disability.

Special needs: Areas in which individuals with intellectual disability might need accommodations or specialised services in order to engage in routine activities.

Special Education Teacher: A teacher qualified to work with pupils who have special needs and intellectual disability.

Burnout: Burnout is characterised as a long-lasting reaction to continuous interpersonal and mental stressors when teaching learners with intellectual disability.

Organisation of the Study

The rest of the study was organised as follows: Chapter two deals with the review of related literature, the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework of the study under the following strands: stress, stress in the teaching profession, sources of stress, consequences of stress, and coping mechanisms of stress. The empirical review was based on sources of stress among teachers, the consequences of stress and coping mechanisms of stress among teachers. Chapter three also deals with the methodology which discusses the research approach, research design, and study area. Population, sampling technique, data collection instruments, the procedure for data collection and data analysis. Chapter four reports on the results of the study along with discussions. The summary of the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations is provided in Chapter Five of the study. Additional schools from various districts should be included in future studies. More diverse reactions and perspectives would be made possible as a result. Simply include participants from various school districts to achieve this. Future research should interview a larger sample of stakeholders. Future researchers should conduct research on the efficacy of particular intervention programmes or support systems intended to reduce stress in special education teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the essential scholarly works on the topic of stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities. Three sections comprise this chapter. The transactional theory of stress as proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) was reviewed to provide the theoretical foundation for the study. The conceptual framework looked at the concept of stress, stress in the teaching profession, sources of stress, consequences of stress and coping mechanisms of stress. The empirical review talks about sources of stress among teachers, consequences of stress among teachers and coping mechanisms of stress among teachers.

Theoretical Framework

The theory underlying this study is the transactional theory of stress as proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). This study's foundation was the transactional stress theory. Transactional theory posits that stress arises from the direct interaction between an individual's environment and their available resources, potentially endangering their overall well-being (Dillard, 2019). Stress can either benefit or harm an individual. People who experience positive pressure, or eustress, learn to adapt to their environment, become more aware of problem areas and develop adaptive skills. Negative pressure exceeds their capacity for adaptation, puts stress on their mental and bodily systems and can lead to both mental and physical health problems (Dillard, 2019). Everyone has a different way of discerning stress. A more current explanation of this theoretical model, however, points to a more plausible approach that could

account for the underlying physiological and psychological mechanisms that support the perception and process of stress in its entirety (Haydon, Leko & Stevens, 2018). The term "transaction" indicates that stress resulting from one's job responsibilities need not always be a result of the workplace or a reflection of one's feelings towards the workplace (Dillard, 2019). Stress does not just happen to you. It develops as a result of changes that take place in a person's surroundings (Aydin & Kaya, 2016). Stress is the outcome of a person's motivations, ideals and convictions about a work environment that may be harmful, dangerous, or difficult for them because of their employment there (Lazarus & Folkman, 2020). Dillard (2019) Synthesised structural elements of process-orientated stress management techniques and distilled them down to five essential elements:

1. Antecedent variables include exposure to occupational dangers that are inherent in the management and design of work environments as well as those that are classical (psychosocial hazards).
2. Cognitive processes resulting from an employee's perceptions of demands made of them, their capacity to meet those demands, their needs, and the assistance they receive from both their employer and other sources that contribute to the emotional experience of stress.
3. The psychological, behavioural and psychological correlates of stress's emotional experience; some of these correlates are coping mechanisms.
4. The broader or secondary impacts of stress, which can affect an employee's family, job and social circumstances. These effects might manifest as poor health and unprofessional social and organisational behaviour.

5. Feedback from the larger community that partially indicate how well or poorly coping is going. In a way, this completes a circle of events that indicates the stress process is continuous. The foundation of transactional theory is the idea that an individual's experience of expectations, control and social support in their lives, when combined with their exposure to the work environment, is what ultimately causes their stress to appear (Dillard, 2019). Based on the degree of the individual's cognitive evaluation, transactional theory also explains the individual's responses to stress, attempts at coping with stress and the implications on their behaviour, health and those in their surroundings (Lazarus & Folkman, 2020).

This transactional model of stress, illustrated in Figure 1, highlights the link between the individual and the environment, whereby the application of coping strategies comes after a cognitive assessment of the environment (stressor). According to Dillard (2019), there are two types of cognitive appraisals for stressors: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. According to Dillard (2019), the interaction of an individual with their environment and the outcome of that relationship are the fundamental components of the transactional model of stress. In the primary phase of appraisal, the person evaluates the surroundings and decides whether or not the circumstance poses a risk or is stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Stress is not a characteristic of the environment or the individual; rather, it is determined individually and classified as a threat or not depending on the interaction between the individual and the environment (Dillard, 2019). The primary phase entails assessing how an individual perceives their environment

and whether it helps or hinders them (Dillard, 2019). Individuals evaluate the stressor and their resources to address the circumstance during the secondary appraisal phase (Dillard 2019). According to Carpenter (2016), during the secondary appraisal phase, people assess the expected result and determine how to minimise or overcome the stressor or make improvements that will be beneficial. Stress results from the inability to use coping mechanisms to minimise environmental hazard or injury (Carpenter, 2016). The resource base, the way in which the environment is perceived and the degree of personal control exercised in light of the potential threat or challenge to homeostasis all influence the coping strategy that an individual chooses (Carpenter, 2016).

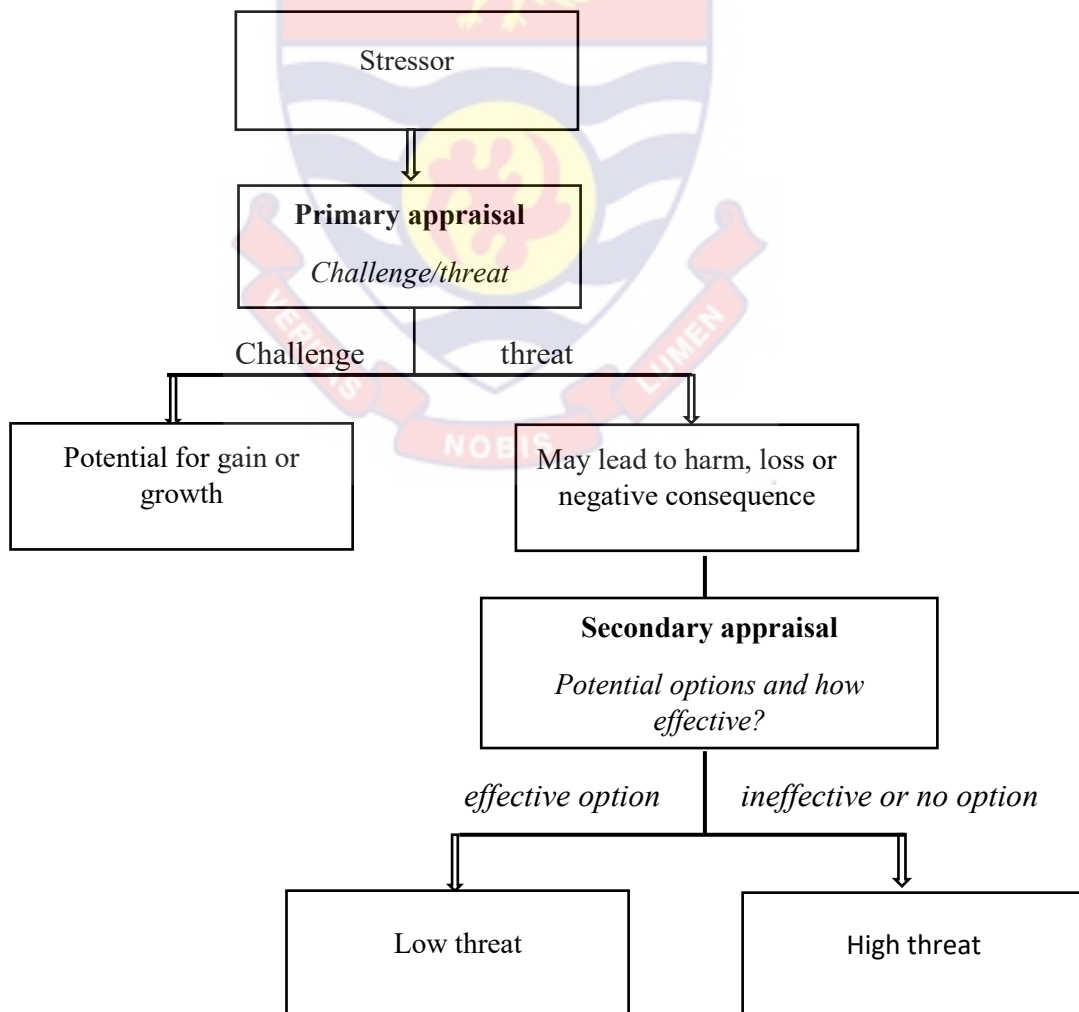


Figure 1: Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

When applying the Lazarus stress theory to teacher stress, it is important to consider the following components:

1. Primary appraisal: This is the first assessment of whether or not a certain circumstance is stressful. When teachers perceive a demanding workload, challenging students, or a challenging classroom management environment, they may undergo primary appraisal.
2. Secondary appraisal: Teachers participate in secondary appraisal following first appraisal, wherein their coping mechanisms and strategies are assessed. Whether they think they have the resources needed to handle the stressors they indicated in the first evaluation is determined by this assessment.
3. Coping mechanisms: Teachers may use a variety of coping mechanisms to control their stress, depending on the results of their secondary assessment. Strategies can be either emotion- or problem-focused, such as using self-care techniques or relaxation techniques, or problem-focused, like asking colleagues for help or organising your time better.
4. Reappraisal: Teachers who use coping skills may also reappraise, which is a process of assessing the circumstances and their own coping mechanisms. Through this process, educators can assess whether their coping mechanisms are working or if they need to adjust.

Teachers can better understand their stresses, assess their coping mechanisms and create stress-reduction plans by applying the Lazarus stress theory. It also highlights how crucial introspection and self-awareness are to the process of managing stress. It is imperative that educational establishments consider the Lazarus stress hypothesis in

relation to teacher stress. Giving educators access to tools and networks of support like mentorship programmes, professional development opportunities and counselling services can enhance their general well-being and help them manage stress more effectively. Furthermore, fostering a healthy work environment and lowering teacher stress levels can be achieved through improving school culture.

Conceptual Framework

Stress

Stress is the result of the interaction between an individual and a stimulus that creates a demand within their surrounding environment (Bilotta, Vaid, & Evans, 2018). It gets worse if a person is asked to do something that is beyond their capacity. An individual subjected to such situations may encounter psychological and physical disruptions. Stress is the psychological and physiological response that individuals exhibit when confronted with emotional threats or demands that disrupt their normal daily routines (Ovsiannikova et al., 2024). Put differently, stress is a physiological and psychological state brought on by both internal and external variables that threaten people's wellbeing and can arise when people attempt to cope with these variables (Yu et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Fink (2016) defines stress as a distinctive set of feelings that worsen when people experience anxiety and find it difficult to handle elevated stress levels or more demanding circumstances. Any employee must be aware of their immediate surroundings and prepare for environmental changes. After making a cognitive assessment of the situation, the employee's emotional, behavioural and psychological actions and responses to the stress his environment imposes on him are linked to his individual traits and the available

stress-reducing factors (Bilotta et al., 2018). Furthermore, whereas earlier research suggested that stress is not just an unavoidable aspect of big changes, it is also a significant state that can result in positive change when present in manageable levels (Fernandez et al., 2017). For instance, Ontario's residents have reported higher stress levels due to the province's frequent regulation changes and unstable housing market (Fernandez et al., 2017). Each significant part of the stress process is evaluated in a wide perspective of stress. This includes the individual's demands and beliefs as the primary environmental and personal experience; the intervening procedure, which mainly consists of coping with the environment; factors of direct stress response, which are physiological and behavioural emotions; and lastly, the effects of workplace stress, which include psychological, health, and social issues (Susan et al., 2024). Stress can be caused by a range of school-related situations (Kaczmarek et al., 2021).

1. Workplace Stress

Related to specific job factors such as:

- Workload
- Objectives
- Hours spent at work
- Physical surroundings
- Isolation in the workplace

2. Role-Related Stress in the Classroom

- Role ambiguity
- Staff accountability
- Disputes arising from unclear school boundaries

3. Career Advancement Issues

- Excessive or insufficient promotion
- Unstable employment
- Unmet professional goals

4. Relationships at Work

- Strained relationships with managers, colleagues, or subordinates
- Difficulty delegating tasks
- Threats of violence
- Harassment

5. Organisational Structure and Culture

- Level of involvement of staff and students in decision-making
- Management style
- Communication methods within the school

Horsch et al. (2016) added that stress impacts counter-regulatory hormones, which may result in various physiological conditions such as anxiety and depression, which are two mental health conditions that are linked to the emergence of extreme stress. For example, Liu et al. (2022) looked into the connection between college students' perceived stress and depression. Random sampling was used in the study to choose a sample of 20,000 students from 62,476 students at Arizona University, of which 2,238 were found as participants to provide their answers. The study's findings showed a statistically significant relationship between subjective depression and stress levels. In a similar vein, Wang et al. (2015) used information gathered from college students to investigate relationships between depression symptoms and stressful life events. Whether they are favourable or negative, abrupt changes in a

person's life are regarded as stressful life events. The level of stress experienced during the preceding 12 months was ascertained by going through a checklist of incidents typical of college students. The findings showed a strong correlation between the number of stressful life events that the students reported and the number of clinical depressive symptoms that they acknowledged. According to this research, students suffered greater depression symptoms the more stressful situations they had been through.

Gupta et al. (2018) used a cross-sectional study on qualified medical trainees from Mangalore, Karnataka, India, and also found a correlation between psychological stress and depression among medical trainees. The General Health Questionnaire and the Beck Depression Inventory scale were used by the authors to gather information on psychological stress and depression, respectively. The study found a statistically significant relationship between emotional triggers and anxiety. At 72.9%, the reported anxiety rate was rather high. According to the report, the rate of stress was found to be significantly higher at 83.7%. Alzayyat and Al-Gamal (2021) conducted a study to investigate the potential association between stress and depression among nursing students. A total of 88 students from two nursing courses were selected as the sample population for this study. The study's findings indicate a significant correlation between stress and moderate-to-severe depression symptoms. Lastly, a study by Yıldırım and Tanriverdi (2020) examined the correlation between nursing students' stress and anxiety levels. The responses of 71 professional nurses were evaluated utilising correlation study methodology. In comparison to other studies of a similar kind, the findings revealed higher ratings for both anxiety and stress. Using both trait and state

anxiety scales, the results demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between stress and anxiety. Yıldırım and Tanriverdi (2020) showed a comparable correlation. Compared to other studies, the levels of stress and anxiety were significantly higher. These findings show that stress and anxiety are consistently associated, regardless of how stressed out the groups are.

Stress in Teaching Profession

Amadi and Paul (2017) stated that teaching is an activity that arises from a teacher-student exchange. Teaching is deemed effective when there is a noticeable and positive change in the learner's behaviour. Biesta (2015) contends that educating students to become better citizens in the future is the main objective of education. According to Singh (2022), education is the process that helps students grow intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, ethically and physically. This development is accomplished by creating a supportive learning environment where students acquire new information, abilities, and attitudes that will enable them to benefit both societies at large and themselves. Darling-Hammond (2017) states that different countries place different values on teaching. In many cases, this is because there are other professions that are seen as more important than teaching, and those professions are thought to be prepared for by teachers. Therefore, it is crucial to establish suitable mechanisms that guarantee efficient learning, such as relevant reforms, effective performance assessment techniques and sufficient remuneration, in order to attract highly competent teachers. According to the survey, only the most brilliant and clever pupils are admitted into teacher education programmes in Finland. Furthermore, becoming a teacher is one of the most prestigious and

competitive careers. The goal of Finnish teachers' pay is to improve the learning results of their students (Darling, 2017).

It is widely believed that teaching is a challenging and complex job that requires a great degree of commitment and professionalism. It has been emphasised that teachers must possess extensive knowledge of the subject, abilities and competencies with the objective to understand the societal and socioeconomic educational component and assist and guide pupils in an efficient manner (Stronge, 2018). Teachers are frequently expected to help students develop both cognitive and noncognitive skills, as well as to comprehend the relationship between practice and research. Teachers must be able to respond to each student's unique needs, provide fair results and quickly adopt new technology in classrooms with a growing diversity of students (Singh, 2022). Based on their research on psychological well-being, physical health, and job satisfaction. Dingel and Neiman (2020) ranked 26 different professions. The poll found that six occupations had negative scores for each of these three attributes that were greater than average. These occupations included teaching, social work, ambulance (EMT), contact centre agents, jail guards and police. It was found that all of these jobs involved emotional labour, or relating to people while retaining emotional reactions that were appropriate for a professional setting.

Savitha and Kumar (2023) conducted a study which indicated that teaching is a very demanding career for teachers in their sample. Their findings revealed that over 80% of the teachers examined experienced moderate to severe stress. According to the study's findings, elementary and secondary school teachers' health is significantly harmed by work stress. Although not as

great as the consequences on their health, the instructors' performance at work suffered greatly as well. Owusu (2021) opined that teachers with less than five years of experience had considerably greater stress levels than those with more or less experience. Furthermore, Kaczmarek and Trambacz (2021) agreed that being a teacher might be challenging. According to these writers, job stress lowers teachers' levels of job satisfaction and self-efficacy. Stress from disruptive children was associated with lower teacher efficacy. The amount of stress caused by teachers' duties positively correlated with overall stress. Due to the greater workload of female teachers compared to their male colleagues, there is a potential disparity in the total levels of stress experienced by male and female teachers (Katsantonis, 2020). According to Kaczmarek and Trambacz's (2021), research on gender disparities, harassment at work causes higher levels of stress in female employees. The study finds that a number of occupational problems that negatively impact teachers' well-being cause them to experience stress at work.

In a study conducted by Alford (2018), the author investigated the job satisfaction levels of teachers who exclusively taught general education students, teachers who exclusively taught special education students and teachers who taught students from both categories. The study aimed to identify any differences in job satisfaction between general and special education teachers and to determine the factors that might have influenced these discrepancies. The results demonstrated that special education teachers had lower levels of job satisfaction and higher levels of stress. The only aspect of job satisfaction or unhappiness that was found to be significantly correlated with unhappy special education instructors but not with unhappy general education

teachers was feelings of annoyance in the classroom. Cancio et al. (2018) conducted a study to investigate particular additional stressors encountered by special education teachers. Their findings revealed that the stress encountered by the special education teachers in their research was influenced by various factors. These factors encompass a scarcity of specialised teachers for children in regular educational environments, an excessive workload for teachers, insufficient assistance and limited student progress. These teachers may also have psychological trauma, leading to stress when they do not witness the improvement of the children, they are responsible for (Willis & Nagel, 2015). Teaching may become more difficult for teachers who work with students who have more complex demands as well as for students with multiple disabilities. This can be the result of the special needs child teacher putting in more effort than usual to fulfil her duties when working with these students (Cancio et al., 2018).

Ortan, Simut, and Simut (2021) investigated how stress, productivity, and job satisfaction were affected by teachers' assessments of the campus environment in which they operate. The influence of these three parameters on every other statistic was granted in the research. According to the research, teachers' experiences with stress are influenced by how they view the work environment in their schools. From the challenges they encounter at work, other teachers might not be delighted with their profession. It was also discovered that stress associated with unruly pupils' behaviour lowers teaching effectiveness. The authors argue that teachers who are under a lot of pressure can think that their work-environment is bad for their health.

Sources of Stress

In today's environment, stress is an unavoidable fact that affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds (Mirowsky, 2017). Stress is a natural aspect of life and can be good or bad. Work is now seen by many employees as a source of stress and discontent as well as an endless source of pleasure and satisfaction (Mirowsky, 2017). Stress at work is a significant global public health concern that has an impact on workers' health and well-being as well as organisations' productivity. Research on stress has received a lot of interest from numerous organisations. Stress factors can be divided into two categories: internal and external. To address the internal and external demands in society, teachers must be aware of these stressors (Haydon, Leko & Stevens, 2018). The only internal sources of stress identified in their questionnaire were "absence of amusement or pleasure associated with teaching" and "inability to achieve personal or professional objectives". The stressors originating from external sources can arise from the school's environment, staff, or administration, as well as from external factors, predominantly parents and students. While the two "internal" sources were categorised as "moderate sources of stress", the overwhelming majority of "external" sources (specifically, 28 out of 30) also fell into this classification.

A study conducted by Greenberg, Brown, and Abenavoli (2016) confirms that there are four primary causes of stress in teachers. These sources include:

- (a) the school's organisational structure and lack of administrative support, as well as unfavourable working conditions
- (b) job demands, such as an overwhelming amount of paperwork, a heavy workload, and a lack of time

(c) work resources, such as the teacher's restricted autonomy and limited authority in decision-making

(d) social and emotional proficiency. Among all jobs, interpersonal disputes are the most common source of stress.

Stress is a result of the numerous interpersonal relationships that are a part of teaching, and teachers are the first line of defence in ensuring that the future generation receives a high-quality education (Pokhrel, 2025). Although good relationships with students, parents, and administration are expected of teachers, interpersonal relationships can also present a stress risk (Prilleltensky, Neff & Bessell, 2016). Working with children entails significant interpersonal relationships and social-emotional demands, which can lead to stress in the teaching profession (Carey & Sutton, 2024). Ambiguity exists in both the relationship between stress and well-being and the methods used to quantify stress (Radebe, 2020). The definition of stress is not universally agreed upon, and this disagreement frequently makes it difficult to grasp the physiological and psychological effects of stressful experiences (Randall, 2019).

According to Opoku-Asare, Agbenatogbe, and DeGraft-Johnson (2020), "insufficient time allocated for work" and "insufficient remuneration" were two of the top-ranked moderate stressors. Schools have clearly not succeeded in establishing a merit system that acknowledges the additional exertion exerted by teachers, which has resulted in a sense of dissatisfaction and demotivation. In addition, he noted that although the idea of internal motivation uses psychology and intrinsic incentives, the theory of external motivation focuses on economics and extrinsic rewards (Opoku-Asare et al., 2020). The absence of an effective reward system had thus become a source of internal tension for

most teachers. Nevertheless, statistical data focusing exclusively on the average scores of special education teachers indicate that the most frequently encountered stressors are "demands on after-school time" and "inadequate disciplinary policy of the school". The former is consistent with what we determined to be the primary cause of stress for all teachers. This can be attributed to the fact that schools are not fully prepared in terms of resources and procedures to handle special education children (Kauffman et al., 2018). In the qualitative portion of the poll, two teachers claimed that a lack of resources in the classroom also contributed to stress.

Parray, Kumar and Awasthi (2016) opined that stress develops when a teacher face demands that are too great for him to physically or emotionally cope with due to his employment, living situation, or other circumstances. It may take the form of system disturbance, strain, roadblocks to goal achievement, competing demands, unclear role prescription, such as ambiguity or role conflict, and taxing working conditions. Amstad and Müller (2020) address factors including student diversity, relative ability and behaviour, disruptive behaviour, verbal and physical threats and student misconduct as among the sources of stress for teachers of special needs children. Students who lack motivation; have inadequate supervision and assistance; have excessive caseloads and class sizes; are unhappy; have a lack of administrative support; have role conflict and ambiguity; and have a lack of professional development opportunities are some additional causes that have been identified. It goes without saying that the aforementioned factors could lead to stress, which would make teaching exceptional students uninteresting and unfulfilling. Many studies have shown that teachers around the world are subjected to ongoing stressors

from a number of sources, making teaching one of the occupations with the highest levels of stress (Travers, 2017). Sudha (2024) opined that stress can result from a variety of factors, starting with technology as the primary source of stress. It is clear in today's workplaces that the use of technological electronic devices and their ongoing updates is crucial. If a working person could not quickly adapt to technological aspects, he or she would struggle to do his or her job and end up stressed. The threat posed by evolving technology in the classroom could affect both the teacher and the students. The environment of the workplace is another important element for stress. Workers who operate in toxic environments constantly struggle to complete their assigned tasks while feeling more fear and anxiety. People who are under work stress experience negative emotional states like annoyance, worry, nervousness and depression that are brought on by various work-related factors (Ornek et al., 2020). The psychological health of workers and how it affects productivity have recently become hot topics at human resources conferences all over the world. Recently, the psychological well-being of employees and its impact on output have become hot issues at human resources conferences throughout the world. Owarewah (2020) claims that teaching stress mostly results from issues such as student misbehaviour, demanding schedules, and time constraints. In the same vein, Owusu (2021) opined that teacher burnout and lower job performance are greatly predicted by job demands, including emotional, cognitive, and physical efforts. Numerous studies claimed that employees' performance would rise when they were psychologically in balance and had positive work experiences on a daily basis.

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Dewe, 2017) states that stress arises when there is a perceived mismatch between the expectations placed on an individual and their resources (such as time or capacity to meet these demands). Extended periods of exposure to work-related stress can lead to burnout, decisions to quit the field, reduced job satisfaction, and mental health problems. Stress is believed to arise from a combination of personal and external influences (Compas & Wagner, 2017). De Nobile (2016) stated that external demands on teachers include an excessive workload, time limitations, insufficient resources, administrative tasks, student conduct and evaluation of their efficacy. Organisational considerations are additional contributors to teacher stress. The importance of intrapersonal factors, such as the regulation of emotions. The topic of subjective well-being, cognitive evaluations and personality qualities, which might have a mitigating or exacerbating effect on stress levels, has not been well studied (Travers, 2017).

Consequences of Stress

Ahmed and Shabbir (2019) stated that teachers' stress significantly influences their students' performance. Stress has a profound impact on teachers' overall performance, leading to decreased morale, increased absenteeism, diminished teaching quality, reduced student satisfaction and higher turnover. Personal and professional resources serve as a form of defence, mitigating the negative effects of stress on performance in this context. Kebbi (2018) opined that teachers in special education are under higher stress than teachers in regular school. Three types of study from the past 60 years have been used to separate the main components of work-related stress. The most significant variables in the area of work-related stress are environmental, psychological and

biological phenomena (Pülschen & Pülschen, 2015). Researchers who focus on this topic have developed many original perspectives on stress as a result of these factors. These factors lead to teachers experiencing lower levels of self-efficacy, quitting their jobs, being less cooperative, suffering from depression, facing health problems, having poor relationships with their students, becoming fewer effective teachers in the classroom, and failing to successfully implement initiatives.

Park and Shin (2020) examined the impact of stress on special education teachers. The literature has documented several additional effects of stress and burnout in these teachers, including a diminished sense of achievement (e.g., feeling unsuccessful in addressing crisis situations or meeting the needs of students), difficulties in maintaining personal or professional relationships (such as isolating oneself due to excessive work demands, refusing to collaborate with colleagues, or lacking social interaction with coworkers both at work and outside of it). Studies have connected teacher burnout to negative outcomes, such as absenteeism and even professional turnover (Madigan & Kim, 2021.; Rajendran et al., 2020). High absenteeism or burnout rates in schools can lead to chronic understaffing, which prevents students from receiving high-quality education (Ryan et al., 2017). School administrators lose both financial and professional resources as a result of teacher turnover (Hanselman et al., 2016). Additionally, stress among teachers may change how they perceive both internalising and externalising problems in their students. Students who receive behavioural referrals from teachers who are under a lot of stress are also more likely to do so (Hanselman et al., 2016).

Sharma and Pal (2021) stated that stress is an outside circumstance or occurrence that adversely impacts our body and psyche. Additionally, studies on teachers' effectiveness show that their opinions, behaviours and values have an impact on the choices they make and how they engage in the teaching-learning process in class discussions. If an individual lacks the ability to effectively manage the causes of stress, the consequences can manifest as long-lasting emotional, psychological, and physical issues (Johnson et al., 2019). In contrast to sporadic stress disease, Prabu (2015) found that there is a significant level of academic stress. In their investigation, it was seen that persistent stress in the absence of relaxation intervals would result in more pronounced adverse effects and challenging circumstances to manage. Studies have connected teacher burnout to negative outcomes, such as absenteeism and even professional turnover (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Depression is a common adverse consequence of teacher stress. According to Burak and Atabek (2019), depression is a serious illness, and allowing depressed people to work as teachers could lead to more significant issues for both the teachers and the students. This is especially valid for students who have received a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. This could be a factor in the early departure of special education teachers from the workforce, leading to a teacher shortage. The study looked at the relationship between burnout, work fulfilment, and teachers who are involved in educating children with special needs (Robinson et al., 2019). Stress also affects the physical health and well-being of teachers. Teachers who consistently endure stress are more prone to experiencing exhaustion and negative changes in their biological stress indicators. Teachers who experience

chronic stress, for instance, have abnormal daily patterns of cortisol levels and stress reactivity (Katz, 2016).

Stefanaki et al. (2018) opined that stress can cause a variety of health issues, including hair loss, eating disorders, tension, muscle pain, palpitations, breathing problems, paleness and many more. In terms of cognitive, emotional and behavioural effects, it can lead to inattentiveness, vulnerability to distraction, memory impairment, depression, less self-assurance, speech impairments, demotivation and even reduced job satisfaction (Stefanaki et al., 2018). Higher levels of occupational stress show a significant influence on teachers' performance, career choices, physical and mental well-being and overall job contentment (Benevene et al., 2020). The majority of workers, especially teachers, should therefore look for, learn, gather information and choose to implement the most effective coping mechanisms that aid in managing or preventing stress.

A study conducted by Besse et al. (2015) found a strong correlation between high levels of stress and the likelihood of being diagnosed with major depressive disorder. The researchers collected data from a sample of over 3000 teachers in Texas, utilising the Perceived Stress Scale, the Short-Form (36) Health Inventory and the Patient Health Questionnaire. Additionally, participants were asked about their current expert therapy for depression or anxiety. Daniel (2019) opined that there is a link between stress and performance; as stress levels rise, it affects performance. There are a number of negative effects of work-related stress, including a drop in worker productivity, accidents, low job satisfaction, and a rise in absenteeism and illnesses (Ajayi, 2018). Stress alters a person's behaviour and leads to the terrible development

of harmful habits, including smoking, sleep disorders, and disobedience to organisational rules and regulations (Ajayi, 2018).

Coping Mechanisms of Stress

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explained coping as constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. Due to its dynamic nature and tendency to alter with time and circumstances, coping is commonly understood to be a process (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The authors suggested that the approach commences with an initial assessment of the situation, categorising it as either a risk, danger, or opportunity. The person evaluates their own capacity to handle the stressor and chooses a first coping mechanism at the second stage of the process, known as secondary appraisal. If the person selects an effective strategy, it reduces the amount of stress they endure during the event. Lazarus and Folkman (2020) classified coping into two categories within the same context: First, coping mechanisms that are centred on emotions are employed to lessen and control the emotional discomfort brought on by demanding circumstances. It encompasses strategies including distraction, minimisation, avoidance and selective attention. These kinds of strategies are more common among people who feel powerless or uncontrollable in a given circumstance; they aim to put the issue on hold until they can figure out a solution. Second, problem-focused coping techniques are employed to address the issue by precisely identifying it, such as by creating a solution to solve the problem. People are more likely to employ these types of coping strategies when they believe they have high control over the situation and are able to look for a solution and find it. These coping strategies are more

successful. solutions to solve the problem; considering these alternatives in terms of their costs and benefits; selecting among them; and acting.

Coping strategies fall into two primary groups (Lazarus & Folkman, 2020; Schafer, Naumann, & Holmes, 2022). Direct action strategies and palliative strategies. Rocheleau (2015) divided the direct-action strategies into five groups: direct assault, skill enhancement, acting capacity, situation adaptation, eliminating stressors and asking for assistance from peers. Teachers can effectively address the source of stress in the direct attack by utilising the skills they have already gained. Develop your abilities and skills. To address the source of stress, teachers must either create new actions and skills or upgrade their current actions, skills and abilities. who adjusted to the circumstances and devised strategies to address the stressors they were facing. Teachers who eliminate the cause of Stress must be eliminated, or triggers must be avoided in some other way. There are two types of palliative strategies: physical and psychological strategies. Physical strategies include listening to music, taking walks, and playing sports like tennis. Psychological strategies include putting things into perspective, seeing the comedy in the circumstance, thinking positively and exercising emotional control. According to Rocheleau (2015), indirect active techniques include asking for social and emotional support or discussing the cause of stress with others. Talking to a friend or trusted colleague about the unpleasant circumstance may help teachers feel less stressed. After speaking with coworkers, people typically feel less stressed, especially if those colleagues can provide answers. According to Clark et al. (2019), picking the right person to discuss the issue with is crucial. An additional source of support will come from a reliable someone who maintains

composure and can find the positive aspects of a difficult circumstance. Redefining the source of stress involves a number of strategies, such as engaging in other activities, pursuing social interactions outside of school, taking up hobbies or physical activity, and offering teachers supportive measures to detach them emotionally and psychologically from their jobs (Clark et al., 2019). This allows teachers to take time out for personal enjoyment, whether it is through exercise or other activities (Clark et al., 2019). Asking for assistance from colleagues could provide genuine assistance in resolving issues and get useful guidance.

According to Frydenberg (2017), coping describes how people respond to difficult circumstances. They are the methods utilised to handle distressing or challenging emotions when faced with stress and/or trauma. Coping strategies enable people to cope with difficult situations while preserving their mental health (O'Dowd et al., 2018). Male teachers are more vulnerable to depressive emotions and a sense of failure or poor motivation than their female colleagues (Agyapong et al., 2022). Additionally, they demonstrated how sensitive to physical symptoms, emotional catharsis, and poor workplace relationships women special education teachers are. Sužiedėlytė (2022) classified coping mechanisms into four categories:

1. Adaptive cognitive methods, such as denial or removing oneself from the issue, are examples of appraisal-focused tactics.
2. Problem-focused tactics, such as taking charge, gathering information, and weighing the pros and cons, attempt to address the root cause of their problem by learning new problem-management skills.

3. Emotion-focused strategies aim to relieve bottled-up emotions through sobbing, meditating, using relaxation techniques and self-distraction.
4. Being self-sufficient or self-assured enough to lower stress levels associated with work and life is a key component of occupation-focused coping.

Rautenbach (2019) mentioned the coping strategies identified by students' teachers classified themselves into:

1. Personal Coping Strategies. These consist of:

- A. Cognitive Strategies, like optimistic thinking and reasonable expectation - setting.
- B. Physical strategies: these could be leisure activities or sports, or they could be passive activities like reading, watching TV, listening to music, or unwinding
- C. Behavioural strategies like eating, cleaning, and using drugs (like alcohol and tobacco).

2. Emotional strategies, including self-deprecating remarks:

- A. Time management strategies, such striking a balance between social and professional obligations and scheduling downtime.

3. Professional coping strategies consist of the following:

- A. Familiarity with the curriculum and subjects they will be teaching, as well as the organisation, structure and culture of the school.
- B. Self-management abilities, including organising, planning, and readiness.
- C. Professionalism, such as organising classes in a topic that the instructor and students find engaging each week.

4. Social coping techniques consist of:

- A. Seeking out the assistance of friends and family during difficult situations.
- B. Interacting with faculty and fellow students.

On the other hand, Prilleltensky, Neff, and Bessell (2016) noted the following coping mechanisms that teachers employ to reduce stress:

1. Personal resources encompass work practises including efficiency, organisation, and workload distribution. Positive attitudes include participation in various activities and understanding of the risks associated with stress. constructive pressures, like liking one's work. Activities to do after school include cooking, baking, strolling, painting, gardening, cycling, and praying.
2. Interpersonal resources comprise relationships with family and friends.
3. Organisational resources include open lines of communication between teachers and administrative staff, positive working relationships and the organization's material resources, such as funds and services being available.
5. Community resources involve neighbourhood sports like sailing and football.

Active and passive coping methods were the two basic kinds of coping mechanisms established by de Kloet et al. (2019). Cognitive strategies, behavioural strategies and emotional strategies can all be used as active coping mechanisms. Cognitive strategies include shifting perspectives, enforcing self-control, and rationally distancing oneself from stressful situations. Conversely, passive coping methods like giving up, abstaining from alcohol, wishing for the

best and avoiding stressful situations are characterised by a lack of involvement in the stressful situation. In line with earlier studies, the current study classified coping as having two types of maladaptive behaviours: self-distraction, denial, substance abuse, behavioural disengagement and self-blame; and adaptive behaviours like seeking emotional support and using positive reframing, planning, humour and religion. Beltman, Mansfield, and Price (2019) opined that adaptive coping in teachers generally promotes enhanced resilience, which raises levels of contentment and happiness. For instance, self-control, which is the capacity to resist engaging in bad behaviours that may heighten stress, seems to blunt the detrimental impacts of unpleasant emotions (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2022). Maladaptive coping, on the other hand, is linked to psychological distress, including depression and anxiety, as well as physical health issues, emotional exhaustion, decreased job satisfaction, decreased well-being and high levels of maladaptive coping (Harmsen et al., 2018). The use of coping mechanisms is another important factor that influences burnout. For instance, addressing the issue head-on and using job techniques and methods for resolving issues result in individual success. techniques lead to personal success, whereas trying to escape away from the issue causes emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Shin et al., 2021). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that problem-solving coping can assist teachers in experiencing less emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Shin et al., 2021).

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) conducted a study, and the findings revealed that the organisation should provide supportive services. It is important to promote vertical channels of communication between management and operational-level staff. A training session or workshop on stress management is

a good idea to use every two years. Another crucial step to take into account is to listen to employees' concerns. Accepting their anxious feelings and how to handle difficult circumstances should be studied and discussed. Techniques like meditation and relaxation that help to lessen the psychological and physical impacts of stress may be provided since they affect performance, general success and interest. The negative impacts of job-related stress on teachers may be severe and include psychological issues that may result in depression, poor performance, absenteeism, an uninterested workforce and ultimately abandoning one's job (Montgomery & Rupp, 2023). As a result, schools have high personnel turnover rates and little obstacles to leaving. As it was previously stated, teachers' stress is avoidable. Teachers who can effectively communicate their concerns and feelings to the highest levels of the organisation and who have good social communication skills will have high levels of job satisfaction and strong commitment to their school (Bentea & Anghelache, 2021). While secondary school teachers engage in sports and additional exercise to maintain the level of stress, middle and elementary school teachers decompress by relaxing, talking to friends and watching TV (Hasanah, Yunus, & Arifin, 2022).

A study done by Hasanah et al. (2022), it was discovered that teachers may effectively cope with stress by implementing school policies, receiving administrative support and promoting a cohesive team dynamic among staff members. This will facilitate the development of learners into persons with a comprehensive range of skills and knowledge. The present level of a study on the correlation among workplace stress and teachers' collective efficacy is inadequate, despite earlier evidence suggesting that teachers' collective efficacy can significantly and positively influence job satisfaction. Teachers in both

general education and special needs classes have the ability to utilise a range of coping strategies in order to minimise stress in their workplace. According to Waltz (2016), stressors are an unavoidable part of the educational environment; thus, teachers need to develop coping mechanisms to preserve both their professional and teaching efficacy. Three steps are suggested by Waltz in his straightforward ABC (Activating event, Beliefs, Consequences) stress management model: identifying the primary sources of stress and their likely effects; modifying the anxious conduct; and boosting social engagements among teachers, pupils, parents and other school staff. It is obvious that teachers (as well as administrators) should be proactive in implementing successful coping techniques because teaching is a challenging profession. It is important to create a variety of strategies, such as methods for introducing flexibility into the classroom, cognitive-behavioural approaches, and personal stress management. Zhang and Sun (2022) discovered that fostering a principal's good leadership style strengthens the bond between the principal and teachers. This facilitates learning, encourages self-control, and relieves stress in teachers. Therefore, the school environment can be significantly improved by the principal and teachers having a good working relationship. Consequently, the researcher believes that principals should be encouraged to improve academic achievement and the true wellness of students.

Special education teachers' stress levels can be decreased by school administrators making positive improvements to their working environment (McLeskey & Billingsley, 2020). According to Garwood et al. (2018), special education teachers recognised three areas of support: appropriate time for paperwork completion, clearly defined job tasks and high-quality mentoring.

Prioritising strategies to reduce special education teachers' workloads is essential for administrators, particularly for those who are new to the profession (Bettini et al., 2017c). When administrators keep an eye on their special education teachers' job happiness, they can continuously modify their working environment to reduce stress (Cancio et al., 2018). This results in the highest degree of support. It is imperative that special education teachers engage in meaningful and reciprocal connections with their colleagues across the school, as stated by Bettini et al. (2017c). Through the inclusion of special education teachers in school networks, the creation of collaborative schedules and the development of personal relationships with their special education teachers, administrators can foster a schoolwide climate that improves teacher relationships and support (Kouhsari et al., 2024). In the opinion of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2023), teachers who work in settings with low levels of acceptable social contact are more likely to experience stress because peer relationships have been shown to reduce stress symptoms.

Empirical Review

Sources of Stress among Teachers

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) investigated the specific sources of stress that are experienced by special education teachers. Their findings showed that the stress experienced by the special education teachers in their study was caused by a number of reasons. A heavy workload for teachers, a lack of support, a lack of student advancement and an insufficient number of specialised instructors for students in regular classrooms are some of these issues. In addition, when these teachers fail to see the children for whom they are accountable for success, they may suffer from a form of psychological

trauma that contributes to stress. In their study, Billingsley and Bettini (2019) investigated the job satisfaction of teachers who exclusively taught general education students, teachers who exclusively taught special education students, and teachers who taught both types of students. The researchers aimed to determine if there were any differences in job satisfaction between general and special education teachers, as well as identify potential factors contributing to these variations. The results indicated that special education teachers encountered higher levels of stress as a consequence of their diminished job satisfaction. Among dissatisfied special education teachers, it was observed that feelings of irritation during teaching were significantly associated with work dissatisfaction, although this connection was not seen among dissatisfied general education teachers. Schaefer, Long, and Clandinin (2022) investigated the factors that contribute to job stress in a sample of 373 special education teachers with varying levels of experience ranging from one to eleven years in the classroom. The special education teachers had an average reported work stress level of 5.05 out of 10, signifying a state of moderate stress. It was found that the stress was caused by issues with the learner's social development, care and advancement as well as their capacity to address their requirements working with students that struggle emotionally and behaviourally, as well as teaching students with autism were the student qualifying groups that were shown to be a significant cause of reported stress. The academic and social development of the pupils was correlated with the special education teachers' proficiency in curriculum administration and documented levels of occupational stress. Additionally, a correlation was found between teachers' perceptions of how

demanding their jobs are and their levels of professional discontent (Schaefer et al., 2022).

Hascher and Waber (2021) identified eleven stress factors in their exploratory factor analysis of a study among Cyprus' elementary school teachers. They are as follows: Student behaviour, self-control over disruptive behaviour, decision-making, relationships with coworkers, job ambiguity, insufficient working circumstances, student respect for the instructor, workload, recognition of teachers by their peers, time pressure, and specific teaching demands. Teles et al. (2020) conducted a study and discovered that the lack of motivation in students, students' negative attitudes towards class assignments, poor student behaviour, a lack of teaching aids, and a lack of public understanding of the challenges of the teaching profession were the five main causes of stress. Less significant factors were the presence of special education children in the class (such as those with autism, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, low ability, or low emotional intelligence), too many teaching subjects, too many duties to do, and a lack of free time, employment opportunities, and holidays. They identified two key components in an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for stress factors: the first was the "teachers' work environment", and the second was "teacher-pupil-parent relations".

Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2019) conducted a poll; out of 175 inexperienced teachers, only 22% were thinking about quitting after the third year. The main causes of these teachers' departure from the profession were their unsatisfactory work environments. While poor pay was a factor in their dissatisfaction, the majority of teachers blamed their high levels of stress at work, the behaviour of their students, their long workdays, the

excessive paperwork, and the demands of assessments for any thought of quitting teaching. According to Sutchter et al. (2019), high levels of stress, a need for administrative support, and personal job satisfaction are the main causes of teacher attrition. Similarly, Toropova, Myrberg, and Johansson (2021) discovered that teachers' job satisfaction differed depending on their gender, ethnicity and years of teaching experience. They conducted this by using 31 questions from the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) with a sample of 4952 all level teachers. Gender differences were not significant, however teachers of ethnicity reported lower levels of satisfaction than their peers and teachers with more experience reported increased levels of contentment. The degree of teacher job satisfaction was correlated with their career status (i.e., stayers, movers and leavers), with teachers who were less satisfied quitting the profession. Additionally, low levels of pay and unfavourable working conditions (such as little time for planning and preparation, a heavy teaching load, large classes and teaching outside of a particular field) seemed to be associated with lower job satisfaction, suggesting that attrition is likely to be impacted by school conditions and policies.

Sharma and Devasiachan (2022) opined that special educators frequently experience stress as a result of the children's unique needs, the added work and the responsibility to provide them with a high-quality education. This ultimately results in teacher burnout, and it has been discovered that special educators are more vulnerable to it because of the ways in which they work, which are consistent with many of the characteristics that contribute to burnout. In a study conducted by Romano (2016), it was shown that the main cause of dissatisfaction among special education teachers was the insufficient

availability of materials. This factor significantly contributed to their experience of stress. In addition, Kebbi and Al-Hroub (2018) conducted a study that examined the levels of stress experienced by special education teachers in comparison to those in general education. The study focused on exploring the relationships between stress, negative emotions and health consequences specifically within the former group. For this experiment, a total of thirty-four special education teachers and thirty-six general education teachers were asked to complete Likert-scale style self-report questionnaires. The findings revealed that teachers of learners with special needs demonstrated extreme levels of stress compared to regular education teachers across all stress-related categories and physical health concerns. The main sources of stress for special education teachers were found to be organisational structures that involved challenging supervision, hard work (both in terms of instructions and content) and difficult relationships with colleagues.

According to the findings of a prior study by Tai, Ng, and Lim (2019) about stress and special education instructors in Malaysia, the participants' workload and other stressors had led to a moderate level of stress. Additionally, the results demonstrated that participants' levels of work stress were not significantly different based on their gender, marital status, or greatest level of education. In addition, the study conducted by Tai et al. (2019) did not demonstrate a statistically significant correlation between teacher stress and demographic factors such as age, years of teaching experience and monthly salary. Conversely, Heffernan et al. (2022) discovered that the primary stressors experienced by teachers in Australia were heavy workload, long working hours,

and limited time for family. Nonetheless, research indicates that the degree of work-related stress varies based on the type of job in education.

This finding of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) supports the research of Billingsley and Bettini (2019), as previously mentioned. The findings of Hascher and Waber (2021) contradict the findings of Kebbi and Al-Hroub (2018). Schaefer et al. (2022) use a sample size of 373 teachers, higher than that of Kebbi and Al-Hroub's (2018) sample size. The findings of Sutcher et al. (2019) and Toropova et al. (2021) support each other. The sample size of Toropova et al. (2021) is higher than that of Sutcher et al. (2019), hence making generalisation of the findings difficult.

Consequences of Stress among Teachers

Wong et al. (2017) investigated the effects of burnout and stress on the conduct of teachers and students and discovered that stress affected both the quality of instruction and student engagement. They found that stressed-out teachers had a higher attrition rate from the profession. Reduced work-related stress was more likely to occur for teachers who received sufficient instructional support to ensure exceptional teaching quality and student involvement, along with emotional aid to monitor students' long-term development. (Wong et al., 2017). In accordance with Hester, Bridges, and Rollins (2020), impaired performance and anxiety and frustration, as well as strained interpersonal relationships at work and home, are all possible consequences of teacher stress in special schools. Kivimäki and Steptoe (2018) opined that high blood pressure, weight gain or loss, heart attacks, coronary heart conditions and other illness are as a result of excessive stress, such as headaches, chest pain, and other muscle aches and personal and relationship issues. According to a study by Karimah

and Mulyono (2021) among Indonesian teachers, the workload that causes work stress varies based on the various qualities of the pupils. Kristiana, Kustanti and Salma's (2018) study concluded that more than 50% of special education teachers have poor mental health and are unable to properly manage their concerns. Sharma (2019) discovered that sleeping issues caused by workload were reported by more than 70% of people. Similar to this, Thai special education teachers studied detrimental psychological traits like low self-esteem and self-actualisation. Many people reported blatant signs of stress, including headaches, insomnia, depressive symptoms, and a lack of vigour.

According to Sujaritha et al. (2022), stress can cause a variety of health issues, including hair loss, eating disorders, tension, muscle pain, palpitations, breathing problems, paleness, and many more. McCarthy et al. (2016) opined that unresolved stress is detrimental to teachers' mental health. In line with Lambert et al. (2015), the study highlighted various types of stress, such as physiological stress like heart issues and ulcers, psychological stress like depression and worry, and behavioural stress like poor work performance. According to Cancio (2018), instructors who teach learners in special schools have job-related stress, which has an impact on their productivity. Studies show that special educators typically have more challenging, demanding and stressful jobs than general education teachers. Mathews (2020) discovered that common workplace pressures, including job overload, especially in development of curriculum, behavioural control, and instructional modifications, lesson preparation, execution, involvement, and management, affect special education teachers. Findings from Karimah & Mulyono (2021), McCarthy et al. (2016), and Sujaritha et al. (2022) confirm that stress is detrimental to health. Findings

from different scholars confirm that teachers who work in special schools' experience stress more than teachers in general classrooms. (Hester, Bridges & Rollins, 2020; Kivimäki & Steptoe, 2018; Sharma, 2019). Their findings revealed that stress is associated with headaches, insomnia, heart attacks, chest pain and other depressive syndromes.

Coping Mechanisms of Stress among Teachers

In accordance with Abbo Bacia (2024), evidence suggests that in addition to adaptive coping mechanisms like routine exercise and meditation, support networks can aid educators in effectively managing stress. Bondarchuk et al. (2024) investigated coping mechanisms and found a diverse range of approaches for effectively managing stress. These strategies encompassed social contact, self-care, relaxation, planning, and engaging in sports, among others. Engaging in enjoyable activities and entertainment can effectively reduce stress levels and improve overall quality of life. Similarly, including self-care practises such as consistent exercise, participation in sports, sufficient sleep of eight hours per night, maintaining a good diet, and utilising relaxation techniques all contribute significantly to achieving these positive outcomes. Costa (2022) made it clear that sharing helpful teaching strategies and behaviour control methods may be essential ways for teachers to handle stress. In accordance with Biegel (2017), there are two major ways to deal with stress: either you give the stressful event your whole focus or you don't think about it at all. However, Scager et al. (2016) highlighted the positive features of assigning duties: "It permits a very healthy interdependence among people." Working together as a team brings people closer. As you divide the job and come to rely on one another, relationships get stronger. More importantly, if the

teacher could simply learn to assign tasks more properly, a lot of their stress would likely be reduced.

Njuguna (2024) opined that effective delegation of tasks can also improve coordination and organisation at the individual and institutional levels, reducing stress and burnout among teachers. Karumari and Patel (2018) stated that meditation and a positive outlook are beneficial for reducing stress. Botona and Baguio (2025) reveal that stress coping techniques to lower teachers' stress levels include focusing on and giving financial issues more importance, communicating organisational changes clearly and engaging in relaxing activities like stretching and taking brisk walks. A study by Donasco et al. (2025) conceptualised three coping strategies for teachers: social issue resolution, passive avoidant coping and relaxation.

Eşin and Eşin (2023) conducted a study using self-report questionnaires to investigate the relationship between stress and life satisfaction among 125 special education teachers. These teachers had varying levels of classroom experience, ranging from one to forty years. The study found that special education teachers who participated reported higher levels of stress linked to teaching, as well as higher degrees of negative effect. Eşin and Eşin (2023) discovered that peer support was the sole factor that provided a coping strategy during stressful periods and reduced the association between stress and positive emotions. However, this did not diminish the negative emotions. In their study, Hagermoser et al. (2021) examined the impacts of teacher stress. This review aims to identify stress-reduction strategies that have been assessed specifically with teachers and the corresponding outcomes linked to these interventions. The results indicate that the stress-reduction intervention that was most commonly

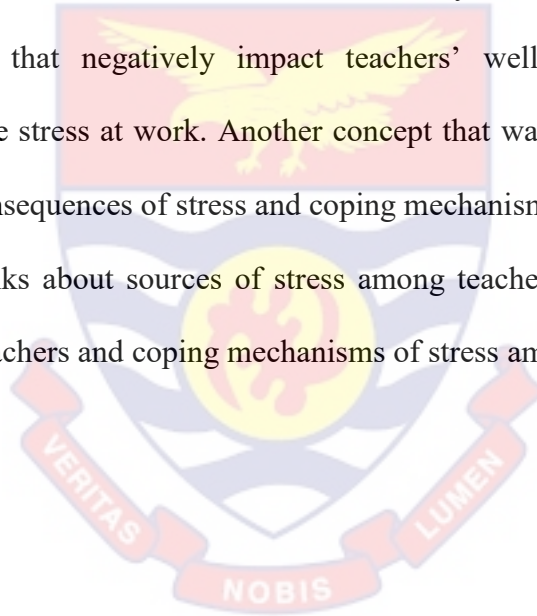
assessed involved the use of mindfulness-centred activities or meditation. Research from the past indicated that the majority of skilled workers use stress-reduction strategies as a means of self-motivation. These methods could entail learning more about the negative impacts of stress, controlling expectations, taking regular breaks from work, exercising and using therapies like massage and yoga (Martinez Montes & Penzenstadler 2025). Similarly, Lomas et al. (2017) discovered in a systematic review of research (n=1,981) that teachers' wellbeing and life satisfaction increased when they practised mindfulness since it decreased their levels of stress, strain, anxiety and depression. García-Arroyo and Osca (2019) conducted a thorough analysis of research involving teachers on the impact of employing active or direct strategies (that is, changing the circumstances and altering the stress factor) or passive or indirect strategies (that is, controlling the emotional reaction brought on by the stressor). They draw the conclusion that the former are related to teachers' psychological health, while the latter are related to their exhaustion.

The findings from Biegel (2017) contradict the findings from Bondarchuk et al. (2024). The findings from Eşin & Eşin (2023), Njuguna (2024), and Scager et al. (2016) are of the view that the best way for teachers to reduce stress is by delegation of tasks and peer support. (Hagermoser et al., 2021; Karumari & Patel, 2018; Martinez Montes & Penzenstadler, 2025) share the same views that teachers can reduce stress through meditation, mindfulness, exercising and support networks.

Chapter Summary

The chapter commenced with the theoretical framework. The theory underlying the study was Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and

coping. The theory revealed that teachers can better understand their stresses, assess their coping mechanisms and create stress-reduction plans by applying the Lazarus stress theory. It also highlights how crucial introspection and self-awareness are to the process of managing stress. Furthermore, fostering a healthy work environment and lowering teacher stress levels can be achieved through improving school culture. The conceptual framework talks about concepts of stress. This was investigated further using a variety of definitions. This was followed by a review of stress in the teaching profession. Various researchers' views were reviewed. Their study finds a number of occupational problems that negatively impact teachers' well-being, causing them to experience stress at work. Another concept that was reviewed was sources of stress, consequences of stress and coping mechanisms for stress. The empirical review talks about sources of stress among teachers, consequences of stress among teachers and coping mechanisms of stress among teachers.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

Chapter three focuses on the description of the research methods that are aimed at examining the Stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities at Garden City Special School. The chapter looks at the research approach, research paradigm, research design, study area, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection procedure and technique, pilot testing, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Research Approach

The study was carried out using a qualitative research methodology. Finding out why a specific group of people experiences the situation that they encounter was the objective of the qualitative research methodology (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). People can comprehend and interpret the reasons behind why one group of people behaves differently from other groups through qualitative research. It provides a thorough explanation of the situation and the circumstances surrounding its occurrence (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). It expands the researcher's perspective on the world and provides explanations for a specific event. Being able to interact with people in their natural environments will allow the researcher to gather pertinent data about teacher stress and coping mechanisms, so the use of a qualitative research approach was thought to be appropriate (Creswell, 2015). Creswell (2015) emphasised that a thorough examination of the research setting is essential if the researcher is to obtain comprehensive information on the subject being studied.

Interpreting participant experiences and opinions by identifying meanings and purposes of reality was the approach's main goal (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Additionally, through qualitative research, participants will fully articulate what they were going through, providing rich information that pushed and deepened the researchers' understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2015). It allows the researcher to have complete knowledge of the stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities because it places a strong emphasis on understanding a particular social setting through exploration. By determining the reasons behind specific events and relying on participant opinions, qualitative research aims to understand the situation (Mohajan, 2018).

Research Paradigm

Interpretivism is based on the assumption that reality is subjective in nature (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Interpretivists understand social processes and offer further interpretation. Interpretivism is the research paradigm that qualitative researchers follow because they use instruments like focus groups, participant observation and interviews to understand the issue and provide context for the suggested findings.

Research Design

According to Maxwell (2023), a research design is a systematic plan that guides the researcher in doing their research. The text provides a comprehensive explanation of the methodologies and strategies employed in the gathering and examination of data (Maxwell, 2023). The cohesive element that holds the study's components together is the research design. A research design, according to Ahmed (2024), is the process of deciding on the sample, settings

and research techniques that will be used to gather data. According to Hancock et al. (2021), organising a study increases the likelihood that the researchers will gather data that may be related to the actual scenario by assisting them in organising and carrying out the study in a way that would help them achieve the desired outcomes. The most efficient approach for the researcher to employ is found to be a case study. Because it enables the researcher to thoroughly examine a small group of people in a limited amount of time and space, the design is ideal for this investigation and will add to the researcher's understanding.

Ridder (2019) asserts that case study research ensures a comprehensive exploration of the topic, revealing the nature of stress and coping strategies in the context of teaching students with disabilities. According to Creswell (2015), a case study is a method whereby a researcher investigates in-depth a circumstance, an individual, or a phenomenon within the context in order to be able to offer a content and process analysis. By choosing a case study approach, the researcher hopes to offer a thorough comprehension of the lived experiences of teachers working with learners with intellectual disabilities, illuminating their sources of stress, consequences of stress and useful coping mechanisms. This method permits an in-depth analysis that could yield insightful findings for use in academic research as well as in real-world classroom applications. All the respondents were permitted to share their thoughts during the interview.

Study Area

Garden City Special School is located in the Asokore Mampong Municipal in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Asokore Mampong Municipal is one of forty-three districts in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Prior to being

promoted to municipal district assembly level and given the name Asokore Mampong Municipal on June 28, 2012, it was a sub-metropolitan district council inside the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly under the name Asawase. The municipality's capital town is Asokore Mampong, and it is situated in the region's centre, Ashanti. The municipality is bordered to the east, south and west by the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA), to the north and west by Kwabre East Municipal and to the southeast by Ejisu Municipal. The municipality has 191,402 residents, despite having a limited geographic area, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census. With 93,506 males and 97,896 females, the municipality has 10 electoral areas: Adukrom, Akurem, Asokore Mampong, Sawaba, Asawasi, New Zongo, Sepe-Tinpom, and Akwatialine.

Population

The study population refers to a substantial group of individuals from which the researcher intends to select a sample that accurately represents the general population (Willie, 2024). According to Creswell (2015), a population is a collection of people who share a characteristic that allows a researcher to study and identify them. In this study, the population was drawn from Garden City Special School, which was made up of teachers. The major group of people with comparable characteristics, known as the target population, is where the sample that can be used to answer the research question comes from (Willie, 2024). The study included a total of 18 teachers as the target population.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for the study was all 18 teachers in the Garden City Special School. The researcher adopts a census approach for the study. A census is an attempt to gather information about every individual in a population

(Aragona & Zindato, 2016). All 18 teachers teaching various classes were selected for the study. Census is to guarantee that information is gathered from each individual or component of the population. This all-inclusive method eliminates the need for estimations based on samples and offers a complete and accurate picture of the population as a whole (Courtoy et al., 2023). Census sampling ensures the highest level of data collecting accuracy by removing the possibility of sampling error that could arise in research with smaller sample sizes (Lohr, 2021). This degree of precision is especially important for some analyses where even small discrepancies can have a big influence on the results.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher employed interviews as a means of data collection. Qualitative interviews originated from the fields of anthropology and sociology throughout the early 20th century (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Although there is a limited historical scope, qualitative interviews have successfully progressed and fundamentally enhanced important areas nonetheless. The evolution of qualitative interviews is clearly connected to the philosophical advancement of research paradigms (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Interviews are an effective strategy for getting information from participants, as they allow for the exploration of participants' perspectives, facilitating the researcher's comprehensive understanding of the situation (Lim, 2025). According to Lim (2025), In qualitative research, interviews are described as attempts to understand the world from the participants' point of view, to highlight the importance of people's experiences, and to expose their lived reality before scientific explanations. Other experts agree that the qualitative interview is crucial for gathering data (Roulston & Choi, 2018). However, it is important to

note that for the obtained material to be more authentic, the researcher needs to build a close relationship with the source.

The selection of semi-structured interview questions was based on their ability to enable participants to freely articulate their perspectives on the phenomenon, without any limitations or restrictions. Semi-structured interview questions enable the researcher to interpret and comprehend the situation from the perspective of the participants (Karatsareas, 2022). In-depth one-on-one interviews encouraged participants to talk about their everyday experiences with learners with intellectual disabilities and the stress they go through. In-depth interviews conducted in this manner are suitable for data collection in a variety of research methodologies, including the case study (Johnstone, 2016). (Gentles et al., 2015; Morse, 2015) made it clear that in conducting case study research, at least 25 participants are suitable to conduct an interview. Though Gentles et al. (2015) and Morse (2015) recommend at least 25 participants for case study interviews, a sample of 18 teachers is justifiable in this study as it allowed for in-depth investigation, data saturation, and contextual relevance while remaining feasible given time and resource constraints. Rich, detailed data acquisition rather than high sample sizes is the goal of qualitative research; saturation can be reached with fewer participants provided the study setting is well-defined (Hennink, Kaiser & Marconi, 2017).

The interview guide was adapted from related literature on teacher stress and coping mechanisms, and it was modified to suit the purpose of this study. The interview guide was modified based on pertinent literature regarding teacher stress and coping mechanisms, as employing recognised frameworks guarantees the validity of the research instrument. Utilising previous research

facilitated the incorporation of evidence-based enquiries that have been validated in comparable circumstances, hence enhancing the comparability and credibility of the obtained data. The first section of the interview guide talks about participants' bio-data, and the other sections consist of the interview questions on sources of stress among teachers, consequences of stress among teachers and the coping mechanisms among teachers. Each strand contains four sets of interview questions. (See Appendix A)

Data Collection Procedure and Technique

The researcher acquired a letter of introduction from the Department of Education and Psychology and ethical clearance from the College of Education Studies Ethical Review Board. The researcher sent the letter to the Ghana Education Service (Asokore Mampong Municipal Education Directorate) for approval. After GES approval, a letter was then sent to the headmistress of Garden City Special School to know when it would be appropriate to conduct the interview. The data was collected from the teachers in the school, as they were the target population for the study. Data was collected by the researcher and two research assistants. Before the data collection, the researcher went to the school to meet the teachers and discuss the interview guide with them so that they would become familiarised with some questions in the interview guide. This was done to establish positive rapport between the interviewer and the interviewees. The researcher ensured the participants stayed focused on the topic by employing an interview guide. A set of questions was developed for each participant, drawing from the research topics and the literature examined in Chapter Two. All interviews were conducted in person. The audio from each

interview was captured for subsequent transcription and coding. Data collection was conducted over a period of three days.

Pilot Testing of Instrument

The instrument was pilot tested at Nyamaa Special Unit School for learners with intellectual disabilities in the Bono Region of Ghana. Nyamaa Special Unit School is a school for learners with intellectual disabilities which is attached to a mainstream school called Nyamaa Primary and Junior High School. The researcher chose this school because learners within Nyamaa unit school and the Garden city school share common characteristics. The pilot testing included all 12 teachers at Nyamaa Special Unit School. Pilot interviews were done by the researcher with a limited sample of participants who were similar to the target interviewees before the actual interviews. The pilot interviews help the researcher to ensure clarity, relevance and efficacy in extracting the needed information from the interview guide.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis is the systematic approach employed to arrange and examine participant data with the aim of deriving meaning from it (Azungah, 2018). According to Akinyode and Khan (2018), data analysis involves organising and collecting the significant amount of information collected from participants and categorising it into groups and sub-groups in order to facilitate result comparison. Sutton and Austin (2015) define data as information that researchers obtained from participants in order to help them answer research questions. In addition to producing results that could be applied to other research designs, this assisted in the reduction and simplification of the information that had been gathered. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic

analysis, Braun and Clarke's (2019) approach for all three research questions. Thematic analysis is the method of identifying, examining and documenting recurring patterns or themes in the data. Data curation entails the systematic arrangement and explication of data. The process of analysing qualitative data, as described by Braun and Clarke (2019), includes the following steps:

1. Familiarisation with the data
2. Generation of initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Writing final report

Familiarisation with the Data

To become acquainted with the data, the interview audio recordings were often replayed. To facilitate easy access, every interviewee was assigned a numerical code (Deterding & Waters, 2021). The codes were allocated according to the sequential order of the interviews. The interviews were recorded exactly as spoken, including pauses and hesitations, and they were specifically documented (Rutakumwa et al., 2020). The objective was to preserve distinctiveness and ensure the absence of data loss or misinterpretation. In order to ensure the absence of any exclusions, the transcript was thoroughly reviewed by repeatedly listening to the audio recording.

Generation of Initial Codes

Initial codes are brief labels or tags that represent the fundamental characteristics of specific sections in the dataset (Rutakumwa et al., 2020). The codes utilised in this study are distinguished by their descriptive quality and

capacity to communicate the main concepts inherent in the information. Upon reviewing the interview and analysing the recordings, I successfully identified preliminary codes that facilitated the development of themes for the responses. See appendices E and F for the coded interview scripts and coding scheme.

Searching for Themes

Themes can be described as repetitive patterns that emerge from the data and encompass broader concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The semi-structured interview agenda lacked predetermined themes. Upon reviewing the recordings, I detected recurring concepts that were subsequently categorised into themes corresponding to the several research questions.

Reviewing of the Themes

The identified themes were evaluated to ensure that they accurately represent the data. To improve the content's quality, I refined, edited, or merged certain themes as necessary.

Defining and Naming the Themes

Within this particular setting, the themes have been more precisely defined and labelled with titles that appropriately represent the essential character inherent in each subject. After doing a thorough analysis of the encoded data and the visual representation of the interview responses, I organised them in a coherent manner. I made sure to ensure that the titles I assigned to the themes were concise, so as to offer readers a prompt comprehension of the content. The number of themes generated was 13, and the number of subthemes was 19. This suggests a wide and diverse range of topics to explore further, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the subject area. Each

subtheme can bring additional insights and details that help us grasp the larger theme.

Writing the Final Report

All of the concepts were thoroughly examined and then categorised into individual themes throughout the writing of the findings section. The main subjects were carefully selected and incorporated into the final report. This opportunity allowed for the selection of vibrant and captivating instances from the extracts, the completion of a comprehensive analysis of the chosen extracts and the establishment of a correlation between the analysis, research topic and existing literature (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). The verbatim samples included in the final write-up were chosen from the collection of responses based on factors such as their level of information, clarity, relevancy and vividness. I endeavoured to transcend just data reporting and instead offer an analysis of the conclusions derived from the study.

Trustworthiness

The foundation of exemplary research is in its trustworthiness, which concurrently determines the truth and practicality of a study's findings in real-world contexts. Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of a research study should all be guaranteed (Kasirye, 2021). Numerous steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study to show accurate results based on participants' views and to guarantee that the study can be replicated in the future if needed (Lindheim, 2022). The notion of trustworthiness holds significant importance in qualitative research as it enables researchers to exhibit the care and attention with which the study was conducted, hence confirming the research's eligibility as a scholarly publication. A set of parallel standards in

qualitative research guarantees the trustworthiness of the study (Lindheim, 2022).

Credibility

The level of agreement between participants and the researcher is a key factor in determining how credible and appropriate a study is. Through member checking, peer debriefing and memos, credibility is established. Giving the participants the chance to independently confirm the results is known as member checking in participant feedback. After compiling the data, the researcher gave it to the participants to see if it addresses the information he had gleaned from their responses (Mose & Korstjens, 2018). The principal researcher and participants thoroughly examined the data, verifying its precision and proving the dependability of the information. The participants could independently verify the accuracy and reliability of the results.

Peer debriefing is a strategy in which an experienced colleague in the same field of study is provided an opportunity to analyse and discuss the researcher's results. The individual tasked with reviewing the findings should possess impartiality. The utilisation of the peer debriefing strategy enabled the researcher to uncover previously overlooked insights during the data analysis process. On one side, the utilisation of legitimate results was facilitated by the researcher (Lim, 2025). Peer debriefing allowed the researcher to determine whether the desired approach was actually used. Upon a meticulous analysis of the outcomes, the colleagues furnished the researcher with input, so guaranteeing the reliability of the research findings (Lim, 2025).

Memoing is the process of repeatedly reading data in order to extract its significance. It is a procedure in which the feelings and ideas of participants are documented based on their individual perception of the situation. The statement reflects the information provided by the participants in response to the research questions (Johnson et al., 2020). It offers a method for the researcher to document their perspectives for future deliberation (McGrath, 2021). The researcher utilised memoing to thoroughly analyse the transcribed data, repeatedly reviewing and comparing it with the recorded information. This facilitated the researcher in comprehending the perspectives of the participants by a thorough examination of the data to extract the intended significance from the surrounding environment (McGrath, 2021). The utilisation of memoing aided the researcher in preserving thoughts that may otherwise be forgotten and facilitated the formulation of the study's design. In addition, the researcher's journal was utilised to observe subjectivity, views and bias (McGrath, 2021).

Transferability

Transferability guarantees that every aspect of a study can be used in a situation that is comparable. In other words, other academics can reproduce the results or research methodology (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The researcher provided the technique and research instruments so that others can try to gather data under comparable circumstances. The identified themes were supported by both a transcription of the participant's own words from the interview and a sound recording of the participant's voice. Utilising thematic analysis to analyse the data, the researcher included an extensive, detailed description of the environment in which the study took place in addition to the audit trail. The researcher continued to keep everyone's identities secret while describing each

participant. Each participant's beliefs and position in relation to the overall context of their environment were described.

Dependability

An additional method of verifying the validity of results that emphasises the importance of consistent and replicable findings. An inquiry audit is of the utmost importance in guaranteeing the study's dependability. An external individual was granted the opportunity to examine the results for consistency and replicability via inquiry auditing (Carcary, 2020). Carcary (2020) defines an audit trail as a method for ensuring the consistency of the findings through the meticulous documentation of all significant elements of the research, such as interviews, field notes and audiotapes. The researcher documented the data collection and analysis process using an audit trail. The comprehensive depiction of procedures facilitated the assessment of dependability in accordance with the audit trail (Amankwaa, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the state of being neutral and objective in a study. This indicates that the findings of the study reflect the viewpoints of the participants (Nyathi, 2018). The confirmability of the study was ensured by the use of an audit trail, which provided a detailed account of the processes performed to examine the data obtained (Carcary, 2020). Confirmability refers to the requirement for consistent outcomes or conclusions in a study when investigating the same condition or environment. The research findings were validated through the process of peer debriefing and member checking. These two methodologies enabled other researchers to reach comparable conclusions and validate the results.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations are essential to research practices. May and Perry (2022) explained that ethical behaviour and concerns are crucial in research, just as they are in any other area of human endeavour. The researcher adhered to certain ethical guidelines that were deemed suitable for research. First, the College of Education Studies Ethical Review Board of the University of Cape Coast granted permission to conduct this study. Second, the researcher requested the respondents' informed consent. See appendices B and G, respectively.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality entails safeguarding the rights and dignity of participants by refraining from revealing their information without their explicit consent. In order to preserve confidentiality, the data collected from participants was securely stored in a locked cupboard to prevent unauthorised access. The researcher additionally ensured that the participants' identities were not linked to their responses. Confidentiality was maintained during the data analysis process by ensuring that the identities of the teachers were not revealed rather than by the use of pseudonyms. The researcher transcribed the recorded information. In order to preserve the secrecy and privacy of the participants, the researcher employed pseudonyms to encode the data. (Surmiak, 2018).

Informed Consent

Informed consent involves providing participants with detailed information regarding the procedures involved in conducting a certain study, as well as a clear explanation of the expectations placed upon them (Hesse-Biber, 2016). Millum and Bromwich (2021) assert that informed consent is maintained

when participants possess an understanding of the purpose and potential hazards associated with their participation in the study. The primary objective of this is to demonstrate respect for autonomy and to avoid any violation of the participant's dignity. It entails executing a variety of protocols when involving human participants. The main focus is on ensuring that the participants possess sufficient knowledge about the project. Participants' right to autonomy is safeguarded through the process of informed consent (Traianou & Hammersley, 2021). Before commencing the research, the researcher explained the methodologies he intended to employ in order to carry out the research, as well as the rationales behind conducting the study. The researcher provided participants with ample time to enquire and thereafter addressed any queries or concerns. The participants were provided with consent forms to fill out and sign. See appendix (G).

Voluntary Participation

Voluntary participation guarantees the protection of participants' rights, necessitating that their involvement in the study is based on their own willingness to engage. Therefore, participants are required to volunteer themselves for investigation (Kılınc & Fırat, 2017). The researcher provided a comprehensive description of the protocols and anticipated outcomes for conducting the study. The participants were afforded autonomy to either accept or decline the request to participate. They were also guaranteed their right to depart if they felt uncomfortable. The participants were introduced to the topic of investigation, and the researcher provided a comprehensive explanation of his interest in conducting the study. The researcher provided the participants

with an explanation of the criteria used to choose them and the rationale behind their selection as potential study participants.

Anonymity

Anonymity refers to the act of presenting data in a way that prevents it from being linked to the individual from whom it was collected. Anonymity guarantees the preservation and appreciation of participants' dignity. This can be achieved by instructing the participant to refrain from disclosing their names when answering the research questions. To maintain the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were used in place of their actual names. The researcher ensured the privacy of data analysis and sharing of results by restricting access to the findings only to the participants. Additionally, the researcher took precautions to avoid using any information that could potentially disclose the name (Surmiak, 2018).

Data Storage and Management

To guarantee confidentiality and data integrity, the information gathered during this study will be securely kept in a password-protected digital format. Following best standards for qualitative research, the data will be kept for five years to enable possible verification or follow-up analysis; it will then be permanently discarded (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). This approach follows ethical standards to strike a balance between data protection and participant confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to discuss the data findings on stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities. Research indicates that a variety of factors, such as a lack of assistance, daily responsibilities, and learners' concerns, as well as teachers' inability to use the time allocated for teaching activities, contribute to teacher stress. The information presented in this chapter provides participants' firsthand accounts of the causes and consequences of stress, as well as their coping strategies. This chapter comprises three sections: A, B, and C. Section A presents a summary of the participants' demographic characteristics, including statistics on gender and years of experience. Section B addresses the interview findings, while Section C pertains to the discussions.

In this case study, the researcher was responsible for objectively and systematically analysing the participant data and drawing conclusions. Following the acquisition of site authorisation, the researcher's additional duties encompassed extending invitations and recruiting study participants, as well as carrying out face-to-face interviews. Following the completion of each interview, a transcription was made to allow the participants to verify the precision of the material. Upon completion of the verification process, the participants were provided with a debriefing form to authorise or withdraw their information and participation in the study. In order to ensure confidentiality, all documents were securely stored in an archive.

SECTION A

Bio Data of Respondents

The population for this study comprised seven men and eleven women, representing eighteen teachers. Those who responded to the interview questions were full-time teachers with two to twenty-six years of experience, certified staff members and employees of the same school. The participants involved in the study were eighteen teachers who were employed on a full-time basis from Garden City Special School. All eighteen participants who volunteered to participate in the study provided the required data.

Out of the 18 teachers, 6 teachers fall within 21-30 years of age, representing one-third of the teachers as youthful age. Even though those in this age range may not have as much experience as more seasoned teachers, their viewpoints, flexibility and creative methods can provide a special lens through which to examine stressors and coping mechanisms among teachers who work with learners with intellectual disabilities. Combining their observations with those of more seasoned teachers may offer a thorough grasp of coping mechanisms in a range of educational settings.

10 teachers out of the 18 teachers fall within 31-40 years of age. These age groups are described as middle age. Teachers between the ages of 31 and 40 have a combination of experience, flexibility and expertise from years of working as teachers. Their grasp of resilience, personal development and long-term coping techniques can be very helpful in comprehending the intricate dynamics of stress management while working with learners with intellectual disabilities. Combining their experiences with those of more experienced and

younger teachers can provide a thorough understanding of coping mechanisms in this educational setting.

The rest of the two teachers fall within 51-60 years of age. Teachers between the ages of 51 and 60 contribute a wealth of knowledge, resiliency and perception from their long careers in the classroom. The expertise of individuals in understanding the long-term viability of a career amidst stress, pedagogical methods and enduring coping strategies can be highly beneficial to both novice and experienced teachers when dealing with the stress of working with learners with intellectual disabilities. Integrating their perspectives with those of novice teachers can yield a comprehensive understanding of coping mechanisms in diverse educational settings.

The biodata of the respondents confirms that 80% of the teachers have knowledge in special education, and they have worked with learners with intellectual disabilities; hence, they can provide information prior to the study. Interviews with the 18 participants focused on stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities. In order to prevent bias, the same questions were asked to the participants during the interviews (see Appendix A). Teacher participants were requested to provide more details if their replies were ambiguous. After being recorded, the interviews were transcribed and analysed.

Table 1 includes a list of research participants. Participants designated as teachers one through eighteen, their respective class and their years of experience are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Research participants

Participants	Class	Experience
Teacher one	Primary 4	5 years
Teacher two	Primary 1A	4 years
Teacher three	Primary 2	7 years
Teacher four	Primary 5	26 years
Teacher five	Primary 3	18 years
Teacher six	Class 1B	10 years
Teacher seven	Pre-vocational class 4	4 years
Teacher eight	Primary 5	10 years
Teacher nine	Primary 6	15 years
Teacher ten	Pre-Vocational class 1	5 years
Teacher eleven	Pre-vocational class 3	2 years
Teacher twelve	PE teacher	7 years
Teacher thirteen	Kindergarten 1	1 year
Teacher fourteen	Pre-vocational class 2	4 years
Teacher fifteen	Primary 7	2 years
Teacher sixteen	Pre-vocational class 5	3 years
Teacher seventeen	Kindergarten 2	4 years
Teacher eighteen	Kindergarten 3	6 years

Source: Field work, 2023

SECTION B

Interview findings

Research Question One: What are the sources of stress among the teachers at the Garden City Special School?

The researcher interviewed 18 teachers at Garden City Special School in the Asokore Mampong municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Responding to the question on sources of stress among teachers at Garden City Special School, some themes were derived from the teachers. They include:

- i. Student behaviour
- ii. Cognitive delays of learners
- iii. Work environment
- iv. Large class size

Student Behaviour: It is challenging to have misbehaving children in the classroom. This type of distraction prevents teachers from teaching successfully and, as several teacher participants have remarked, raises their stress levels and has an adverse mental health impact. The following subthemes emerged: hyperactivity, aggression and bullying.

Hyperactivity: 'Hyperactivity' is a commonly used term to indicate abnormally high levels of activity, restlessness and impulsivity. It is frequently linked with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), but it can also manifest on its own or as a sign of other diseases.

One teacher reported:

Hmm! Majority of my students are hyperactive so I usually try my best to control them in class. I need to talk more than 10 minutes before students put up appropriate behaviour. This act triggers the stress in class. (Teacher 1)

One teacher reported:

Hmm... Am confused and I don't know what to do again, I feel sad and frustrated. The students' behaviours are beyond control and out of hands. Here in this school, you cannot punish a student, this is the reasons why some students put up deviant behaviours in class. (Teacher 3)

One teacher explained:

Some students exhibit disruptive behaviour in class. Behaviours such as aggressiveness, temper tantrums, which triggers stress in class. (Teacher 2)

Aggression and Bullying: Examples of aggressive behaviour, such as bullying and its effects on the school environment, as well as acts of physical, verbal, and relational aggression.

One teacher commented:

Ow! I sometimes feel stressed in school because of my students' aggressive behaviours in class, I need to talk a lot before they do the right thing in class. (Teacher 4)

Another teacher reported:

Regarding reprimanding learners in your classroom, you have limited choices. Your potential is limited. I experience difficulty in maintaining concentration. I struggle with maintaining focus during the class. Clearly, the practise of using flogging as a disciplinary measure is no longer in use. However, it is not permissible to physically restrain a child in this educational institution. Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) cannot be exempted from attending class, as the IEP is intended for exceptional circumstances, such as physical altercations. I lack the cognitive capacity to handle this consistently throughout the day, which exacerbates my irritation. (Teacher 7)

Another teacher reported:

My students at times are not interested in the lesson and do not participate, it is frustrating for me and I usually think am not making any impact. (Teacher 8)

Based on the responses from the participants it is evident that disruptive behaviour of some learners leads to stress among teachers.

Cognitive Delays of Learners: In the interview, some of the teachers stated that because of the significant limitation in intellectual functioning of learners with intellectual disabilities, learners find it difficult to understand concepts. This slows the progression of the class; hence, the objectives stated in the lesson

plan cannot be achieved. These sub-themes emerged: conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills.

Conceptual Understanding: Challenges in abstract reasoning and conceptual comprehension which impede a learner's ability to comprehend intricate concepts, establish connections between ideas and apply learning to unfamiliar situations. These are the comments raised by some teachers.

One teacher commented:

I need to teach one lesson five times before learners will understand the concept. It took me three days for learners to differentiate between two primary colours (red and black). (Teacher 7)

One teacher reported that:

Although I adopt demonstration as my teaching method, learners do not get an understanding of concepts. This slows down the rate of class progress. (Teacher 15)

Problem-Solving Skills: Cognitive impairments can hinder problem-solving skills, making it difficult for learners to utilise logical thinking, analyse information and devise effective problem-solving strategies. These were some of the comments raised by some of the teachers.

One teacher reported:

When teaching, I usually use real objects to teach concepts but yet still learners do not understand concepts. I don't achieve my goals. (Teacher 14)

It can be deduced from the comments that cognitive delay of learners leads to teacher stress as teachers need to repeat themselves over and over again.

Work Environment: In the interview, some of the teachers said that their most stressful work-related incident included the workplace. According to the

information gathered from teachers, having too many demands placed on them can have a negative impact. It appeared that physical stress, such as headaches and body aches and pains, was influenced by the workplace. One participant who is a teacher recounts the effects of stress brought on by their workplace. The following subthemes emerged: physical environment and heavy workloads.

Physical Environment: Inadequate resources for health and safety, poorly maintained facilities, overcrowded classrooms and uncomfortable working conditions may all contribute to the stress and discomfort of teachers.

One teacher stated that:

Hmm! I have experienced headaches and stomach problems far too frequently. The restrooms lack a custodian and have defective electrical systems. A teacher shouldn't have to be concerned about any of these circumstances. You are supposed to carry on teaching under these circumstances and make an adjustment. When I walk into the building, I instantly have the stomach flu. I feel overburdened since I have to switch classes. (Teacher 18)

The working atmosphere of a school affects both teachers' and students' capacities for learning. The setting conveys information about the importance of education and learning. This has an impact on both teacher retention and how teachers are distributed throughout schools.

Another teacher reported that:

It is bad when you enter a building and you immediately start to wonder how the day will go. Before the day even gets started, I am already stressed, annoyed and apprehensive. To me, school culture is crucial. I have a tendency to overwork myself occasionally. Stress can be reduced by cooperating with one

another. Work should be a constructive environment in which everyone achieves to some extent. I must maintain my good attitude because it always helps to relieve stress. (Teacher 17)

The school culture or environment holds significant importance. The impact of stress on school culture might have repercussions on academic performance.

Another teacher commented:

I have found that when I'm happy and important, I work harder and more diligently to deliver greater results. The fact that the environment encourages me to want to do more motivates me to stay late and arrive early. I don't always feel like I'm a part of a good atmosphere, though. I start to feel self-conscious and fret over little things, which has an impact on how well I function. I experience depression because I question why I'm doing anything if it will just be the same routine every day. It is made up of various negative emotions. Some of you don't get along with others, which makes me feel lonely. It's simply different thing that adds to my stress and makes me feel downcast and nervous. (Teacher 6)

Heavy workloads: It involves excessive planning of lessons, grading, administrative duties, and additional responsibilities outside of the regular curriculum, which can result in feelings of being overwhelmed and experiencing time constraints. High workload and long working hours leading to teacher stress

One teacher commented:

Ugh! The duration of lessons should be deducted to enable teachers and learners to rest for a while. This will enable learners to understand concepts when they are taught a bit. (Teacher 16)

Another teacher stated that:

Teachers should focus more on practical things than theory because learners with intellectual disabilities corporate well with real objects other than abstracts. (Teacher 14)

The comments raised by the teachers show that most of the teacher stress is associated with the work environment.

Large Class Size: When there are more pupils in a classroom or other educational setting than what is thought to be the ideal or manageable quantity for efficient teaching and learning, the situation is referred to as having a large class size. During the interview, it was confirmed by the participants that high class size accounts for teacher stress in the school. The sub-theme that emerged was student-to-teacher ratio.

Student to Teacher Ratio: The student-to-teacher ratio is a metric used to represent the mean number of pupils per teacher in a specific educational environment. The student-to-teacher ratio is determined by dividing the total number of pupils enrolled in a school or educational programme by the total number of instructors that get hired at that school or programme. Mostly if the number of students in a class is large, teachers often feel stress in class. These were comments raised by some teachers.

One teacher said:

The number of students in my class is too high making it difficult for some of the learners to understand concepts. In fact, I need to divide the class into two groups before lesson begins. (Teacher 10)

Another teacher commented:

Ow! It hurts when I witnessed teaching this large group of students in my class. It's terrible for me in the sense that the size should be reduced to ensure maximum cooperation between teachers and students. (Teacher 12)

Based on the comments raised by the teachers it can be deduced that high- class accounts for teacher stress in the school.

Research Question Two: What are the Consequences of Stress among the teachers at the Garden City Special School? All of the themes found have related consequences. Every teacher had suffered a negative outcome, whether it was psychological, emotional, or social. The consequences were discussed in relation to work stress during the interviews by the participants at Garden City Special School.

Physical Effects: Three teachers highlighted the physical effects of stress associated with school-related stress throughout the conversation. The following sub-themes emerged: health conditions and physical discomfort.

Health Conditions: Physical effects may encompass the emergence or worsening of health illnesses such as stress-related disorders, cardiovascular ailments, musculoskeletal concerns (e.g., back pain, repetitive strain injuries), and impaired immune function.

One teacher stated:

Occasionally, my chest aches and I am aware that stress is to blame. Being new, I am concerned about whether I am doing things correctly. I become anxious about how much I have to accomplish and when I need to do it. My heart is beating rapidly. Even if it is uncomfortable, I must persevere. (Teacher 5)

Another teacher stated:

A little stress is fine every now and again, but when I start getting severe headaches and physical problems, and I notice that I can't sleep or wake up frequently at night due to work, I know I have a problem. My headaches have always been diagnosed as stress-related. Strangely, I get headaches more frequently when I deal with students. (Teacher 4)

Physical Discomfort: Physical effects might be observed as feelings of discomfort or physical strain in the body, such as headaches, muscle tension, gastrointestinal disorders, and other bodily symptoms.

Another teacher further explains:

My headache problem is only a small portion of my stress issue. I feel so physically ill from the stress I experience. I experience nausea. It makes my stomach feel anxious and rumbles uncomfortably. There are times when the stress is so severe that I am unable to eat. (Teacher 3)

Emotional Effects: The interviewees who were teachers acknowledged both the emotional and physical repercussions of stress in addition to the physical ones. All the participating teachers talked about experiencing emotional stress, whether it manifested as irritation or depression. As indicated by earlier teacher participants, this kind of stress can have a lasting impact and be connected to physical stress. The following sub-themes emerged. Depression and mood instability.

Depression: Stress that never goes away can cause depression symptoms, such as sadness, desperation, disinterest and adjustments to eating or sleeping schedules to appear or worsen. Some of the comments raised by the teachers were.

One teacher said:

Oh yea! At times, I simply behave out of anger against particular circumstances. I've held back the fact that as the day goes on, I occasionally become agitated and frustrated. Yes, I have been known to lash out at the kids when I'm frustrated. There isn't much alleviation at all. I try to act professionally, but it's challenging. (Teacher 2)

Another teacher reported:

I obsess over my errors. I experience persistent sentiments of regret, remorse, and guilt that make the day challenging because they drain all of my energy. I make an attempt to deliberately shift the mood by doing something. When I notice myself slipping into regrets over the things I've done in the past, I use mindfulness practices. You attempt to get past your previous transgressions and learn from them, but it still drags you down and makes you depressed. (Teacher 1)

Mood Instability: Mood swings, impatience, frustration, or an increased emotional reactivity in reaction to perceived stressors are examples of emotional impacts. Another teacher attributed his emotional stress to eating. This teacher stated:

I consume my emotions,' I admit. When I'm stressed, I eat more unhealthy foods. You're already pushed for time as a teacher. I notice that when I'm pressed for time and only have 25 minutes to eat lunch, I eat quickly. I gained so much weight this school year because I'm attempting to create a comfort zone by eating to relieve stress. The best part is that I am aware that I am stress eating and am not attempting to exercise to counteract the consequences, which would only aggravate the situation. (Teacher 6)

Social Effects. During the interview, a teacher made reference to a phenomenon that can be identified as social stress. The diversity of personalities in a work environment leads to conflicts.

One teacher reported:

You can't always get along with everyone. You sometimes have to accept that you are wrong. However, working with people you don't get along with might create an uncomfortable situation. Being social when you don't want to, avoiding specific individuals, and attempting to "rock the boat" can be taxing because it's difficult to avoid people you have to interact with at work without generating conflict. You're unhappy and miserable at work because it's impossible. (Teacher 10)

Mental Effects: During the interview, the psychological impacts of stress were determined. Several teachers reported experiencing tension, depression, decreased motivation, and difficulty concentrating. The following subthemes emerged. The following sub-themes emerged: cognitive impairments low self-esteem and self-worth

Cognitive Impairments: Psychological discomfort has the potential to negatively impact cognitive abilities such as memory, focus, and judgement, making it more challenging to carry out work-related duties or make wise decisions. These were some comments raised by some of the teachers.

One teacher stated:

I find it difficult to focus on just one thing at a time. Once I start a task, I find it difficult to finish it. My mental process is hampered by my lack of motivation. I lose track of what I'm doing and discover that I can't find stuff. (Teacher 11)

Low Self-Esteem and Self-Worth: Negative job experiences or comments can have effect on people's self-esteem and worth, causing feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt or imposter syndrome.

Another teacher said that:

Oh! Yes, I have taught of quitting this job whenever I find different job.

(Teacher 12)

One teacher stated that:

If I get chance to travel to abroad, I will quit this job and go. This work is stressful. (Teacher 9)

One teacher reported:

If I get the chance, I will quit this job to teach regular school learners.

(Teacher 8)

Physical, emotional, mental and social effects are the consequences of teacher stress in the school. The comments raised by the teacher participant clearly shows.

Research Question Three. What Coping Mechanisms do the teachers use to manage stress at the Garden City Special School?

Teachers who are stressed out at work have coping mechanisms. These strategies come in both positive and negative varieties. The effectiveness of teachers may also be significantly impacted by these techniques. The results of both positive and negative coping mechanisms differed. During the interview, several evident strategies for managing work-related stress were discussed, including both beneficial and detrimental approaches. Participants admitted to experiencing severe to moderate stress during the interview, and they also said they were more likely to turn to friends and family for help, which may be a

good sign. Participants who had modest stress said they would take time out of work, which could be seen negatively.

Engagement of Students: During the interview ten teachers reported that engagement of learners in both physical activities and academic activities helps them to reduce stress. The following sub-themes emerged: Social engagement and cognitive engagement.

Social Engagement: Interactions and relationships with peers, teachers and other members of the learning community help students feel connected, collaborate and supported.

One teacher reported:

Oh well! When I am stressed, I engage my students in physical activities on the school field. They always feel happy and I also enjoy it since it is the best way to reduce my stress. (Teacher 1)

One teacher commented:

Whenever I feel stressed, I play with my student under a big tree on our campus and I become satisfied. I think engaging the students a lot helps me mentally sound good. (Teacher 9)

Cognitive Engagement: Cognitive engagement, focus on dedication to educational assignments and scholarly material, encompassing analytical reasoning, solution finding and thorough assimilation of knowledge.

Another teacher stated:

Demonstration is the best way to engage learners in class. Students feel happy and active anytime I adopt a demonstration. I feel relaxed anytime learners are active in my class. (Teacher 3)

One teacher reported:

I allow learners to assist their peers in the class. It allows learners to understand concepts and is always active in class. Peer tutoring has really helped me a lot over my years of teaching and indeed am able to manage the stress. (Teacher 4)

One teacher reported:

I have a tablet which I used to play games and music for students to enjoy. They become happy and fully active in class. Anytime my learners feel happy I also feel happy and able to cope with the stress. (Teacher 11)

Another teacher stated:

Well! My students enjoy practical lessons other than theoretical lessons; I engage them in every activity and they always understand concepts. Am able to manage the stress once my students understand the lesson. (Teacher 7)

Another teacher commented:

I was very stressed one day and I decided to adopt roleplay as a method of teaching. I realised the students were happy and really enjoyed the class. Since then, I have adopted roleplay as a method of teaching my learners. (Teacher 16)

Comments raised by teachers confirm that when they are stressed, they engage students to reduce the stress.

Tranquillity: A condition of serenity and quiet that can aid in lowering stress is called tranquillity. Being in a state of tranquillity allows us to unwind and release the tension and anxiety that arises from being under stress. This can enhance our general feeling of wellbeing and help us feel more focused and centred. We can develop a sense of calm by engaging in relaxation practices

like mindfulness and meditation. During the interview, 80% of the teachers reveal that tranquillity helps them to cope with stress. The following sub-theme emerged: mindfulness and meditation.

Mindfulness: Mindfulness has been recognised as a highly effective strategy for managing stress. It provides individuals with techniques to handle stresses, decrease physiological arousal, and enhance emotional well-being.

One teacher reported:

When I am stressed, I practise mindfulness, I have been using these strategies and it has helped me a lot. (Teacher 13)

Another teacher reported:

“Over my four years in this institution, anytime I am stressed I practise relaxation. I relax for a while then go back to teaching. (Teacher 11)

One teacher said:

Anytime I am stressed I put my head on a desk and listen to music. Music is good for the soul and it helps me a lot to cope with the stress. (Teacher 17)

Another teacher said:

When I am stressed, I talk to my fellow teachers and we discuss matters arising in the school. Whenever I do that, I become normal and able to focus on my work. (Teacher 6)

Meditation: It is recognised as a highly efficient strategy for managing stress. It provides individuals with abilities to handle stresses, decrease physiological arousal, and enhance mental well-being. Meditation functions as an effective strategy for managing stress.

Another teacher stated:

Whenever am stress, I usually breath in for sometimes to release stress.

(Teacher 15)

Based on the responses from the teachers, it is clear that meditation, mindfulness, relaxation and talking to fellow teachers helps them to cope with the stress.

Motivation: Motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic. When a person is motivated, he/she devotes himself/herself well to work harder to ensure high productivity. Special education teachers deserve to be motivated so that they can work hard to achieve good classroom performance from learners. Twelve teachers out of eighteen teachers talk about motivation as the impact on stress. The sub-themes were intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation: Intrinsic motivation refers to the drive that comes from within an individual, resulting from personal interest, delight, or satisfaction obtained directly from the activity.

One teacher stated that:

Well! I always do exercise outside the classroom whenever I am stressed. It has really helped me over my years of teaching. (Teacher 9)

Another teacher reported:

Whenever am stress I try to write poems, stories and music to motivate myself. Motivating myself intrinsically has really helps me a lot to cope with stress. (Teacher 7)

Extrinsic Motivation: Extrinsic motivation is driven by external influences such as incentives, praise or the desire to avoid negative consequences.

One teacher stated that:

Mmm! The Headmistress should reward and praise us in each academic year because handling learners with ID is very tedious. This will help us to cope with the stress. (Teacher 4)

Another teacher reported:

Yuh! I think Provision of incentives to teachers will also help to reduce stress. Incentives can motivate us and we can work hard to cope with the stress. (Teacher 9)

Another teacher commented:

Well! The school authorities should collaborate with other agencies to provide us with packages to motivate us. I've worked here for four years and I can honestly say I'm not motivated. A lot is going through my head, and I become angry every time I go to school. (Teacher 2)

One teacher said:

This work demands a lot of motivation, because there is a lot of stress in handling learners with intellectual disabilities. Oh! I think the school authorities and other stakeholders should collaborate together to praise the teachers. (Teacher 5)

The participants made it clear that when they are motivated, the stress will be reduced and they will be able to discharge their duties well.

Ability Grouping: The process of assigning children with comparable skills to study together in academic subjects like reading, writing and maths is known as ability grouping for learners with intellectual disabilities. Ability grouping is intended to give students education more specifically matched to their individual needs and skills, which has the potential to improve academic

performance. Ability grouping, however, can also have unfavourable outcomes, such as making kids feel stigmatised or low on self-worth when they are grouped with peers who have different capacities and receive less engagement from them. It is crucial that teachers and educational institutions carefully weigh the possible advantages and disadvantages of ability grouping and make sure that it is applied in a way that is just, equal and supportive of all students. During the interview some of the teachers reported that when learners are grouped by abilities, it will make their work easy by identifying individual learning needs and providing the needed intervention. This will definitely help them to manage the stress. These were the comments raised by the teachers.

One teacher commented:

There are various categories of students in my class. Every learner has their own learning style, I feel frustrated and tired. I think there should be grouping of learners based on their abilities. (Teacher 8)

Another teacher reported:

Am confused and frustrated, I think the school authorities should group the learners based on their abilities. I have multiple disabilities in my class and is not easy at all for me to handle them. (Teacher 1)

One teacher stated:

I teach an adult class composed of multiple disabilities, which indeed is not easy for me at all, I become weak and tired in class. I think groupings of students will help me to cope with the stress. (Teacher 13)

Another teacher reported:

This job is tedious for me in the sense that there are different categories of learners that I handle in class. Learners should be grouped according to their abilities so that each individual learning needs will be addressed. (Teacher 10)

The respondents made it clear that when learners are grouped based on their abilities, teachers will manage to reduce the stress because individualised attention will be managed.

Negative Strategies. When teachers experience stress at work, not all of their coping strategies are beneficial. During the interview, three teachers admitted that certain coping mechanisms they had employed could pose a potential risk.

One teacher said:

When I'm stressed, I might need some time to myself, which may necessitate a day off." Even though I know I shouldn't, this is the only way I can relax and refocus. I consider changing occupations on occasion, but I am convinced that I am now well qualified to teach than I was four years ago. This leads me to assume that if I were to leave, the educational system would suffer as another teacher would be absent. So, yes, I do take days, even though I think it's not the best option. The ability to express what is bothering you is an essential component of coping methods. (Teacher 14)

One participant said that while talking to others is a helpful coping mechanism, it can sometimes have negative effects.

You want to fit in with the community at your school. It's crucial to communicate socially with the administration, coworkers, parents, and pupils. I feel overburdened by the anxious thoughts I experience while attempting to handle them separately. Although you can't please everyone, you must collaborate with all students as a teacher. (Teacher 5)

SECTION C

DISCUSSIONS

The study was undertaken to investigate the stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities in Garden City Special School in the Asokore Mampong municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

Data that addressed the three research questions were gathered through teacher interviews. The results and interpretations related to the research questions were discussed in this section. Every teacher participant's data was analysed independently. Themes that illustrated the similarities and contrasts surfaced after analysis. The findings were analysed in relation to the research topic, stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities.

Sources of Stress among Teachers

Research question one investigated the sources of stress among teachers in Garden City Special School. The results indicated that student behaviour, cognitive delays of students, work environment and high-class size were the sources of stress among teachers in Garden City Special School.

Amstad and Müller (2020) examined the conduct of students concerning stress and mechanisms to cope. The study found that one of the six major sources of stress that negatively affect teachers is student behaviour. The findings of the current study corroborate the results of Amstad and Müller (2020), indicating that student behaviour significantly contributes to teacher stress. In addition, Hofmann and Müller (2022) confirmed that student behaviours can create challenges for teachers in the classroom, particularly when dealing with students with intellectual disabilities. They can cause stress not only for teachers but also for parents, siblings, friends, and other carers.

They can cause stress for teachers in addition to parents, siblings, friends, or other carers. Amstad and Müller (2020) examined 800 teachers in mainstream classes with a small number of special needs students. The participants were instructed to reflect on the degree to which they perceived nine distinct forms of student behaviours as problematic. The findings demonstrated that internalising behaviours (such as self-stimulation and isolation/lack of engagement) were viewed as less problematic than externalising behaviours (such as off-task verbal disturbance and off-task behaviour).

In line with these findings, Plueck et al. (2015) discovered that among preschool teachers, higher levels of externalising student problem behaviours predicted higher stress among teachers. During the interviews, some teachers reported experiencing stress as a result of student behaviour. As per Sonnentag and Fritz (2015), teachers may encounter the psychological repercussions of stress due to the demands of their profession, which arise in their regular work setting. The teachers commented on how their work environment influences their reactions to stress. The work would be less fulfilling if the atmosphere were negative. Unwanted elements, such as a negative work atmosphere, can be internal or external and impair job performance (Kaur, 2018). One aspect that participants mentioned as needing to be fulfilled for teachers is the work environment. This relationship appears to be pertinent to the findings of Kaur's theory, which identifies elements that can impede performance both internally and externally. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) conducted a study on Canadian teachers; the findings showed that high class size, teacher workload and student behaviour account for teacher stress.

Consequences of Stress among Teachers

Research question two sought to examine the consequence of stress among teachers in Garden City Special School. This question was addressed using an interview. The findings from the interview sessions revealed that the consequence of stress was based on physical effects, emotional effects, social effects and mental effects. In this study, participants reported health-related factors, which calls for further investigation into the potential effects these factors may have on teachers of Garden City Special School. The individuals listed headaches, fatigue, chest discomfort, anxiety, annoyance, job discontent and feelings of inadequacy as contributing reasons.

According to Ekornes (2017), stress-related health factors can be classified into two distinct categories: behavioural, psychological, or both. People who are not in the teaching profession still have a limited awareness of the elements that lead to stress. Several health concerns that Ekornes (2017) identified as problems are having an impact on teachers at Garden City Special School. For the participants, occupational stress was revealed to be a point of reference. The majority of teachers stated that the most common outcomes of job stress were fatigue and annoyance. There is a connection between participant replies and Herzberg's (2017) description of poor student motivation, challenging interpersonal dynamics with colleagues and management, and unfavourable working conditions. This is backed by earlier research and lends credence to the idea that teachers are indeed adversely affected by these stressors on a physical and mental level.

Coping Mechanisms of Stress among Teachers

Research question three examined coping mechanisms used by teachers in Garden City Special School to cope with the stress. The findings revealed engagement of students, tranquillity, motivation and ability grouping of learners with ID. During the interviews these findings were revealed by the teachers as a way to manage the stress. The findings indicate that the teachers experienced the repercussions of stress. The outcomes demonstrated that the techniques are effective and that the best ways to deal with stress are to practise physical activity, meditate and take little pauses. Since stress is a constant emotion in life, adopting coping mechanisms like engaging in stress management techniques such as mindfulness and exercising can be beneficial. Stress can have exhausting effects.

According to Hepburn and McMahon (2017), teachers can lower hormones associated with stress and increase flexibility by incorporating physical exercise and stress reduction techniques into their stress relief practices. Meditation is a common method of stress reduction used by many civilisations. The individuals who talked about using exercise and meditation as coping mechanisms acknowledged this.

According to Holman, Johnson, and O'Conner (2018), stress management intervention (SMI) highlights that stress can be reduced with the right support. The results show that the majority of participants employed some form of stress management intervention, which can be recognised by both organisational and individual methods. Individual approaches include activities that people engage in outside of the classroom, such as exercising and

meditating. The teachers demonstrated that by altering work practices and job features, such as time management, the cause of stress was eliminated.

Additionally, teachers frequently use the following coping mechanisms: experiences, social assistance, direct and indirect action, proactive preparation and repression of negative conduct. Each has a connection to earlier studies conducted by Holman et al. (2018), which suggest that stress management strategies should be implemented. The literature on the impacts of stress and coping mechanisms has long included social support and proactive measures.

Mindfulness is another method of therapy for stress reduction (Riley et al., 2017). Using behavioural and cognitive techniques, mindfulness concentrates on the process of feeling and thinking rather than the substance of thoughts (Riley et al., 2017). As mindfulness addresses stress-related symptoms without carrying the same stigma as seeking mental health therapy, it could be a beneficial strategy for treating stress (Rodriguez et al., 2024).

Summary

The purpose of this section is to present the conclusions drawn from the conducted interviews. The study's data-gathering method and conclusions concentrated on the sources of stress, consequences of stress and coping mechanisms for stress. The findings revealed that student behaviour, work environment, cognitive delays of learners and large class size were the major sources of teacher stress. The results of the study indicated that the participants' stress levels had some physical and psychological repercussions. Obtaining emotional encouragement from colleagues in the school or from those outside the teaching profession was one way that teachers dealt with stress. Exercise and meditation were two indirect methods of stress management. The findings

also revealed that engagement of students, ability groupings and motivation also play a significant role in coping with the stress. The majority of the school's teachers take time for themselves after work as a coping mechanism, according to information revealed during the interviews. Both good and bad drawbacks to stress and coping mechanisms were demonstrated by the findings and results.

The findings are linked with the participant roles, emphasising the particular work-life conflicts that teachers face. The individuals' reported levels of stress were influenced by a variety of circumstances. The majority of participants shared a tremendous workload and issues with classroom discipline. Furthermore, the participants believed that stress negatively affected their interactions with colleagues as well as their classroom instruction. Stress among teachers can arise for a number of reasons and cannot be solely attributed to one problem. The results of the study provided a technique to assess how well the participants' personal coping mechanisms worked and whether the stressful circumstance merited further attention. The case study provided a tool for participants to assess their own levels of stress at work and provided a connection to constructive coping strategies. Chapter five presents the data findings, recommendations, conclusions and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the entire study, including the conclusions derived from the study's findings, recommendations to address the identified concerns and suggestions for further research.

Overview of the Study

This study sought to examine the stress and coping mechanisms of teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities at Garden City Special School. In this case study, a qualitative data analysis method was utilised. The researcher targeted all the teachers in Garden City special school. The entire population of 18 teachers was targeted for the study. Census sampling technique was used to recruit all the 18 teachers for the study. In gathering data from the teachers, the researcher used interviews to collect the data. The data was analysed thematically using reflexive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Summary of Key Findings

Based on the data gathered from the interviews, the research questions were addressed. The data collection produced themes, and each theme included sub-themes. The 18 teachers responded to stress in many ways, including mental, physical, emotional and social.

1. The study found out that student behaviours, cognitive delays of learners, work environment and large class size were the main sources of stress among teachers in the school.

2. The study found out that the teachers experienced emotional impacts such as depression and anxiety. The physical and mental reactions to stress that the participants noted were tiredness, headaches and difficulty concentrating.

3. The results showed that, Exercise, meditation and mindfulness were among the coping mechanisms used by the teachers to cope with stress. The study also revealed that ability grouping of learners, engagement of learners and motivation could also help them to cope with the stress effectively.

Conclusions

1. From on the findings, it can be concluded that student behaviours, cognitive delays of learners, work environment and large class size serve as sources of stress for teachers.

2. It can be concluded from the findings that stress has a comprehensive effect on teachers emotional, physiological, and mental health.

3. The study concluded that teachers adopt diverse coping mechanisms to deal with stress, including exercise, meditation, and mindfulness. In addition, the findings indicate that strategies such as ability grouping of learners, engagement of learners and enhancing teacher motivation support teachers in coping with stress more effectively.

Recommendations

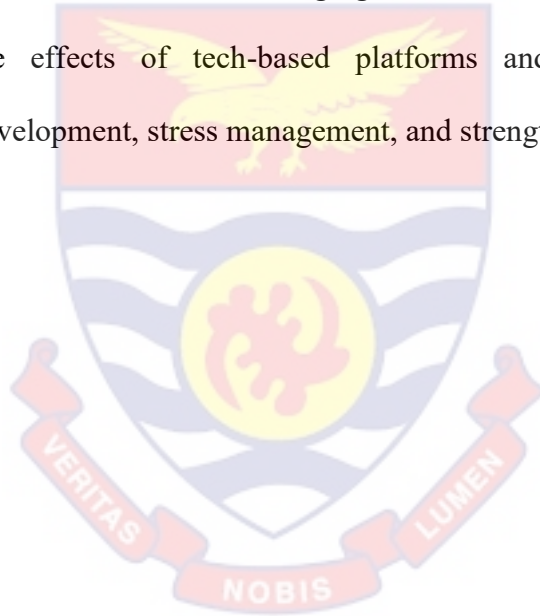
1. The Ghana Education Service (GES) should design and implement inclusive educational policies that expressly address the problems that teachers experience while working with learners with intellectual disabilities. These rules should aim to provide a helpful and constructive work environment that promotes teachers and improves their well-being.

2. The Ghana Education Service (GES), in partnership with the Division of Special Education Services, should implement targeted programs to manage stress among special education teachers. Initiatives may encompass training workshops, peer support groups and the establishment of learning communities that facilitate shared experiences and coping strategies.
3. The Ministry of Education should provide incentives and support packages specifically for special education teachers. These may include cash incentives, wellness programs, professional development opportunities, and recognition prizes to motivate teachers and help them cope with the stresses of their jobs.

Suggestion for Further Research

1. Additional schools from various districts should be included in future studies. More diverse reactions and perspectives would be made possible as a result. Simply include participants from various school districts to achieve this.
2. Future research should interview a larger sample of stakeholders. Subsequent research should include the couples and friends of teachers who work with learners with intellectual disabilities. A rolling sample could be used to achieve this. The primary participants themselves would provide a means of identifying secondary participants. The more people involved in each case, the more positive opinions are held about the coping strategies teachers use and their overall effectiveness.

3. Future researchers should conduct research on the efficacy of particular intervention programmes or support systems intended to reduce stress in special education teachers.
4. Future researchers should explore cultural and contextual factors by comparing and contrasting various educational settings or geographic areas. This will help identify differences in stressors, coping methods, and support networks available to teachers.
5. Scholars and practitioners are encouraged to examine how technology can assist teachers in managing their stress. This includes investigating the effects of tech-based platforms and tools for professional development, stress management, and strengthening support networks.



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APPENDICES**APPENDIX A****INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS**

Thank you for your participation in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to investigate stress and coping Mechanisms of teachers of learners with Intellectual Disabilities. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose other than this research and your confidentiality will be maintained. The interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Sex a) Male () b) Female ()
2. Age a) 21-30 () b) 31-40 () c) 41-50 () d) 51-60 ()
3. Highest academic qualification/Current Form
 - a) Diploma () b) First Degree ()
 - c) Postgraduate Degree () d) Others (Please specify).....
4. For how long have you been teaching in your present school?
 - a) 1-5years () b) 6-10years () c) 11-15 years ()
 - d) 16-20years () e) Above 21 ()
5. Are you a professional teacher for learners with intellectual disability?

Please specify

Yes..... No.....

SECTION B

SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG TEACHERS

1. Explain what stress means to you?
2. Do you feel stressful at school?
3. What triggers the stress when teaching learners with intellectual disabilities?
4. What do you find to be the most stressful when teaching learners with intellectual disabilities?

CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS AMONG TEACHERS

1. How does stress affect you when teaching learners with intellectual disabilities?
2. How does the working environment affect teaching and learning process of learners with intellectual disabilities?
3. Have you ever thought about doing something else other than teaching learners with intellectual disabilities?
4. Do you perceive any negative effects from stress you experience when teaching learners with intellectual disabilities?

COPING MECHANISMS OF STRESS AMONG TEACHERS

1. What do you think can be done to reduce stress when teaching learners with intellectual disabilities?
2. What strategies have you learned to use to manage stress over your years of teaching learners with intellectual disabilities?
3. How do you cope with stress at school?
4. What strategies can the school authorities put in place to help teachers to reduce stress?

APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

Telephone: 0332091697
Email: dep@ucc.edu.gh



UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE
CAPE COAST, GHANA

26th April, 2023

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

**THESIS WORK
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
MR. JOSEPH DUODU (EF/SDP/21/0006)**

We introduce to you Mr. Duodu, a Master Student from the University of Cape Coast, Department of Education and Psychology. He is pursuing Master of Philosophy Degree in Special Education.

Mr. Duodu, is researching on the topic: **"STRESS AND COPING MECHANISMS OF TEACHERS OF LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES"**

He has opted to collect or gather data at your institution/establishment for his thesis work. We would be most grateful if you could provide him the opportunity and assistance for the study. Any information provided would be treated strictly as confidential.

We would be most grateful if you could provide him the opportunity for the study. Any information provided would be treated as strictly confidential.

We sincerely appreciate your co-operation and assistance in this direction.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,



Ms. Ama Ocran
Principal Administrative Assistant
For: **HEAD**

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION LETTER

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

Tel: 0245800222/0277888877

Email: asokoremampongmunipal@ges.gov.gh

In case of reply the ref. number and date of this letter should be quoted.

Our Ref: GES/ASH/AMM/ NOP/18/V.I/68

Your Ref:



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

ASOKORE MAMPONG MUNICIPAL

P. O. BOX WE 585

ASOKORE MAMPONG

ASHANTI – GHANA

GPS: AS-024-7881

Date: 23rd August, 2023

**JOSEPH DUODU
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
CAPE COAST**

RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA

With reference to your letter dated 16th August, 2023 on the above subject matter, the Directorate deems it fit to grant you your request to collect data from our teachers for your thesis.

It is our hope your exercise will not disrupt the instructional hours of the schools.

.....
**SAMSON ANAWINE ATOGEMBERO (MR)
MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

Cc: The Headteachers, Basic Schools, Asokore Mampong
The SISOs, Asokore Mampong

APPENDIX D

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD



UNIVERSITY POST OFFICER
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref. ces/erb/eth/2023-23/51

Date: 17th July, 2023

Your Ref.....

Dear Sir/Madam,

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Chairman CES-ERB
Prof. J. O. Omotosho
jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh
0243784739

Vice Chairman, CES-ERB
Prof. K. Edjah
kedjah@ucc.edu.gh
0244742357

Secretary CES-ERB
Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
forde@ucc.edu.gh
0244786680

The bearer, Joseph Duodu
Reg. No. EF 15DP/21/0006
M.Phil./Ph.D student in the Department of Education
and Psychology in the College of Education Studies,
University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. He/She wishes to
Undertake of research study on the topic:

Stress and Coping mechanisms of teachers of
learners with intellectual disabilities: A case
study at Garden City Special School.

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies (CES) has assessed his/her proposal and confirmed that the proposal satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval to commence his/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would give him/her the necessary assistance to facilitate the conduct of the said research.

Thank You.

Yours faithfully,

Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
(Secretary, CES-ERB)

APPENDIX E**CODED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT****Teacher 1**

“Hmm! Majority of my students are hyperactive so I usually try my best to control them in class. I need to talk more than 10 minutes before students put up appropriate behaviour. This act triggers the stress in class.”

- Code: Repeated instructions; Classroom control difficulty
- Theme: Student Behaviour
- Subtheme: Hyperactivity

Teacher 3

“Hmm... Am confused and I don't know what to do again, I feel sad and frustrated. The students' behaviours are beyond control and out of hands. Here in this school, you cannot punish a student...”

- Code: Lack of disciplinary options; Emotional distress
- Theme: Student Behaviour
- Subtheme: Aggression and Bullying

Teacher 7

“I need to teach one lesson five times before learners will understand the concept. It took me three days for learners to differentiate between two primary colours (red and black).”

- Code: Repetition of lessons; Delayed comprehension
- Theme: Cognitive Delays of Learners
- Subtheme: Conceptual Understanding

Teacher 18

“The restrooms lack a custodian and have defective electrical systems... When I walk into the building, I instantly have the stomach flu.”

- Code: Poor school facilities; Physical symptoms
- Theme: Work Environment
- Subtheme: Physical Environment

Teacher 10

“The number of students in my class is too high making it difficult for some of the learners to understand concepts.”

- Code: Overcrowded classroom; Learning barriers
- Theme: Large Class Size
- Subtheme: Student to Teacher Ratio

Teacher 5

“Occasionally, my chest aches and I am aware that stress is to blame... My heart is beating rapidly.”

- Code: Chest pain; Rapid heartbeat
- Theme: Physical Effects
- Subtheme: Health Conditions

Teacher 4

“I get headaches more frequently while I'm dealing with students.”

- Code: Stress-related headaches
- Theme: Physical Effects
- Subtheme: Health Conditions

Teacher 3

“My headache problem is only a small portion of my stress issue. I feel so physically ill from the stress I experience.”

- Code: Physical illness from stress
- Theme: Physical Effects
- Subtheme: Physical Discomfort

Teacher 2

“I've held back the fact that as the day goes on, I occasionally become agitated and frustrated.”

- Code: Anger and agitation
- Theme: Emotional Effects
- Subtheme: Depression

Teacher 11

“I find it difficult to focus on just one thing at a time. Once I start a task, I find it difficult to finish it.”

- Code: Difficulty focusing and finishing tasks
- Theme: Mental Effects
- Subtheme: Cognitive Impairments

Teacher 6

“I consume my emotions... I gained so much weight this school year because I'm attempting to create a comfort zone by eating to relieve stress.”

- Code: Stress eating; Emotional coping
- Theme: Emotional Effects
- Subtheme: Mood Instability

Teacher 1

“Oh well! When I am stressed, I engage my students in physical activities on the school field. They always feel happy and I also enjoy it since it is the best way to reduce my stress.”

- Code: Exercise
- Theme: Engagement of students
- Sub-theme: Social Engagement

Teacher 7

“Well! My students enjoy practical lessons other than theoretical lessons; I engage them in every activity and they always understand concepts. Am able to manage the stress once my students understand the lesson.”

- Code: Demonstration and role play
- Theme: Engagement of students
- Subtheme: Cognitive engagement

Teacher 4

“Peer tutoring has really helped me a lot over my years of teaching and indeed am able to manage the stress.”

- Code: Peer support in class
- Theme: Engagement of Students
- Subtheme: Cognitive Engagement

Teacher 13

“When I am stressed, I practise mindfulness, I have been using these strategies and it has helped me a lot.”

- Code: Practising mindfulness
- Theme: Tranquillity

- Subtheme: Mindfulness

Teacher 15

“Whenever am stress, I usually breath in for sometimes to release stress.”

- Code: Breathing exercises
- Theme: Tranquillity
- Subtheme: Meditation

Teacher 7

“Whenever am stress I try to write poems, stories and music to motivate myself.”

- Code: Creative self-motivation
- Theme: Motivation
- Subtheme: Intrinsic Motivation

Teacher 2

“The school authorities should collaborate with other agencies to provide us with packages to motivate us.”

- Code: Call for external motivation
- Theme: Motivation
- Subtheme: Extrinsic Motivation

APPENDIX F
CODING SCHEME

Theme	Subtheme	Definition	Excerpts	Comments
Student Behaviour	Hyperactivity	Hyperactivity is a commonly used term to indicate abnormally high levels of activity, restlessness and impulsivity.	<i>Hmm! Majority of my students are hyperactive so I usually try my best to control them in class. I need to talk more than 10 minutes before students put up appropriate behaviour. This act triggers the stress in class. (Teacher 1)</i>	Disruptive behaviours of some learners lead to stress among the teachers.
	Aggression and Bullying	Unpleasant behaviours such as physical violence, verbal insults, threats, or social isolation, both directed at or demonstrated by learners with ID.	<i>Ow! I sometimes feel stressed in school because of my students' aggressive behaviours in class, I need to talk a lot before they do the right thing in class. (Teacher 4)</i>	Aggression and bullying among learners lead to stress among the teachers.
Cognitive Delays of Learners	Conceptual Understanding	Challenges in abstract reasoning and conceptual comprehension which impede a learner's ability to comprehend intricate concepts, establish connections between ideas and apply learning to unfamiliar situations	<i>I need to teach one lesson five times before learners will understand the concept. It took me three days for learners to differentiate between two primary colours (red and black). (Teacher 7)</i>	Learners have difficulties in understanding concepts, hence making the teachers more stressed.

	Problem-Solving Skills	Cognitive impairments can hinder problem-solving skills, making it difficult for learners to utilise logical thinking, analyse information and devise effective problem-solving strategies.	<i>When teaching, I usually use real objects to teach concepts but yet still learners do not understand concepts. I don't achieve my goals. (Teacher 14)</i>	Learners have difficulties in Problem-Solving, hence making the teachers more stressed.
Work Environment	Physical Environment	Inadequate resources for health and safety, poorly maintained facilities, overcrowded classrooms and uncomfortable working conditions may all contribute to the stress and discomfort of teachers.	<i>Hmm! I have experienced headaches and stomach problems far too frequently. The restrooms lack a custodian and have defective electrical systems. A teacher shouldn't have to be concerned about any of these circumstances. You are supposed to carry on teaching under these circumstances and make an adjustment. When I walk into the building, I instantly have the stomach flu. I feel overburdened since I have to switch classes. (Teacher 18)</i>	Most of the teachers' stress is associated with the work environment.
	Heavy workloads	It involves excessive planning of lessons, grading, administrative duties, and additional responsibilities outside of regular curriculum, can result in feelings of being overwhelmed and experiencing time constraints	<i>Ugh! The duration of lessons should be deducted to enable teachers and learners to rest for a while. This will enable learners to understand concepts when they are taught a bit. (Teacher 16)</i> <i>Teachers should focus more on practical things than theory because learners with intellectual disabilities corporate well with real objects other than abstracts. (Teacher 14)</i>	Most of the teachers' stress is associated with the heavy workload.

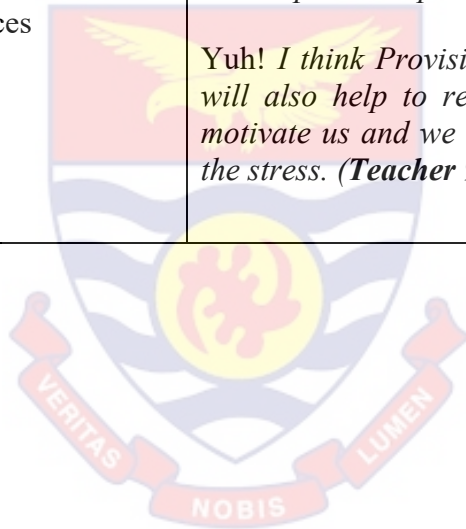
Large Class Size	Student to Teacher Ratio	It is a metric used to represent the mean number of pupils per teacher in a specific educational environment	<p><i>The number of students in my class is too high making it difficult for some of the learners to understand concepts. In fact, I need to divide the class into two groups before lesson begins. (Teacher 10)</i></p> <p><i>Ow! It hurts when I witnessed teaching this large group of students in my class. It's terrible for me in the sense that the size should be reduced to ensure maximum cooperation between teachers and students. (Teacher 12)</i></p>	Large class size accounts for teacher stress in the school.
Physical Effects	Health Conditions	The emergence or worsening of health illnesses such as stress-related disorders, cardiovascular ailments, musculoskeletal concerns (e.g., back pain, repetitive strain injuries), and impaired immune function.	<p><i>Occasionally, my chest aches and I am aware that stress is to blame. Being new, I am concerned about whether I am doing things correctly. I become anxious about how much I have to accomplish and when I need to do it. My heart is beating rapidly. Even if it is uncomfortable, I must persevere. (Teacher 5)</i></p>	Stress is associated with health conditions.
	Physical Discomfort	Physical effects might be observed as feelings of discomfort or physical strain in the body, such as headaches, muscle tension, gastrointestinal disorders, and other bodily symptoms.	<p><i>My headache problem is only a small portion of my stress issue. I feel so physically ill from the stress I experience. I experience nausea. It makes my stomach feel anxious and rumbles uncomfortably. There are times when the stress is so severe that I am unable to eat. (Teacher 3)</i></p>	Stress leads to headache

Emotional Effects	Depression	Stress that never goes away can cause depression symptoms, such as sadness, desperation, disinterest and adjustments to eating or sleeping schedules to appear or worsen	<i>Oh yea! At times, I simply behave out of anger against particular circumstances. I've held back the fact that as the day goes on, I occasionally become agitated and frustrated. Yes, I have been known to lash out at the kids when I'm frustrated. There isn't much alleviation at all. I try to act professionally, but it's challenging. (Teacher 2)</i>	Stress leads to depression
	Mood Instability	Mood swings, impatience, frustration, or an increased emotional reactivity in reaction to perceived stressors are examples of emotional impacts	<i>I consume my emotions,' I admit. When I'm stressed, I eat more unhealthy foods. You're already pushed for time as a teacher. I notice that when I'm pressed for time and only have 25 minutes to eat lunch, I eat quickly. I gained so much weight this school year because I'm attempting to create a comfort zone by eating to relieve stress. (Teacher 6)</i>	Stress leads to mood swings among teachers in the school.
Social Effects		It includes challenges such as a lack of support from coworkers or administration, poor communication, isolation, and unpleasant interactions with parents or the community.	<i>You can't always get along with everyone. You sometimes have to accept that you are wrong. However, working with people you don't get along with might create an uncomfortable situation. Being social when you don't want to, avoiding specific individuals, and attempting to "rock the boat" can be taxing because it's difficult to avoid people you have to interact with at work without generating conflict. You're unhappy and miserable at work because it's impossible. (Teacher 10)</i>	Stress leads to anti-social among the teachers in the school.

Mental Effects	Cognitive Impairments	Psychological discomfort has the potential to negatively impact cognitive abilities such as memory, focus, and judgement, making it more challenging to carry out work-related duties or make wise decisions	<i>I find it difficult to focus on just one thing at a time. Once I start a task, I find it difficult to finish it. My mental process is hampered by my lack of motivation. I lose track of what I'm doing and discover that I can't find stuff. (Teacher 11)</i>	Stress leads to cognitive impairments among the teachers in the school.
	Low Self-Esteem and Self-Worth	Negative job experiences or comments can have effect on people's self-esteem and worth, causing feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt or imposter syndrome	<i>Oh! Yes, I have thought of quitting this job whenever I find different job. (Teacher 12)</i> <i>If I get chance to travel to abroad, I will quit this job and go. This work is stressful. (Teacher 9)</i>	Stress leads to low self-esteem and self-worth among the teachers in the school.
Engagement of Students	Social Engagement	Interactions and relationships with peers, teachers and other members of the learning community help students feel connected, collaborate and supported.	<i>Oh well! When I am stressed, I engage my students in physical activities on the school field. They always feel happy and I also enjoy it since it is the best way to reduce my stress. (Teacher 1)</i> <i>Whenever I feel stressed, I play with my student under a big tree on our campus and I become satisfied. I think engaging the students a lot helps me mentally sound good. (Teacher 9)</i>	Engagement of learners in class helps teachers to manage stress.
	Cognitive Engagement	Cognitive engagement, focus on dedication to educational assignments and scholarly material, encompassing analytical reasoning, solution finding and thorough assimilation of knowledge	<i>Demonstration is the best way to engage learners in class. Students feel happy and active anytime I adopt a demonstration. I feel relaxed anytime learners are active in my class. (Teacher 3)</i>	Engagement of learners in class helps teachers to manage stress.

			<i>I allow learners to assist their peers in the class. It allows learners to understand concepts and is always active in class. Peer tutoring has really helped me a lot over my years of teaching and indeed am able to manage the stress. (Teacher 4)</i>	
Tranquillity	Mindfulness	Mindfulness has been recognised as a highly effective strategy for managing with stress. It provides individuals with techniques to handle stresses, decrease physiological arousal, and enhance emotional well-being.	<i>When I am stressed, I practise mindfulness, I have been using these strategies and it has helped me a lot. (Teacher 13)</i> <i>Over my four years in this institution, anytime I am stressed I practise relaxation. I relax for a while then go back to teaching. (Teacher 11)</i>	Teachers practise mindfulness to cope with stress
	Meditation	It is recognised as a highly efficient strategy for managing with stress. It provides individuals with abilities to handle stresses, decrease physiological arousal, and enhance mental well-being.	<i>Whenever am stress, I usually breath in for sometimes to release stress. (Teacher 15)</i>	Teachers practise meditation to cope with stress in the school.
Motivation	Intrinsic Motivation	The drive that comes from within an individual, resulting from personal interest, delight, or satisfaction obtained directly from the activity.	<i>Well! I always do exercise outside the classroom whenever I am stressed. It has really helped me over my years of teaching. (Teacher 9)</i> <i>Whenever am stress I try to write poems, stories and music to motivate myself. Motivating myself intrinsically has really helps me a lot to cope with stress. (Teacher 7)</i>	When teachers are motivated, they feel extremely happy and able to cope with stress.

	<p>Extrinsic Motivation</p>	<p>It is driven by external influences such as incentives, praise or the desire to avoid negative consequences</p>	<p><i>Mmm! The Headmistress should reward and praise us in each academic year because handling learners with ID is very tedious. This will help us to cope with the stress. (Teacher 4)</i></p> <p><i>Yuh! I think Provision of incentives to teachers will also help to reduce stress. Incentives can motivate us and we can work hard to cope with the stress. (Teacher 9)</i></p>	<p>When teachers are motivated, they feel extremely happy and able to cope with stress.</p>
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APPENDIX G

INFORM CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANTS CONSENT FORM

**STRESS AND COPING MECHANISMS OF TEACHERS OF LEARNERS
WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES
A CASE STUDY AT GARDEN CITY SPECIAL SCHOOL IN ASOKORE
MAMPONG MUNICIPAL-ASHANTI REGION OF GHANA
DETAILS OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

Joseph Duodu

Department of Education and Psychology

Faculty of Education and Psychology

Faculty of Educational Foundations

College of Education Studies

0248041301

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

1. I voluntarily agree to take part in this research study []
2. The goal and the scope of the study have been thoroughly explained to me []
3. I am aware that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time []
4. I accept that the information I supply will be treated confidentially []
5. I agree that my personal information will be kept confidential in the study report []
6. I understand that I am entitled to have access to every information I have provided []

.....

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

I believe the participant has been given the informed consent to participate in this study

.....

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

