# Daily Hassles Checklist for School Teachers

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## Abstract

Daily hassles are the small daily stressors of everyday life that can add up if they continue to occur over time. The aim of this study was to develop a checklist which would serve the purpose of measuring the daily hassles experienced by school teachers specifically. Two studies led to the development of the checklist. The study 1 dealt with the item generation process. This study describes the generation of items of the checklist only and not the validation process. Items generated were based on one focus group and five detailed semi structured interviews carried out with the secondary school teachers. Meaningful themes were derived from their discourse which resulted in a pool of 71 initial themes, which were further clustered and a final list of 24 consolidated themes was created which led to the formation of an initial daily hassles checklist of 24 items. In Study 2, the items were administered to a sample of secondary school teachers in order to determine the final structure of the checklist and for its further refinement, which led to a decrease in the total number of items depending on the frequency of responses. The final 20 items checklist was developed by the process carried out in the study 1 and 2 was then it was administered to another sample of

secondary school teachers. Development of the indigenous measure would lead to future research studies in this respect.

## Introduction

There has been a lot of development in the field of measuring daily hassles of life in general, but there are a very few measures of daily hassles of school teachers. Some ways of measuring the difficulties of the day to day difficulties of school teachers have been utilized in different studies, but there is no standard or a well-defined tool devised for this specific purpose. Vaniatha and Husain (2011) in their article titled as "Daily Hassles among school teachers" also point to the fact that the need for an authentic tool to measure daily hassles of school teachers is the need of the hour. Further empirical evidence in the area of teachers facing daily hassles was added by Nagra and Arora (2013) in their article titled as "Occupational stressors and Health among teacher educators". Antoniou, Ploumpi, and Ntalla, (2013) in their book "Occupational Stress and Professional Burnout in Teachers of Primary and Secondary Education: The Role of Coping Strategies" have high lighted the fact that school teacher burnout is the result of Occupational Stress and daily hassles. The aim of the study was to develop a measure of daily hassles for government secondary school teachers.

Lazarus (1984) defines daily hassles as ''experiences and conditions of daily living that have been appraised as salient and harmful or threatening to the person's well-being''. Kanner et al (1981) also defined hassles as annoying, frustrating day after day experiences which take place from the transactions between the individual and the environment. They need to be distinguished from significant life events, which are referred to as the environmental circumstance(s) that are characterized by identifiable beginning and ending and may have the potential for changing the present state of mental and physical well-being of an individual (Goodyer, 2001). Significant life events, e.g. the death of a family member or having a parent move out of home, typically have infrequent occurrence and have identifiable

beginnings and endings. Daily hassles, on the other hand, occur with regular frequency, and have less readily identifiable onsets and endings. Research has established daily hassles as cumulative factor and that they may affect mental health to a larger degree than major life events (Cassidy, 2000; Kanner et al., 1981; R. Williams, Zyzanski, & Wright, 1992). According to Kanner et.al (1981) there is a significant relationship between the frequency of daily hassles and psychological symptoms. According to Cassidy (2000) daily hassles have been found to have an impact on health through the damaging of social relationships, habits and patterns of activity, but also through daily hassles' affective importance for each individual person. More empirical studies data to second the same finding was provided by Davies, (2012) in his article titled "Fundamentals of occupational health hazard in organizations: An empirical study".

## Daily Hassles and Health

Diener, (2009) in his book called "The Science of well-being" and in another book by Diener, (2009)" Culture and well-being" both of these work second Wheaton's (1994) finding that daily hassles have been overlooked by previous studies as a form of stress that requires to be differentiated from chronic or acute stressors for the reason of their effects on health. Furthermore while the study of acute and chronic stress present a wide view of socially structured conditions in general, daily hassles on the other hand, capture the routine, everyday transactions with the environment that are reliant upon, and unfold within, a broader context that is shaped by socioeconomic status (Aneshensel 1992; Krieger, Williams, and Moss 1997). The heightening levels of physiological arousal endured over time or recurrent physiological spikes are the usual physiological response to the daily hassles, both of which, with the passage of time can lead to extensive wear and tear (McEwen 1998). First, potent effects of daily hassles on physical and mental health have been clearly found (Almeida and Kessler 1998; Almeida, Wethington, and Kessler 2002; Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, and Schilling 1989; Delongis, Folkman, and

Lazarus 1988; Lu 1991), and it has also been indicated through certain studies that daily hassles have the strongest effects on health states (Jandorf, Deblinger, Neale, and Stone 1986; Weinberger, Hiner, and Tierney 1987). Wheaton (1994) explained that though the magnitude of effects caused by daily hassles is attributed partially to the indirect effects from acute or chronic stressors, daily hassles have been found to exert independent and collective effects on mental and physical health. Thus, the daily hassles possible cumulative and additional toll can be large.

Okeke and Dlamini (2013) in an empirical study of stressors that impinge on teachers in secondary schools in Swaziland reported high stress levels in school teachers, the same findings in the past have been put forward by many researhers (Cox & Brockley, 1984; Cunningham, 1983; Farber, 1984; Tokar & Feitler, 1986). On the other hand, mostly the studies focused on school teachers of the urban area and only some of them have reported on stress in school teachers of the rural area (Rottier, Kelly & Tomhave, 1983). Teacher's job satisfaction can be affected due to stress. (Borg, Riding & Falzon, 1991) as well as their effectiveness with students (Blase, 1986). Mental and physical illness can be attributed to stress and which in return debilitate the teaching quality overall and the working relationship between teachers and students as well (Kyriacou, 1987). Stress has also been found to lower the teachers' level of time and energy in their job involvement (Blase, 1982, 1986). There are a numerous definitions of stress that have been presented. The phenomenon of teacher stress has been particularly defined as conditions of negative effects, such as depression and anxiety, which are the outcome of the aspects of their job and that, they are perceived as a threat to their psychological or physical health (Kyriacou, 1987; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978b). Stress is defined, according to one model of teacher stress, as a response syndrome mediated by an appraisal of threat to the teacher's self-esteem or well-being. In that model, the appraisal of threat to an individual's well-being has been proposed as the main mechanism for

mediating the experience of stress. As a consequence coping mechanisms are activated so that the personal threat can be decreased and stress-response syndrome is mediated (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978a), therefore, the experience of stress begin due to the teachers' perceptions of demands, lack of effective coping skills, inability to meet those demands resources, and the most crucial risk to their mental or physical well-being. The described model is associated to the transactional model of stress presented by Lazarus (1966) and Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

## The Transactional Model of Stress

According to the transactional model, the experience of stress is dependent on how an individual cognitively evaluates events and situations and on what is seen as the end result of an individual's transaction with the environment, one's coping abilities. An individual's coping approach is continually varying to deal with specific demands that a reappraised as exceeding the person's resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The individual does not experience any after effects of long term stress if his/ her coping ability does not exceed (Hiebert & Ferber, 1984). However, making an effort to effectively cope with stress in the work setting can be less beneficial because there may be various aspects of the work setting that cause stress and which the individual does not exercise control over (Kyriacou, 1981). The level of attentiveness generally required by teachers in meeting potentially threatening and diverse demands may offer explanation of the reason for the experience of stress being so prevalent (Kyriacou, 1987).  It was concluded by Cox and Brockley (1984) that work is found to be the principal stress source for working people, with teachers having to experience more of it because of work than non-teachers.

## Sources of Teacher Stress

The sources causing teacher stress are multidimensional. In an early study by Coates and Thorsen (1976) and later by Bevan, (2010) in his work 'The business case for employee health and

wellbeing" it was found that sources which give rise to teacher stress commonly reported include difficulties with pupils, time demanding duties, clerical works, motivating and controlling students, large number of students, dearth of supply of educational materials and financial constraints. Teachers- student relationships have been reported to be the most significant source of stress (Tellenback, Brenner & Lofgren, 1983). Numerous other studies have shown that another predictor of teacher stress is disruptive student behavior (Chang, & Davis, 2009, Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008, Borg & Riding, 1991; Borg, Riding & Falzon, 1991; Boyle et al., 1995; Byrne, 1994; Coates & Thorsen, 1976; Coldicott, 1985; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978b). However, it has also been suggested by certain other studies that the amount of stress caused by student misbehavior may be overestimated when combined with effects of other sources of stress such as poor attitudes by students, profound workload, and time difficulties (Feitler & Tokar, 1982; Hart, 1994; Hart, Wearing, & Conn, 1995; Kyriacou, 1987; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978b). Feitler and Tokar (1982) reported that as compared to the on the whole quality of student behavior, teachers rated the constant misbehavior of a few individual students as highly stressful. It was suggested by Kyriacou (1987) that irregular stressful encounters with a few problem students cause more stress than frequent stress from daily hassles. Tokar and Feitler (1986) finally proposed that student misbehavior may be regarded as more stressful when experienced in relation to an inadequate discipline policy by the school. They also contended that chief sources of stress for urban teachers were found to be poor discipline policy, insufficient salary, noisy students, and high workload, whereas for rural teachers the major sources of stress appeared to be poor discipline policy and high workload.

## Goal of the Study

The goal of the present study was to develop a valid and a reliable instrument i.e. a checklist for use with school teachers based on the approach adopted by Almeida, Wethington, and

Kessler, (2002) in their development of 'The Daily Inventory of Stressful Events: an Interview-based Approach for Measuring Daily Stressors". There is no consensus on what the term stress means? The term holds different meanings for different people and there is no generally accepted definition of the construct. The absence of a shared conceptualization has resulted in measurement strategies that lack uniformity across investigations. This problem has plagued the study of occupational stress but is particularly acute in the teacher stress research. As Pakistan has a unique culture of its own, hence we should have our own instruments created and standardized having our own norm tables. This can lead to more culturally unbiased studies in our country.

## Method
## Sample

The participants for the phase 1 of the study included 10 higher secondary school teachers (5 for focus group and 5 for interviews) and the participants for the phase 2 and 3 of the study included 30 higher secondary school teachers each from the Dar-ul- Itfal School, Lahore, Pakistan.

## Procedure
## Phase 1

To start with, the task was to review the hassles literature and previous hassles scales to generate enough items to form the basis of the instrument. After that the daily hassles experienced by the government secondary school teachers of Pakistan were explored with the help of the focus group technique and semi structured interviews. The content analysis of the focus group and interviews revealed a pool of daily hassles or stressors. Then from the obtained data, recurring and meaningful themes were derived. As a result of this exercise, a pool of 71 themes was derived out of the content analysis of the focus group and the in-depth semi structured interviews. After developing the initial theme list, the themes were synthesized to form further clusters of themes. Another list of clustered themes was generated, which were then

transformed into the initial checklist. The items were to be responded in terms of a "yes" or a "no" response.

## Phase 2

A try out study was then carried out with 30 secondary school teachers to determine the most frequently checked "yes" responses from the initial checklist. The items which were responded with "yes" by less than or equal to 20 percent of the sample were eliminated from the initial checklist. The order of the items was also modified, and the final checklist incorporated the items in ascending order with the most frequently reported hassle at the top.

## Phase 3

The 20 item daily hassles checklist developed by the above described two levels of the study was further administered to another sample of 30 secondary school teachers.

## Results

Through the process of item generation by focus group, semi structured interviews and reviewing the hassles literature, an initial checklist of a total of 24 items was developed. The development of daily hassles checklist involved research work at three levels. The level one consisted of collecting data through focus group and semi structured interviewing. The level two of the daily hassles checklist development study involved the process of item generation based on the data gathered by focus group and interview conduction. On the bases of which an initial daily hassles checklist of 24 items was developed. A try out study was conducted with a sample of secondary school teachers (N=30) in order to check which items are most frequently endorsed by the participants and to structure the items further and eliminate those items which were responded as "yes" by $\leq$ 20 % of the sample. The 20 items daily hassles checklist developed by the above described two levels of the study was further administered to another sample of 30 secondary school teachers.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of the current study was to develop an indigenous measure to assess the intensity of daily hassles faced by school teachers of our country. The topic of teacher stress has been subjected to significant research since the last two decades, reflecting the detrimental effects of stress on employees. The stressful teaching experience has been found to be highly associated with adverse effects on physical, economical, and academic terms

The condition of this predicament is worsened in a country like Pakistan, where teachers are enduring great problems related to academic, social and economic aspects of life. A number of reasons have been found that make teaching a stressful profession, especially in Pakistan including working conditions, pay structure, workload, general status, school environment etc. (Naheed, Rehman, & Shah, 2000). The teachers in Pakistan do not enjoy a very prestigious social status. Their scope for achieving recognition and professional advancement is mitigated. There is a lack of uniformity in the school system all over the country. The differences are stark, i.e. on one side there are numerous shelter less schools and on the other hand wall to wall carpeted and air conditioned classrooms. These schools are different not only at the level of physical environment but differences can also be seen at the medium of instruction, level of curriculum, examination system, teaching methods, number of students in one class etc.

The emphasis of the present study is only on secondary school teachers. Empirical studies and general observations have lead to the assumption that secondary school teachers experience more stress. Many studies have concluded that as compared to primary school teachers, secondary school teachers experience high levels of stress (Borg, Riding, & Falzon, 1991; Pervez & Hanif, 2003). In our education system, secondary classes are considered more important in a sense that after completing this phase of education, the students have to take the crucial step of making career choice. This depends on their secondary school certificate which is regarded as the cornerstone of future career. Therefore, the

teachers have to endure immense pressure as compared to primary school teachers. Pervez and Hanif (2003) and Brown and Uehara (2008) come up with the same finding that secondary school teachers underwent more stress as compared to primary school teachers. The differences were also found between government and private school teachers where government school teachers showed more stress. Secondary school teachers are dissatisfied with their jobs due to relationship with students, workload, supervisors and colleagues (Imam, 1990).

The impetus for developing a daily hassles checklist for use with school teachers was gathered by the fact that it is the need of the time to identify dimensions of this serious problem of our indigenous population, where teachers have lots of factors at their schools and jobs that are contributing to their experience of stress. Schwab (1980) suggested that the development of measures falls into three basic stages. Stage 1 is item development, or the generation of individual items. Stage 2 is scale development, or the manner in which items are combined to form scales. Stage 3 is scale evaluation, or the psychometric examination of the new measure. According to this, the focus of the present study has been on the stage 1 and stage 2 of the development of measures. The inductive approach was adopted for the item generation and selection process because it implicates an attempt without the involvement of any theory, to identify constructs and generate items from individual responses. Responses were then classified into a number of categories by content analysis based on themes or key words.

This study is a very ambitious and a bold project as this is a pioneering work in the context of school teachers' daily hassles in Pakistan. There can be certain shortcomings in this contribution, as there was no existing model or frame work present which could be followed in the Pakistan's context. The psychological and physiological problems that arise in teachers due to the adverse effects of daily hassles should be addressed with the help of appropriate intervention plans. The stressors of this group of our

population should be helped and worthwhile steps be taken to alleviate their experience of daily hassles as much as possible.

The development of an indigenous checklist to measure the daily hassles of school teachers is a significant contribution in the areas of research and education. Although the sample of this research was specifically woman secondary school teachers, yet this checklist can be used to measure the levels and sources of stress among male teachers and teachers of other categories as special education, vocational etc. This checklist may be used for individual or group purposes, research and other field purposes, as well as for making group to group and individual to group comparisons. The identification of daily stressors experienced by teachers may help to improve their mental and physical health and as a consequence, their performance and over all well- being. The daily hassles identified by using the checklist may also help the government to rectify the present conditions of the school systems, hence relieving teachers of their stressors. Furthermore on the bases of identified sources of stress, educationists may plan their policies and curriculum in a manner which could lead to eliminate the plight of our teachers.

## Notes and References

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## Daily Hassles Checklist for Use with School Teachers.

A list of daily hassles has been provided below; please check the ones you feel as being applicable to your life.

Do you face disturbance everyday in your life due to:

|  |  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Excessive electricity load shedding | ☐ | ☐ |

2.  Financial burdens   ☐ ☐

3.  Difficulty bearing expenses due to low pay   ☐ ☐

4.  Unavailability of public/ private transport   ☐ ☐
    due to fuel shortage, strikes etc.

5.  Uncomfortable classroom environment   ☐ ☐

6.  Lack of teaching facilities   ☐ ☐

7.  Shortage of teaching materials   ☐ ☐

8.  Shortage of other basic amenities of   ☐ ☐
    life e.g. water, gas etc.

9.  Scarcity of Class rooms   ☐ ☐

10. Unprofessional attitude of colleagues   ☐ ☐

11. Disobedient  students   ☐ ☐

12. Traffic   ☐ ☐

13. Rising public/ private transport fares   ☐ ☐

14. Tough schedules and duties   ☐ ☐

15. Lack of concern by the authorities   ☐ ☐

16. Unpleasant weather.   ☐ ☐

17. Prejudice and discrimination among   ☐ ☐
    colleagues

18. Environment of public/ private transport   ☐ ☐

19. Disturbing staff room atmosphere   ☐ ☐

20. Commuting   ☐ ☐