

## The Awareness of Depression Among School Teachers at Smka Al-Mashoor Perempuan, Penang Island

Manak A/L Klai, Farhana Kamarul Bahrin\*, Masarah Mohamad Yusof  
*School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia*

### Abstract

*This study aims to explore the awareness of teachers at SMKA Al-Mashoor Perempuan, Penang Island, regarding the issue of depression. Additionally, it investigates the coping strategies practiced by teachers to address depression. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 3.8% of the population is estimated to grapple with depression, encompassing 5% of adults (with a breakdown of 4% among men and 6% among women). Moreover, 5.7% of adults aged over 60 years are affected by depression. Depression is also said to have an impact on other health problems, whether chronic diseases or the increasing suicide rate in a country. Out of 22,000 depression patients treated at the psychiatric clinic in Universiti Malaya Medical Centre, 10% of them are reported to be teachers. Previous studies have indicated a lack of public knowledge about depression. Therefore, this study focuses on the knowledge of teachers regarding depression. To address the research objectives, an in-depth interview method was employed. The findings of this study were analyzed thematically. The results show that teachers are aware of the issue of depression. The coping strategies applied by teachers to address depression include social support and religious aspects. The study also suggests intervention methods to address depression, such as seeking treatment from experts and the importance of counseling sessions. The findings highlight the need for social workers in schools to address the increasing prevalence of depression among teachers, in addition to raising awareness about depression among educators.*

**Keywords:** *Coping Strategies, Depression, Mental Health, School Teacher, Social Work in School.*

### Introduction

The mental health plays a crucial role in the well-being of individuals who are employed. This is because individuals experiencing high mental burdens are prone to feelings of fatigue, leading to frequent errors in their tasks [1]. This is related to symptoms exhibited by individuals facing depression, as they quickly lose motivation, and the quality of their work diminishes. This pressure is often attributed to the demands of their respective job fields. The statistics released by the Ministry of Health Malaysia indicate that the percentage of stress varies by occupational sector in Malaysia, with the police force having the highest stress rate at

53.7%, and the teaching profession being the fourth-highest at 45.8% [2]. A rise in mental health issues among adults, increasing from 10.7% in 1996 to 29.2% in 2015, equivalent to 4.2 million individuals [3].

According to Prof. Nor Zuraida Zainal, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist at the Universiti Malaya Medical Centre, an estimated 22,000 patients received treatment at the psychiatric clinic and ward, with 10% of them being teachers [2]. This percentage is a cause for concern for the government, prompting efforts to address it. The Ministry has taken steps to promote mental health awareness in schools by enhancing the understanding of school communities through lectures, exhibitions, and

quizzes conducted as part of extracurricular activities. Mental health issues are given priority to prevent stress, anger, violence, depression, and suicide attempts. In-depth knowledge of these issues reduces depression among teachers, ultimately producing a higher quality workforce. This awareness is crucial for individuals to address problems rationally and work towards solutions. Mental health is vital for overall well-being, as it not only affects the individual but also impacts those around them. Unhealthy mental health conditions contribute to increased medical expenses, poor performance in schools or workplaces, and an elevated risk of suicide. In the majority of cases, individuals facing depression-related suicides often result from not receiving proper treatment for mental health issues. Thus, researchers believe that the burden of mental health problems will decrease if individuals with depression receive appropriate treatment and if society gains sufficient awareness of depression.

This study aims to identify the knowledge of teachers at SMKA Al-Mashoor Perempuan regarding mental health aspects, especially the issue of depression. This research is significant in the field of social work as it can uncover teachers' knowledge about the aspects of depression in their lives, which, in turn, can help treat and protect the community from depression issues. Additionally, this study is crucial because it is hoped to serve as a starting point for Malaysia to acknowledge the presence of social workers in schools. This is due to the teaching profession being one of the high-risk professions for experiencing stress. Typically, the pressure they feel is caused by excessive workloads and pressures from various sources such as management, parents, students, or changes in educational policies. Unmanageable stress can make teachers more susceptible to depression, leading to more severe health problems. By analysing the causes of depression, it can contribute academically as a reference for other researchers studying mental

health aspects, especially depression issues. This study delved into the intervention methods that social workers can take to address depression issues experienced by schoolteachers. Appropriate interventions can help understand this issue more deeply and ultimately assist teachers dealing with this problem. The researcher also believes that this study can expose information or knowledge related to depression issues to teachers. This is crucial because knowledge about depression is essential for teachers, given that they are among the professions vulnerable to stress due to heavy workloads. With this knowledge, teachers can effectively address this issue, ensuring it does not negatively impact the teaching and learning process with students in the classroom.

School teachers play a crucial role in determining the quality of the country's education, whether it is good or bad. Therefore, the determination of the quality of education in the country depends significantly on the high productivity of educators, namely teachers in schools [4]. In realizing this goal, the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia has launched the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2013-2025 in line with the National Education Philosophy. One of the shifts in the is the effort to transform the teaching profession. Similarly, the achievement of Vision 2020 aims for a human resource that is competitive, efficient, energetic, and highly productive [4]. To achieve this goal, the working conditions of teachers must be conducive and not subject to excessive challenges and pressures in the workplace. This is because excessive challenges and pressures can lead teachers to experience excessive stress, resulting in the occurrence of depression issues among them. The task of educating carried out by teachers is a challenging job both physically and mentally for the teachers themselves [5]. This is because teachers expend a considerable amount of energy in their daily lives to teach in the classroom, manage their personal lives, and fulfil their commitments to their families. This

contributes continuously to the problem of stress in teachers [5].

Depression and teachers indeed have a very close relationship. This is because depression issues can cause a decline in the productivity of teachers in their essential responsibilities. This indirectly affects the MOE's aspirations. Previous studies have also found that the excessive workload of teachers can lead to depression issues [6][7]. Excessive teacher workload can cause emotional stress, disrupting teaching and learning sessions in the classroom. Excessive stress among teachers makes them four times more likely to suffer from critical illnesses, leading to serious mental health problems [1]. Mental health is crucial because it promotes a good quality of life, happiness, and an individual's ability to face challenges, accept existing conditions openly, and have a positive attitude [9]. Researchers agree with previous studies stating that mental illnesses do not occur on their own but are caused by factors in their environment [9]. This clearly demonstrates the close relationship between the teacher's job and the issue of depression. Previous studies have also proven that the education sector is at high risk of experiencing stress [9]. Past research evidence on stress issues shows that this problem has a significant impact on the education sector and health as well.

Depression refers to a mental disorder caused by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-esteem, sleep disturbances, appetite disturbances, fatigue, and weak concentration [10]. Depression issues can occur over an extended period and have the potential to recur. This problem undoubtedly affects an individual's ability to function productively at work or school and face everyday life challenges. The impact of depression has been identified by previous studies, reporting that it will lead to failure in school, substance abuse, family conflicts, violence, and ultimately suicide [11]. This is agreed upon by the WHO, where depression issues typically expose individuals to suicide

[10]. Based on statistics, men account for 75% compared to women in suicide cases [10]. There are symptoms exhibited by individuals facing depression issues. In previous studies, 20 types of symptoms were listed, indicating that someone has depression issues. These include difficulty finding satisfaction, frequent crying, feeling tired, difficulty making decisions, lack of attention, worrying about physical health, always feeling a failure, feeling persecuted, feeling regretful, and being in a state of sadness [12]. These symptoms were also compared in a study conducted in New Delhi, which stated that a person needs to show at least five (5) of these symptoms to confirm that they have depression issues, such as a feeling of being pressed, reduced interest, significant weight loss, insomnia, fatigue or loss of energy, feeling worthless or often guilty, lack of attention, and thoughts of death [13]. However, awareness of depression issues among the community is limited. This is because the percentage of individuals affected by depression issues is increasing daily. According to previous studies, the incidence of depression issues among women compared to men is at a ratio of 2:1 [14]. In the teaching profession, previous studies have recorded the frequency of depression issues among female teachers at 43.9% compared to male teachers at only 40% [15]. Teachers aged between 20 and 49 are a group that is often exposed to depression issues.

Limited knowledge and inappropriate perceptions of mental health issues have led to negative attitudes towards mental patients [16]. Consequently, it is clear that a lack of knowledge about mental health within individuals leads to an increase in the percentage of mental health issues [17]. This is evidenced by a study conducted in Nigeria, which revealed that the Nigerian community has limited information about awareness of depression issues [16]. Facilities and experts in mental health in most countries are very limited, even though mental health issues are becoming more serious. This situation has

confirmed that awareness and knowledge of depression among teachers in Malaysia are also low. Lack of awareness of these symptoms and the causes of depression has led individuals to be unable to seek help from expert groups at the right time [18]. The education system in Malaysia often undergoes changes, indirectly making teachers the main players in achieving the nation's educational aspirations. Teachers need to be prepared to develop themselves by accepting any changes that occur.

This situation has led to teachers experiencing excessively high levels of job pressure [19]. Teacher involvement is not only focused on themselves but also on students, parents, schools, and the established education system [20]. The diversity of responsibilities imposed on this group has made teachers face very challenging, heavy, and increasingly difficult responsibilities [21]. Teachers are now burdened with administrative tasks, such as filling out forms, collecting fees, updating student data, preparing student performance reports, and so on. Teachers are said to have to manage as many as 108 types of forms related to teaching, extracurricular activities, and administrative work [19]. This situation makes teachers feel that they are forced to do work that contradicts their preferences [21]. Indirectly, this has led to emotional, physical, and psychological stress among teachers. Therefore, stress problems become a cause of depression among teachers. This is supported by previous studies stating that stress issues are often associated with mental health problems [21]. Mental health issues among teachers have affected the declining quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers should be aware of their need to understand the symptoms of depression so that this health problem can be addressed.

Moreover, the prevalence of depression among educators may also be attributed to the conduct of students within the school environment. This perspective is additionally supported by Robert M. Klassen and Ming M.

C. in their research titled "Effects on Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction: Teacher Gender, Years of Experience, and Job Stress." This is because instructing students with low motivation to learn and facing disciplinary issues proves to be a challenging task for teachers. The performance of teachers is judged based on the academic achievements of students, thereby exerting pressure on them to attain these objectives. In the classroom setting, teachers are confronted with various student behaviors, including disruptive, disrespectful, or impolite conduct, leading to complications in managing the classroom [22].

The theory of stress and coping revolves around the notion that individuals consistently evaluate stimuli in their surroundings and employ coping strategies when perceiving them as stressors (such as threats, challenges, or harmful events) [23]. Coping is an ongoing process wherein individuals continually adjust their cognitive and behavioral patterns to minimize or overcome stress originating from internal or external demands. As a result, coping is seen as a dynamic, conscious, and purposeful action that unfolds in a process-oriented manner [24][25]. Researchers exploring coping theories typically classify individuals' approaches to managing stress into problem-based and emotion-based coping [24]. Problem-based coping involves ideas, actions, and strategies aimed at eliminating or mitigating stressful events or their effects. These strategies tend to be effective when individuals believe they can take action to change their behavior or environmental conditions [24][25]. Conversely, emotion-based coping entails selectively focusing on the positive aspects of oneself and the situation, either by avoiding or reconstructing stressful situations to exert control over the emotional states associated with or triggered by stress [23][24][25]. Emotion-based coping strategies are primarily activated to manage and diminish distressing emotions linked to threatening events, especially when the stressor is perceived

as something that needs to be endured [24, 25]. The outcomes of these coping strategies lead to a reassessment of stress and offer new insights into the environment. This enables individuals to reconsider the situation, evaluating whether the coping strategy was successful in eliminating or maintaining the stress within reasonable limits [23-25].

Strategies for coping are considered a crucial avenue for addressing stress-related issues in individuals [15]. Coping strategies refer to the diverse ways individuals think and behave to confront internal and external stressors [26]. These coping strategies are employed by individuals to play their role in reducing or simplifying the relationship between existing stressors and tension [27]. Therefore, the use of coping strategies is essential in addressing the depression issues faced by teachers, as a failure to employ these strategies effectively in stressful situations can expose individuals to depression [27]. Currently, these strategies serve as an alternative therapeutic approach that social workers can use to address public health issues, especially in mental health. Individuals facing problems who fail to utilize coping strategies are more likely to experience depression [28]. This coping mechanism requires individuals to maintain positive thinking to overcome stress. Additionally, the study also involves coping strategies, such as spending time with family and friends. Respondents believe that spending time with loved ones will make them laugh and help them forget about the stressors [29]. In a past study focusing on university students, it was emphasized that social support provided by the university is crucial in helping students dealing with excessive stress. This is because adequate social support enables individuals to build more positive coping strategies when facing stress [8]. The researcher believes that the use of these coping strategies is suitable for the target groups in the study. This is because firefighters and teachers are professions known for having high work-related stress. In conclusion, the

application of coping strategies in addressing individuals' stress-related issues can reduce the risk of them facing depression.

Depression problems may vary in duration and exhibit different symptoms in each individual. It is essential to emphasize that, although there is no direct cure for depression, it can be treated [30]. When depression persists for an extended period, it indicates the need for various intervention models [31]. Family therapy, individual or group work, and medication interventions are some approaches that can be utilized. Psychotherapy, also known as talk therapy or counseling, has proven effective in assisting individuals experiencing depression. Examples of effective therapies include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Interpersonal Therapy [30]. When depression reaches a worrisome level, seeking expert help becomes crucial. This support can be provided through the school system [33]. Therefore, it is clear that individuals facing depression require comprehensive support from various sources to help them cope with daily life. Individuals experiencing depression need more than just support; they require profound attention and focus, not criticism, punishment, or indifference. Previous studies indicate that someone facing depression needs guidance from psychology experts, counselors, or social workers to overcome these challenges [31]. Therefore, as a social worker, appropriate interventions should be implemented, especially for teachers, so they can adapt to changes in the teaching profession and prevent the occurrence of depression issues.

## **Methods**

In this study, researchers have chosen to use a qualitative study design to obtain respondents' information. The purpose of selecting a qualitative approach in conducting this study was aimed at data collection. Therefore, data collection techniques through in-depth interviews were performed on teachers working at SMKA Al-Mashoor Perempuan,

Penang Island. The reference of the interview questions was directed to the respondents 'knowledge of depression. Researchers have selected study respondents based on purposive sampling technique. This is because, the sampling technique to select study respondents based on the researcher's judgment in selecting the most appropriate study sample and meet the requirements of the purpose of this study. Although the sample size for this study could not be determined at an early stage because it occurs in conjunction with continuous data analysis until saturation is reached, but overall, the researcher has managed to interview ten (10) respondents consisting of teachers. The respondents were individuals involved in the teaching and learning of classes involved with public examinations, namely PT3, SPM, and STPM. The selection of this school is based on the factor of its status of excellence in the academic field and has indirectly attracted the interest of researchers to know the commitment of teachers to their work stress. In this study, it can also be seen that researchers also use secondary data in their research process. These secondary data refer to reference sources from official websites such as ministries, academic books, research abstracts, articles, journals, as well as statistical data reports of government bodies as well as non -governmental bodies [32].

The semi-structured interview method through the in-depth interview technique is used in this qualitative research to obtain accurate data. The guidance of the existing interview questions in line with the research objectives is used in the interview process conducted in stages. It begins with the construction of rapport with the informants at the first stage and then carries out the process of digging out information in more depth on them at the next step. The Malay language was used as the medium to conduct interviews with informants, and the average time allocated for each interview was between 30 minutes to one hour. In addition, this research involves several

important tools, including audio tape recordings, interview question guidelines, and the researcher's self towards more effective data analysis. Before transcripts were produced, recordings of all interviews were played several times so that the data processed was accurate and concise. Next, the data undergoes a coding process through the use of NVIVO 8 software towards the production of key themes in line with research objectives. Finally, selecting appropriate verbatim data is important to explain the existing themes.

Regarding the issue of research ethics, the names of the informants involved in the interviews were kept confidential. They were only labelled as R1 to R10 as identification without putting the real name of the informants. Moreover, the question guide used throughout the interview process did not touch on the sensitivity of the informants. All informants were also informed that they had the right to withdraw at any time, and there was no compulsion to answer the questions posed. The consensus was reached when the informants agreed to fill in the available consent form, and this research successfully obtained full participation from all informants (10 people).

## **Results**

All the informants, namely 10 schoolteachers in SMKA Al-Mashoor in the research, were in the age range of 35 to 58 years old who came from five different states, including Penang (3), Kedah (3), Selangor (2), Kuala Lumpur (1), Terengganu (1). However, they had all migrated and settled in the state of Penang when this research was conducted. Based on their employment background, the informants have become a schoolteacher for 10 – 28 years. In addition, the academic background of all informants is bachelor's degree.

### **Awareness of the Teachers at SMKA Al-Mashoor Regarding Depression**

Teachers' feedback on this definition indicates that they have a basic understanding

of the issue of depression. This is evident from the statement of Respondent 1, who mentioned that there are a few teachers who have attended Stress Management Courses and have taken a Depression Screening Test during the course. On average, respondents are aware that depression may stem from stress issues influenced by various factors, including work-related tasks, parents, students, and other surrounding factors. Based on the data obtained from interviews with the respondents, several symptoms have been identified to indicate if someone is experiencing depression. The teacher's response to this definition shows that they have a basic knowledge of the problem of depression. This is because, according to Respondent 1, there are a few teachers who have attended the Stress Management Course and have taken the Depression Screening Test in the course. The average respondent knows that this problem of depression is caused by a problem of stress that may be influenced by various factors, whether it is from the task factor, parents, students, or other surrounding factors. However, there are a few respondents who do not know about the problem of depression. The following is one of the statements given by the informant, namely R9:

*This depression is in... in... the context of teachers, this depression happens when we look at ahhh... work for teachers, we assign any task, in terms of the success of his work. If he gives good responses, is that moody? No, if the work is 100% okay for him, he is in the performance category. Maybe that moodiness is because his personality doesn't like hanging out with people who throw things away his work time, he better focus on people who can help him. Because there are three types of people in this category, there are... autocratic, there are... democratic, and then lazzis-faire. These three also affect the work of a teacher. So, if we practice our culture of sitting in this category, I think we can overcome the things that cause depression. We just must always remind ourselves.*

## **Coping Strategies for Dealing with Depression among School Teachers**

The respondents involved in this study also disclosed their approaches to coping with job stress to prevent depression from occurring. It can be concluded that the respondents agree that having social support from those around them helps teachers cope with work pressure. The interview excerpts below illustrate this situation.

### **R2**

*For me, social support is crucial. I often share experiences and feelings with colleagues. We encourage and advise each other. This helps me get through challenging days.*

### **R4**

*I practice breathing techniques and light exercise during breaks. This helps release stress and maintain emotional balance. Additionally, talking to friends who understand the teacher's situation provides significant support.*

### **R5**

*I attended a mental fitness course organized by the school. It taught us how to manage stress and create a positive work environment. I feel more prepared to face challenges.*

### **R7**

*Family support also plays a vital role. I discuss my challenges at school with my spouse and children. They provide significant moral support and help me through difficult times.*

Through the respondents' expressions, social support, mental fitness practices, and open conversations with close ones are strategies that help them cope with work pressure and prevent depression. This provides insight into the importance of community support in protecting the mental well-being of teachers. Furthermore, there are respondents who agree that having a high religious aspect within oneself will help the group of teachers overcome the problem of

depression. The following interview excerpt illustrates this situation.

#### **R6**

*Absolutely. I believe that a strong religious aspect can be a significant source of support for teachers facing depression. Personally, my faith has been a guiding force in difficult times. It provides a sense of purpose, resilience, and the belief that challenges are temporary. It's like having a moral compass that helps me navigate through tough situations.*

### **Social Work Interventions Suggested by Informants for Teachers Experiencing Depression to Improve Their Mental Health**

These suggestions were proposed by the respondents to raise awareness of depression issues.

#### **Health Services at the Psychiatry Specialist Clinic**

The study found that only a few respondents, specifically four individuals, were aware of the treatments available at the Psychiatry Specialist Clinic for addressing depression issues. All four respondents were aware of the existence of treatments at the Psychiatry Specialist Clinic to address depression problems. The interview excerpt below can attest to this.

#### **R1**

*That's what I know about counselling sessions with treatment at the psychiatry.*

#### **R3**

*As far as I know, we have a psychiatry treatment centre. But that's the problem with our people, when you go there, they consider us crazy. It's the perception of people that makes us even more stressed.*

#### **R5**

*One thing I know is that the government has provided treatment for people with mental health problems at the psychiatry. But it seems*

*like our people, when we go to get treatment at the psychiatry, they consider us crazy already. They don't really understand what kind of treatment is provided there.*

#### **R7**

*Yes. My own child experienced depression, and I sent her to a psychiatrist for treatment.*

### **Counselling Treatment**

The findings of this study also revealed that five respondents were aware of the need for counselling guidance units to play a role in helping to address the issue of depression among teachers. The counselling unit can not only provide counselling to individuals facing stress or depression but can also serve as a medium for disseminating information related to this issue. The following is one of the statements given by the informant, namely R8:

*Another thing is counselling, that's why every department should have a counselling unit. It's important. I think they should meet with a counsellor. Like in schools, if students have problems, they are advised to meet with a counsellor. For me, counselling sessions are crucial. They need to meet and investigate.*

### **Discussion**

The results of this study found that most respondents have a basic understanding of depression. This is evident because all respondents explained that depression is caused by the stress faced by the individual. The findings of this study are consistent with research [27], stating that prolonged stress can lead to depression if not effectively managed. The study's results also align with the research, indicating that individuals facing workplace stress are more likely to experience depression compared to those without stress issues [28].

Among the stresses faced by teachers are workload pressure, pressure from parents, and pressure from superiors. This is reinforced by previous research, which listed teacher stressors as originating from parents, society,



government, organizations, superiors, and personal issues [30].

Most respondents in this study stated that the stress faced by teachers is primarily caused by the workload they must carry out. Respondents mentioned tasks beyond teaching, such as administrative work, co-curricular responsibilities, and others. This statement is in line with previous research in New Zealand, which identified teacher stress at primary and secondary schools as arising from workload, including overwhelming teacher roles [30]. This aligns with research by [2] stated that teachers hold various positions, such as advisors, union teachers, disciplinary teachers, and more. Respondents also mentioned their involvement in multiple roles within a year, like serving as the Parent-Teacher Association (PIBG) Secretary, Assistant Secretary of In-Service Training, Class Teacher, and Sports and Games Club Advisor.

Moreover, the pressure from parents on teachers is another factor contributing to stress. Besides interacting with students, teachers also must interact with both parents. Recent news often reports dissatisfaction by parents with teachers. In fact, teachers are now seen to have limitations in teaching students. Most respondents in this study have experienced pressure from parents, and some respondents have been scolded by parents for their children's academic failures. Additionally, pressure from the administration blaming teachers for failing to improve student performance contributes to stress. Respondents indicated that the administration's desire to enhance educational performance results in increased pressure on teachers. Respondents also noted that teachers are frequently questioned about creativity, innovation, and critical aspects if there is no progress in student exams. This non-conducive situation causes teachers to feel pressured, indirectly leading to teacher depression. Ultimately, teacher depression will affect daily functioning [33]. This aligns with the respondents' opinions that

individuals experiencing depression will affect the continuity of assigned tasks. This is further supported by previous research indicating a strong correlation between workload issues and depression [6]. Therefore, the respondents have knowledge about depression, with the consensus that it originates from stress issues.

Social support plays a significant role in assisting individuals experiencing depression. This is because social support acts to help and provide stimulation and attention, whether through words, actions, or material assistance from individuals who have direct or indirect relationships with the person facing depression [34]. Social support is considered an experience that is valuable, making individuals feel respected, cared for, and loved by others [35]. This form of social support is believed to help individuals reduce the stress they face [36], including advice, encouragement, assistance, and attention from individuals surrounding teachers experiencing depression. This was emphasized by respondents who, on average, had acquaintances or close individuals who had experienced depression.

The majority of respondents acknowledged the need to provide support to individuals experiencing depression, given that depression is a serious health issue that can lead to suicidal actions. Positive social support from the community can encourage individuals facing depression to take appropriate action in managing their stress. The study's findings indicate that respondents tend to seek support from trusted individuals or those who understand their situation to discuss their problems. This implies that with sufficient social support from the community, the issue of depression can be reduced, with a positive impact on suicide rates related to this problem. Although there are two forms of social support, formal and informal, in the literature, most respondents tended to associate social support with the informal form. This study opens up space for further research that may link both forms of social support to provide a deeper

understanding and possibly identify the success of the existing social support system.

Social work in schools refers to professional activities that assist individuals, groups, and communities in enhancing or improving their self-capacity to meet social needs and thus create a conducive environment to achieve these goals [37]. According to researchers, with the existence of the school social work profession in Malaysia, it indirectly fulfils the objectives of the Fourth Shift in the Malaysian Education Development Plan initiated by the Ministry of Education to transform the teaching profession into a preferred career choice. This is because the Malaysian Education Development Plan has emphasized that international studies have shown that teacher quality is the most significant school-based factor determining student success.

Collaboration with school social workers can not only help improve student functionality but also meet the needs of teachers to function effectively in the field of education. The presence of school social workers as researchers into the effectiveness of school programs and ensuring their alignment with student needs has been highlighted [37]. Respondents have also stressed the workload of teachers in implementing various programs during the school session. This can distract teachers' focus on effective teaching and learning, indirectly leading to excessive stress and resulting in depressive problems.

School social workers also act as intermediaries to connect students' families with problem-solving resources. For example, in the case of economically disadvantaged students, social workers can help connect the student's family with the Department of Social

Welfare to obtain necessary assistance. This can alleviate the workload of teachers, and competent social workers need to be prepared with counselling skills and information to assist individuals experiencing depression.

## Conclusion

Insufficient awareness of depression among teachers may expose them to more severe depressive issues. Consequently, researchers propose the implementation of social work interventions in the field of education, specifically by establishing school social workers. School social workers, serving not only as counsellors but also as educators, enablers, facilitators, or brokers, can play a crucial role. Social work interventions are essential in addressing social problems collectively, providing diverse solutions to restore the social functionality of teachers. Given that teachers are prone to depression, social workers should concentrate on this group. The suggested social work intervention has the potential to reduce depression rates among teachers, indirectly contributing to the attainment of the National Philosophy of Education's objectives.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest while producing this article.

## Acknowledgements

We thank to all who participated in this study, the teachers in SMKA AL-Mashoor, Penang Island. We also would like to extend our gratitude to the Ministry of Education, Malaysia and Department of Education, Penang Island to give permission the study to be done.

## References

[1] Mo Lee, G., Udin, A., & Aziz, M. H. A. (2012). Persepsi Guru Terhadap Kesehatan Mental Di Sekolah Menengah di Perak. *Journal of Educational*

*Psychology & Counseling Mental Health*, 7, 1–10, <http://www.ijepc.com/home.asm>.

[2] Zakaria Umami Kalsom. (2014). Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Tekanan Kerja Dalam Kalangan Guru Sekolah Menengah Daerah Hulu

- Terengganu, Terengganu Darul Iman. Disertasi Sarjana. *Universiti Utara Malaysia: Kedah*. 141, <https://etd.uum.edu.my/5102/>.
- [3] Institute for Public Health. (2015). National Health And Morbidity Survey 2015 (NHMS 2015). Ministry of Health Malaysia. (Vol. II). Kuala Lumpur: *Ministry of Health Malaysia*, <https://iku.nih.gov.my/nhms-2015>.
- [4] Sipon, S. (n.d.). Stres Kerja Guru : Punca, Kesan Dan Strategi Daya Tindak. Dalam Prosiding Seminar Profesion Perguruan. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sapora-Sipon/publication/280114629\\_Stress\\_Kerja\\_Guru\\_Punca\\_Kesan\\_dan\\_Strategi\\_Daya\\_Tindak/links/55aa daef08aea994672417e9/Stress-Kerja-Guru-Punca-Kesan-dan-Strategi-Daya-Tindak.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sapora-Sipon/publication/280114629_Stress_Kerja_Guru_Punca_Kesan_dan_Strategi_Daya_Tindak/links/55aa daef08aea994672417e9/Stress-Kerja-Guru-Punca-Kesan-dan-Strategi-Daya-Tindak.pdf).
- [5] Desouky, D., & Allam, H. (2017). Occupational Stress , Anxiety And Depression Among Egyptian Teachers. *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health*, 7(3), 191–198, <https://www.atlantipress.com/journals/jegh/125905823>.
- [6] Ahola, K., Honkonen, T., & Isometsa, E. (2005). The Relationship Between Job-Related Burnout And Depressive Disorders — Results from the Finnish Health 2000 Study. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 88(2005), 55–62, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0165032705001606>.
- [7] Iacovides, A., Fountoulakis, K. N., Kaprinis, S., & Kaprinis, G. (2003). The Relationship Between Job Stress , Burnout And Clinical Depression. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 75(2003), 209–221, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6424886/>.
- [8] Mohamad, M. S., & Ibrahim, R. (2018). Perbezaan gender tekanan psikologikal dan kesihatan mental dalam kalangan pelajar prasiswazah. *Jurnal Personalia Pelajar*, 21(1), 55–66. <http://journalarticle.ukm.my/15985/>.
- [9] World Health Organization. (2022). World Health Statistics 2021 : Monitoring Health for the SDGs. Geneva: World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/data/gho/publications/world-health-statistics>.
- [10] Beaudry, M. B., Swartz, K., Miller, L., Schweizer, B., Glazer, K., & Wilcox, H. (2019). Effectiveness of The Adolescent Depression Awareness Program (ADAP) on Depression Literacy And Mental Health Treatment. *Journal of School Health*, (3), 165–172. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0165032713003923>.
- [11] World Health Organization. (2018). World Health Statistics 2017 : Monitoring Health for the SDGs. Geneva: *World Health Organization*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565486>.
- [12] Abdullah, N. A. S., & Rosli, N. A. (2018). Kemurungan dalam Kalangan Muafaf di Pusat Pengajian PERKIM Wilayah Persekutuan. *Malaysian Online Journal of Counseling*, 5(1), 52–63. <https://ejournal.um.edu.my/index.php/MOJC/article/view/10778>.
- [13] Sidana, S., Kishore, J., Ghosh, V., Gulati, D., Jiloha, R., & Anand, T. (2012). Prevalence Of Depression In Students Of A Medical College in New Delhi: A cross-sectional study. *Australasian Medical Journal*, 5(5), 247–250. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Prevalence-of-depression-in-students-of-a-medical-A-Sidana-Kishore/9a2eeeddd5e3093f17c3e06843c75e5c3bc2611f>.
- [14] Ramli, J., Yahaya, A., Yahaya, N., & Lazin, S. Z. M. (2010). Kemurungan dalam Kalangan Penghuni Rumah Anak Yatim di daerah Kota Bharu, Kelantan. *Journal of Science & Mathematics Education*. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Kemurungan-Dalam-Kalangan-Penghuni-Rumah-Anak-Yatim-Ramli-Yahaya/c3af4cb7478a00251fe8b520c0469556cb53ed89>
- [15] Othman, Z., & Sivasubramaniam, V. (2019). Depression, Anxiety, And Stress Among Secondary School Teachers in Klang, Malaysia. *International Medical Journal*, 26(2), 71–74. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331430927\\_Depression\\_Anxiety\\_and\\_Stress\\_among\\_Secondary\\_School\\_Teachers\\_in\\_Klang\\_Malaysia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331430927_Depression_Anxiety_and_Stress_among_Secondary_School_Teachers_in_Klang_Malaysia).
- [16] Akinsulore, A., Esimai, O. A., Mapayi, B. M., & Aloba, O. O. (2018). Public Awareness and

- Attitude towards Depression: A Community Based Study Among An Adult Population In Ile-Ife South-Western Nigeria. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 54(6), 866–874. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10597-017-0222-8>.
- [17]Safari, I. N. M., Kassim, N., Iskandar, N. F., Mohamed, M. H., & Abdullah, M. Y. (2011). Tahap Pengetahuan Mengenai Kesehatan Mental Dalam Kalangan Pelajar Institut Pengajian Tinggi Awam (IPTA): kajian kes di UKM, Bangi. *Jurnal Personalia Pelajar*, 14, 37-44. <http://journalarticle.ukm.my/4511/>.
- [18]Khan, T. M. (2009). Evaluation Of Public Knowledge And Clinical Management Of Depression In The State of Penang, Malaysia. Disertasi Sarjana Sains. Universiti Sains Malaysia: Penang. 135 pp. [http://eprints.usm.my/29140/1/Evaluation\\_of\\_public\\_knowledge\\_and\\_clinical\\_management\\_of\\_depression\\_in\\_the\\_state\\_of\\_Penang%2C\\_Malaysia.pdf](http://eprints.usm.my/29140/1/Evaluation_of_public_knowledge_and_clinical_management_of_depression_in_the_state_of_Penang%2C_Malaysia.pdf).
- [19]Morris Anak Lat, & Han, C. G. K. (2018). Hubungan Antara Beban Tugas Dengan Stres Guru Kolej Vokasional di Negeri Sabah. *Jurnal Pemikir Pendidikan*, 9, 71–78. <https://sainshumanika.utm.my/index.php/sainshumanika/article/view/1174>.
- [20]Buric, I., & Macuka, I. (2017). Self-Efficacy, Emotions And Work Engagement Among Teachers : A Two Wave Cross-Lagged Analysis. *Journal of Happiness*, 19(7), 1917-1933. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10902-017-9903-9>.
- [21]Azizi Yahaya, & Jamaludin Ramli. (2010). Stres Dalam Kalangan Guru Sekolah Menengah Di Empat Buah Negeri di Malaysia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education*, 25, 103–136. [http://apjee.usm.my/APJEE\\_25\\_2010/APJEE\\_25\\_07\\_Azizi%20\(103-136\).pdf](http://apjee.usm.my/APJEE_25_2010/APJEE_25_07_Azizi%20(103-136).pdf).
- [22]Kamaruddin, K. (2007). Tekanan Kerja di Kalangan Guru Sekolah Menengah. *Jurnal Kemanusiaan*, 10, 104-118. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41804661\\_Tekanan\\_kerja\\_di\\_kalangan\\_guru\\_sekolah\\_menengah](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41804661_Tekanan_kerja_di_kalangan_guru_sekolah_menengah).
- [23]Han, S., Yoon, A., Kim, M. J., & Yoon, J.-H. (2022). What influences tourist behaviors during and after the COVID-19 pandemic? Focusing on theories of risk, coping, and resilience. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 50, 355–365. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1447677022000365>.
- [24]Lazarus R. S., Folkman S. (1984). Stress, Appraisal and Coping. New York: Springer. [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9\\_215](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_215).
- [25]Lazarus, R. S. (1993). Coping theory and research: past, present, and future. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 55(3). [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9\\_215](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_215).
- [26]Abdullah, S., Sipon, S., Baharudin, D. F., & Sawai, R. P. (2011). Strategi Daya Tindak Versi Bahasa Melayu. *PERKAMA International Counseling Convention*, 1–8. <https://oarep.usim.edu.my/jspui/handle/123456789/5856>.
- [27]Bullare@Bahari, F., Ismail, R., Madlan@Endalan, L., & Lajuma, S. (2015). Strategi Daya Tindak Remaja Sekolah Dan Hubungannya Dengan Kemurungan. *Jurnal Psikologi Malaysia*, 1(29), 21–38. <https://spaj.ukm.my/ppppm/jpm/issue/view/22>.
- [28]Votta, E., & Manion, I. G. (2003). Factors In The Psychological Adjustment Of Homeless Adolescent Males: The Role Of Coping Style. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 42(7), 778–785. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0890856709609771>.
- [29]Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017. <https://www.moe.gov.my/en/>.
- [30]World Federation for Mental Health. (2010). Depression: What you know can help you - International perspectives on depression for people living with depression and their families. USA: World Federation for Mental Health. <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/depression>.
- [31]Huberty, T. (2010). Depression: Supporting Students At School. Helping Children at Home and

- School III: Handouts for Families and Educators, 1–3. <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/school-health/mental-health-in-schools/supporting-students-with-depression-in-school/>.
- [32] Bahrin, F. K. (2018). Pembentukan Dan Keberkesanan Modul Dalam Perubahan Pengetahuan, Persepsi Dan Tingkah Laku Pelajar Sekolah Menengah Terhadap HIV/AIDS di Pulau Pinang. Tesis Doktor Falsafah. Universiti Sains Malaysia: Penang. 232 pp. <http://eprints.usm.my/43987/>.
- [33] Gani, F. A. (2019). Gejala Kemurungan : Kesedihan Biasa Atau Penyakit ? Kolumnis Awani Malaysia. <https://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/kolumnis-kelesuan-pandemik-impak-psikologi-akibat-pandemik-yang-berpanjangan-305577>.
- [34] Jalil, S. J. A. (2017). Pengaruh Program Keagamaan Dan Sokongan Sosial Terhadap Konsep Kendiri, Kebimbangan Dan Kemurungan : Kajian Dalam Kalangan Banduan Wanita Di Malaysia. PhD Tesis. Universiti Malaya: Kuala Lumpur. 307 pp. <http://studentsrepo.um.edu.my/7232/>.
- [35] Gurung, R. A. R. (2006). Health Psychology : A Cultural Approach. (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). San Francisco: Wadsworth. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10926-009-9222-z>.
- [36] Singh, P. S. J. (2015). Strategi Daya Tindak Ahli Keluarga Pengguna Dadah di Pulau Pinang. PhD Tesis. Universiti Sains Malaysia: Pulau Pinang. 454 pp. <http://eprints.usm.my/31492/>.
- [37] Aslal, N., Zakaria, E., & Wahab, H. A. (2012). Intervensi Kerja Sosial Sekolah Dalam Menangani Masalah Sosial Pelajar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, 38(1), 42-51. <http://journalarticle.ukm.my/7994/>.