

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL NETWORK AT WORKPLACE FOR NEW TEACHERS

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This study focused on 52 new teachers from 16 schools around Penang Island. Objectives of the study were to examine how new teachers coped with the event of starting work at a new place, to gain understanding of the factors that could have influenced coping process of the teachers and to learn how their new social network developed. Two interviews were conducted within the period of six months; first after five months of the teachers being posted and second, after 11 months. The first interview included measures of demographic background, 8-item open personality indices, a comprehensive measure of available support, personal reports of social network development, psychological well-being indices and physical and psychological symptom checklists. The second interview included measures of possible stressors, coping and social support related to possible stressors, personal reports of social network development, psychological well-being indices and physical and psychological symptom checklists. Results indicated that participants' psychological well-being increased significantly over the period of six months. Participants also reported work-related issues as their main stressors. A wide variety of coping mechanisms were also reported. The most important source of support for new teachers came from their own colleagues and in the forms of advice, guidance, and experience- and information-sharing. There was also a significant increase in the size of their social network over the period of six months. Findings of this study suggested that starting work was indeed a stressful time for new teachers and supportive working environment was essential in predicting a better adaptational outcome.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Throughout history, teachers are highly respected because of their role in shaping people's mind. However, the task of dealing with students and of having to pass to them various knowledge and skills are likely to be challenging. On the other hand, being a new teacher can add additional burden to the already demanding task of teaching. Yet, little is known on how the situation of being a new teacher can affect a person's psychological and physical well-being and, in turn, his or her teaching performance. A deficient teacher may not be able to help his or her students learn or worse still, may affect them in a negative manner. A stressed out teacher is likely to take out his or her frustrations on people around him or her, especially the students. Such actions are highly likely to have a negative impact on the students' well-being and academic performance. Therefore, it is important that we gain more understanding on the how the event of starting work at a new place influences teachers' psychological well-being and eventually their work performance. This study was an attempt to gain a better understanding of this issue.

Current literature on stress suggests that certain aspects of personality and social characteristics may also influence an individual's stressful experience (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1995; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Based on the literature's proposition, this study identified open personality as a concept of personality and available social support as a manifestation of social characteristics. Thus, this study also examined how a new teacher's stressful experience was influenced by the degree of open personality he or she demonstrated and the level of social support he or she received. In this paper, the two constructs of personality and social characteristics chosen for the study are discussed further in a later section.

It is pertinent to note that, despite the vast number of research that has focused on social support, studies that focused solely on how social support develops are still limited. Much of the research on social support appears to limit itself to the examination of the role of social support during stressful encounters (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Yet, in order to promote social support, it is also important to know how it develops within the natural context. A study that focuses on how new teachers

cope with the event of starting work at a new place provides an ideal opportunity to also examine how new social network can develop for these new educators. This constituted the third aim of this study.

Starting Work as Part of Transitional Stress

Getting used to teaching at a new place can be seen as part of transitional stress. In this process, new teachers are expected to learn new tasks, to become familiar with new working environment and to rely on different sets of social network, all of which can potentially lead to an increase in stress. In its more general form, transition refers to a period of social and personal dis-equilibrium that requires some adjustments out of the ordinary everyday life (Trickett & Buchanan, 1997). It can be a kind of disturbance to the current transactions one has with his or her environment. It occurs whenever a person's position in the ecological environment changes due to alteration in role, setting or both. A person undergoing transitional stress may experience disruptions to their daily lives that require them to become accustomed to a different set of person-environment transactions.

Transitional stress is also marked by adjustments to unfamiliar people, tasks and situations (Trickett & Buchanan, 1997; Jou & Fukada, 1996; Sykes & Eden, 1985; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, a person who has just changed a job may need to meet new people at his or her workplace, to adapt to new job requirements and to be in a different working environment. In this context, the main focus of this study was on how the event of starting a new job could create some transitional stress for a new teacher and in turn influence his or her psychological well-being. An attempt was also made to identify the common sources of stress that could be related to the event. In addition, a teacher's ways of coping were also examined.

Personality and Social Supports as Possible Factors that May Influence a Stressful Experience

Many stress researchers recognize the importance of a number of factors that influenced a person's stressful experience and in general these factors can be divided into intra personal and extra personal categories (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1995). Intra-personal factors are internal resources an individual might possess and be able to

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draw upon to alleviate any negative responses such as anger or depression during a time of stress or challenge. These factors may include various personality variables such as the hardy personality (Kobasa, 1979) or skills including social and problem-solving (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). All of these resources will eventually influence how a person copes with a stressful event.

Stress research that focuses on personality usually focus on one or two aspects of personality. Among these aspects are the hardy personality (Kobasa, 1979), Type A/Type B personality and locus of control (Cooper & Payne, 1990). However, there are still a wide variety of personality characteristics that have not been explored. These characteristics may be equally important in shaping a person's stress experience. Among these characteristics is what can be defined as an open personality. An open personality is marked by an easy-going attribute, a preference to be with people and a preference to share with people. It is likely that a person with the above characteristics are likely to be more adaptive in a stressful situation, particularly in a situation where one needs to make new friends such as the situation for the participants in this study.

On the other hand, extra personal resources refer to help from outside of the person. It is plausible to suggest that people with money generally cope better than people without money. Economic resources can widen a person's coping alternatives for some stressors in a way that they can provide easy access to legal, financial and medical assistance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When facing a legal problem, a wealthy person has more opportunity to get help from a good lawyer compared to a poor person. Just as economic resources can be useful during a difficult situation, so can social supports be valuable as a coping resource (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Available help from one's social network can indeed improve his or her capability in coping with stress.

Social support on the other hand has captured the attention of many social and medical scientists, primarily because of its potential role as a health promoting and a health restoring agent (Callaghan & Morrissey, 1993; Sarason, Sarason & Gurung, 1997). Whilst theorists may differ in concepts and definitions of support and health, many imply a relationship between these two constructs and recognize the notion that individuals can generally benefit from having supportive relationships

(Cobb, 1976; Cassel, 1976; House, Landis & Umberson, 1988; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1995). For example, individuals with social relationships that can potentially provide psychological and material resources, such as people with friends and family, have been associated with better health compared to those with more limited social networks (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

In this study, two factors were identified as likely to influence a participant's psychological well-being; one was an interpersonal factor labeled as the open-personality and the other was an extra personal factor in the form of social support.

Development of Social Network System

Being a new teacher, a participant in this study had likely been in the process of developing his or her network. This had provided an ideal opportunity for the study to tap into how social network might develop. On the other hand, only limited work could be found within the literature on support that had looked into this issue. As such, it had become necessary for this study to rely on a much more developed body of research of attraction and friendship theories.

According to attraction and friendship research, there are a number of factors that can influence any attraction a person might have for another. One important factor is repeated contacts. Research shows that repeated contact has been linked with the development of a friendship (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1994). Study by Whitbeck and Hoyt (1994), which focused on the effect of repeated contacts, found that the number of contacts were associated with more positive effects. In this present study, it was predicted that teachers were likely to feel more positively towards the persons they were constantly in contact with and therefore were more likely to initiate their social network with them. Examples of these people would be those sharing the teachers' common room with them or those teaching the same subjects with the participants.

Attraction also depends on similarity. In this case, findings suggest that people who shares common characteristics are more likely to be attracted to each other compared to those who do not share any similarities at all (Byrne, 1971; Klohnen & Luo, 2003). Again within the context of this study, it became possible to predict that new teachers

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were more likely to become friends with those who share some common characteristics with them such as race, gender and religion. It was possible also to predict that the new teachers were highly likely to become friends with other new teachers.

Research Questions

The discussion provides the background to the research questions for this study which were:

1. How does the state of psychological well-being for new teachers change over the period of six months?
2. What are the major stressors for new teachers?
3. What kinds of coping do new teachers use in dealing with these stressors?
4. How does open personality influence new teachers' well-being?
5. How does available support influence new teachers' psychological well-being?
6. What are the types of social support available to help new teachers deal with major stressors?
7. How does the social network of new teachers develop?
8. How do personality characteristics influence the network and network development of new teachers?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants consisted of 52 teachers who had just started working at new schools within the period of six months prior to the research being conducted. Out of the 52 teachers, two participants were Chinese, six were Indians and 44 were Malays. Also, out of the 52 participants, two were Buddhists, six were Hindus and 44 were Muslims. There were 29 single participants, 22 were married and one was divorced. The group also comprised of 17 men and 35 women. Their ages range from 27 to 37 with a mean of 27.17 and standard deviation of 2.86. Each of them had graduated with a first degree and two had obtained master's degrees.

Procedure

The participants were recruited with the assistance of the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The ministry had made available a list of new teachers who had newly been posted to schools around Penang within the period of six months before the study was carried out. From the list, 52 teachers were identified. Participants were initially contacted through their schools and headmasters. Upon agreement to participate, interviews were conducted with the participants at their respective schools during school hours. Two series of interview were carried out within the period of six months. The first series of interview took place five months after the teachers began working at their new postings and the second, 11 months after the event.

Measures

First interview

Demographic background

Information about a person's background such as age, sex, race, marital status was obtained in this section.

Life-event inventory

To provide control for the potential occurrence of external events that may exert a negative influence on psychological well-being, a 15-item life-event inventory was also included. The inventory was developed based on knowledge of the literature. Six items were listed based on the top ten items in Holmes and Rahe's social readjustment rating scale (1967). The life-event inventory was included to screen out the effects of major events that were not related to the event that formed the main focus of the study (i.e., the experience of starting work at a new place).

Open personality index

An eight-item open personality index was used. The index includes item like preference to spend time with people and preference to share with people. Participants were given a list of statements and were asked to rate their agreement.

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Current available support

In this section, participants were asked to indicate whether or not the support had been available to them from families and other sources. For each of the “families” and “other sources”, they were asked seven questions that sought to tap available emotional, esteem, network, information and tangible forms of support.

Personal report on how social network developed

This was an open-ended section where the participants were asked to identify persons they considered as friends in the school. They were also asked to identify the person closest to them and to describe how the relationship had developed.

Physical and psychological symptoms checklist

A simplified symptom check list was constructed from a longer list (McNicholas & Collis, 1996). A total of 15 items were selected from among 30 physical symptoms. In addition, 15 items were selected from 30 psychological symptoms. Subjects were given the option “never occurs” to cover the possibility that the particular symptom never occurred, either before or after the beginning of their posting in the new school. The other response options comprised a 5-point scale: much less than usual; slightly less than usual; about the same as usual; slightly more than usual; and much more than usual. These responses were scored 1 to 5. The overall symptom scores were computed as the mean of these scores, omitting items denoted “not applicable”.

Psychological well-being

Section D was a 22-item version of the Psychological General Well-Being (PGWB) index (Dupuy, 1984). PGWB index was developed to provide a measure that could be used to assess self-representations of interpersonal affective or emotional states reflecting a sense of subjective psychological well-being or distress. It has been used in a variety of situations for participants aged 14 to 90 (Dupuy, 1984). High scores would indicate high psychological well-being and low scores would indicate low psychological well-being.

Second Interview

Stressors, coping, available supports and satisfaction over available supports

In this section, stressors were presented in an 18-item measure covering a variety of possible stressors such as “dealing with your boss” and “traveling to school”. Participants were asked to indicate how much they had been disturbed by the stressors. They were also asked to indicate whether or not they could have done something about the disturbance (coping) and what strategies they had taken. They were also asked if they had anyone to help them (available social support) and whether or not such help had been helpful (satisfaction over available support).

Personal report on current state of supports network at workplace

This was an open-ended section where the participants were asked to report on the relationship they had with persons they had considered as friends.

Physical and psychological symptoms checklist

(Same as in the first interview).

Psychological well-being

(Same as in the first interview).

RESULTS

This section follows the flow of the research questions as presented in the introduction section. However, in the second interview, coping and social supports were tied together to the same group of stressors. As a result, in this analysis, the research questions on the kind of coping new teachers used and the kinds of support that were available to them will be tackled together.

How does the state of psychological well-being for new teachers change over the period of six months?

From Table 1, the psychological well-being of the teachers can be assessed by comparing their responses during the different times of interview. The means for the first and second series of interview are

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significantly different. The teachers' psychological well-being was lower during the first interview compared to the second interview.

Table 2 allows us to compare the physical and psychological symptoms reported by the participants at the different times of interview. The average number of symptoms reported decreased significantly at the second interview.

Table 1: Comparison of Mean of Psychological Well-Being

Interview	Mean Score of Psychological Well-Being	DF	P
First interview	97.18	(47,46)	P < 0.001
Second interview	104.17		

Table 2: Comparison of Mean of Psychological Well-Being

Interview	Mean Number of Symptoms Reported	DF	P
First interview	1.47	(51,47)	P < 0.001
Second interview	0.93		

In general, the teachers' psychological well-being was lower at the beginning of their postings at the new schools. However, their well-being apparently improved after 11–12 months. During the latter time, their psychological well-being seemed to increase while physical and psychological symptoms seemed to decrease.

What are the major stressors for new teachers?

From table 3, the items that correspond to the five highest means are school-related. Family and personal problems seemed to rank relatively low as major stressors for this sample. Stressors related to the relationship at work also appeared to be relatively low. More specifically, the stressors appeared to be task-oriented concentrating mainly on the task of teaching.

Table 3: Average Severity of Stress for Each Item

No.	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Having to bring problems from Home to the office	48	1.2083	0.4104
2	Having family problems that are bothering you	48	1.3333	0.5955
3	Having personal problems that are bothering you	48	1.3750	0.5696
4	Having to deal with your boss	48	1.4792	0.7987
5	Having to deal with your colleagues	48	1.5625	0.8729
6	Lacking of appreciation for your work	48	1.6250	0.8903
7	Having to bring problems from office to home	48	1.7292	1.5262
8	Facing a workplace situation that is not conducive	48	1.7708	0.8565
9	Getting pay that is not enough	48	1.8333	1.0383
10	Having to take home work from the office	48	1.9583	0.8982
11	Teaching subject you are not interested in	48	2.0833	0.9416
12	Having to come to school besides school hours	48	2.1250	1.1601
13	Having to learn to many new things	47	2.1277	0.7407
14	Lacking of guidance in dealing with new tasks	46	2.1304	0.6867
15	Having too many small matters to take care of	48	2.5625	1.0499
16	Traveling to school	48	2.5625	3.0100
17	Dealing with the students	48	2.6458	0.9563
18	Teaching subjects that students do not like	48	2.6458	0.8870

Table 4 shows the distribution of the frequencies for responses when participants were asked to identify three major sources of stress for further discussion. Similar pattern appeared and more people recognized school-related items as their major stressors compared to personal or family-related items.

Table 4: Frequency of Item Being Recognized as Three Major Stressors

No.	Items	Number of People Identified This Item as a Problem
1	Having to bring problems from home to the office	0
2	Having personal problems that are bothering you	0
3	Having to deal with your colleagues	0
4	Having to bring problems from office to home	0
5	Having family problems that are bothering you	1
6	Having to deal with your boss	1
7	Lacking of appreciation for your work	2
8	Work place situation is not conducive	3
9	Getting pay that is not enough	4
10	Having to take home work from the office	4
11	Lacking of guidance in dealing with new tasks	7
12	Teaching subject you are not interested in	10
13	Having to come to school besides school hours	10
14	Having to learn too many new things	11
15	Having too many small matters to take care of	13
16	Traveling to school	14
17	Dealing with the students	17
18	Teaching subjects that students do not like	21
Total		118

What kinds of coping do new teachers use in dealing with these stressors?

What are the types of social support available to help new teachers deal with the major stressors?

Table 5 shows a wide variety of coping mechanisms being reported by participants. The most important sources of support for new teachers came from their own colleagues and in the forms of advice, guidance, and experience- and information-sharing.

Table 5: Coping Mechanisms Used and Support Available in Dealing with Each Stressor

No.	Items	Coping Mechanisms Used and Supports Available
1.	Having family problems that are bothering you	One person indicated this problem as a main stressor and this person also indicated that he/she could not do anything about the problem and did not have anyone to help him/her.
2.	Having to deal with your boss	One person indicated this problem as one of the main stressors. This person indicated that being well-prepared when the boss comes around is his/her strategy. He/she also indicated that there was no one to help.
3.	Lacking of appreciation for your work	Two persons identified this problem as their source of stress and one person indicated that there was no support and he/she was not coping. The other person reported that he/she coped by giving some appreciation to him/herself.

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Table 5 (continued)

No.	Items	Coping Mechanisms Used and Supports Available
4.	Workplace situation is not conducive	Three persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. All of them indicated as not having any coping strategies or anyone to help them with the problems. One person was getting a transfer because of that.
5.	Getting pay that is not enough	Four persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. However, all of them indicated as having some ways to cope with this problem. Among coping strategies reported were to cut expenses, to get extra money from running tuition classes or to rely on other extra allowances. Three of them indicated as having some supports in the form of money lend by families and friends and they found these supports as helpful.
6.	Having to take home work from the office	Four persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. Only one person indicated as having no coping strategy and no support and that he/she just had to do it. The other two identified sharing experience with other teachers as helpful while one person indicated that finishing work at school as his/her coping strategy and class monitors and other students as being his/her sources of supports.

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Table 5 (continued)

No.	Items	Coping Mechanisms Used and Supports Available
7.	Lacking of guidance in dealing with new tasks	Seven persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. Most of them indicated as having some ways to deal with the situation. Among these were to get more knowledge, to increase their self-confidence and to get-help from other teachers, particularly the senior ones. Some of them indicated as having support in the form of experience-sharing from other teachers and they found these supports as helpful.
8.	Teaching subject you are not interested in	Ten persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. Most of them indicated that they had ways to deal with the problem. Most of their coping strategies were in the form of gaining knowledge about the subject either by studying on their own or by talking to others. Most supports came in the form of sharing ideas and advice. Most of them found supports as helpful.
9.	Having to come to school besides school hours	Ten persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. Most of them indicated as not having any coping response or anyone to help with. Three persons however reported some kind of coping strategies. One indicated that she could take turn with her husband; the other indicated that he/she did not mind and one person indicated that he/she took a flexible approach by coming in late, whenever possible.

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Table 5 (continued)

No.	Items	Coping Mechanisms Used and Supports Available
10.	Having to learn too many new things	Eleven persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. All of them indicated as having some kind of coping strategies. Among these strategies were studying and getting information from senior teachers. One person indicated relaxing as his/her coping strategies. As for supports, nine out of eleven persons indicated as having some supports. Most of these supports were in the form of advice and information-sharing from other teachers and friends. All of them found the supports at least somewhat helpful.
11.	Having too many small matters to take care of	Thirteen persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. From thirteen, twelve indicated that they had some coping responses. Most of these responses came in the form of being prepared, having better time management, getting advice and guidance from others and taking time to relax. Four of them indicated as not having any supports while the rest identified other teachers, students and families as their main source of supports. Supports came in the form of advice and some tangible help.
12.	Traveling to school	Fourteen persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. Most of them indicated as having some kind of coping responses and they were mostly in the form of asking for transfer. Two people indicated as getting their own car as a form of coping strategy. Two got a ride with friends and husbands but most of them indicated as not having any supports.

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Table 5 (continued)

No.	Items	Coping Mechanisms Used and Supports Available
13.	Dealing with the students	Seventeen persons indicated this problem as their main source of stress. Most of the coping strategies came in the form of referring the students to disciplinary board or by giving them demerits and punishing them. Three took the more avoidance strategies in the form of not caring or not taking it too seriously. Most of them relied on the appointed discipline teachers to help and one person indicated the principle as a useful source of supports.
14.	Teaching subjects that students do not like	Twenty-one persons indicated this problem as their main stressors. Most of the strategies came in the form of trying out other methods of teaching, getting extra information, going to the student's level and trying other relevant activities. Help came in the form of advice and experience-sharing from other teachers and most of respondents found help as helpful.

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA between Well-Being at First Interview and Personality

Source	DF	Significance	F
Between group	1,45	0.500	0.462
Personality Characteristics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low open-personality	35	96.57	13.43
High open-personality	11	99.81	15.06
Total	46	97.34	13.74

How does open personality influence new teachers' well-being?

In this part of the analysis, an 8-item perceived personality characteristics measure was used to divide samples into two groups, high open-personality characteristics and low open-personality characteristics. Those who scored 32 and above were considered as having high open-personality characteristics and those who scored 31 and below were considered as having low open-personality characteristics. From the analysis, 11 respondents were categorized as high while 39 were categorized as low. From Tables 6 and 7, ANOVA test showed that these two groups did not differ in terms of their psychological well-being at both interviews 1 and 2.

Table 7: One-Way ANOVA between Well-Being at Second Interview and Personality

Source	DF	Significance	F
Between group	1,44	0.829	0.047

Personality Characteristics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low open-personality	36	104.33	10.31
High open-personality	9	103.44	13.43
Total	45	104.15	10.84

How does available support influence new teachers' psychological well-being?

From Tables 8 and 9, correlation tests show no significant relationships between social support (from families and from other sources) and participants' level of psychological well-being. A similar result is shown with regard to social support and psychological symptoms reported.

Table 8: Correlation between Social Supports and Psychological Well-Being

Pearson Correlation	Significances (2-tailed)	N
-0.116	0.608	22

Table 9: Correlation between Social Supports and Physical and Psychological Symptoms Reported

Pearson Correlation	Significances (2-tailed)	N
0.138	0.531	23

How does the social network of new teachers develop?

Table 10 shows a comparison between the first and second sets of interview on the issue of the number of friends the participants had reported to have. It is shown that there is a significant difference between the two series of interview.

Each participant was also asked to identify one person in the new school whom he or she felt closest to. The following is a summary of the participants' responses when asked to give personal accounts on how relationships had developed between them and the persons they identified.

The questions were open-ended, so participants were not forced to fit their answers into any categories. However, from the responses as shown in Table 11, it can be concluded that for a relationship to develop, there is a need for a meeting point. Such meeting point may be the fact that a teacher had known the person before the event or that they have a common background (such as both being new teachers). It may also be created by space (such as staff room) or an activity (such as staff meeting). It is likely that without these meeting points, relationships may not have developed.

Table 10: Comparison of Average Number of Friends at First and Second Interview

	Average Number of Friends	DF	P
First interview	8	(38,39)	P < 0.001
Second interview	19		

Table 11: Categories of Meeting Points

Categories	Frequencies
Etc.	2
Knew them before (from college or school)	7
From staff room	9
Also new teachers	16
From staff meeting	18
Total	52

Table 12: List of Summaries of Who Initiate the Relationship

Categories	Frequencies
Both	9
The other person	16
Me	19
Missing	8
Total	52

From Table 12, it appears that both the new teachers and their potential friends are likely to initiate the relationship.

How do personality characteristics influence the network and network development of new teachers?

Influence of different personality characteristics over network development

Again, the participants were divided into two groups; one representing those with high open-personality characteristics and the other representing those with low open-personality characteristics.

From Table 13, when comparing between those in high and low category, those with high open-personality characteristics reported a significantly higher number of friends at both the first and second sets of interview.

Table 13: Number of Friends Reported by High and Low Open Personality Categories

Personality Category	N	Average Number of Friends at First Interview	Average Number of Friends at Second Interview
High open-personality	9	10	25
Low open-personality	35	7	18
Missing	2		

DISCUSSION

On the question about the changes to a teacher's well-being that have occurred since he or she started work at a new school, the findings of this study suggested that teachers were significantly less healthy at the beginning of their times at new work places. However, within the period of six months, respondents' psychological well-being increased and physical and psychological symptoms decreased. This pattern seems to support an earlier suggestion that the event of starting work at a new place is part of transitional stress. However, while the level of stress may decrease after a certain period, transitional stress can still be a stressful period for the teachers and it can still have some negative impacts on their psychological well-being and most likely on their work performance. Based on the analyses of the main sources of stress, teachers identified a number of work-related items. Two of the highest items were students related; one was dealing with students and the other was teaching subjects that students did not like. It is likely that students form the salient issue for the teachers and students represent a more important group of people compared to their colleagues or even bosses. New teachers also identified a variety of daily hassles like traveling to school and having too many new things to take care of as their major stressors. This is quite common for people facing transitional stress in which one of the main stressors is usually getting used to a new task or a new place (Trickett & Buchanan, 1997).

When the kinds of coping and support available for each stressor were analyzed, it can be postulated that while for most of the problems teachers usually have some kind of coping strategies, there are problems for which they do not have any coping mechanisms to use. For these

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cases, they may choose to just accept the situation. This is true for a problem like “having to come to school beyond school hours”. However, in general, teachers have some form of coping and from the research, there appears to be a degree of consensus in terms of what kind of coping to be used in which situations. The study has shown that social support for the teachers came mostly from fellow teachers, in the form of informational support.

This study however did not find any evidence of the effect of either personality or social support on an individual teacher’s psychological well-being. In general, the study did not find any significant relationships between open-personality and psychological well-being and between social supports and psychological well-being. One likely explanation is the measure that has been used in this study. It is possible that the 8-item personality index used could not tap accurately into what was termed as “open-personality” and therefore was not an appropriate predictor of psychological well-being. It is also possible that the support measure used, which focused mainly on support from families and others, was not useful in this context where stressors mostly came from school-context. What would be more useful perhaps was to focus on social support available from colleagues.

The analysis of how social network develop indicates that on average social network did improve within the period of six months. The average number of friends almost doubled from 8 to 19 persons during this period. This might also partly explain the increase in psychological well-being as reported by the respondents. There seems to be parallel improvement pattern in psychological well-being during the same period. This allows for a conclusion that the number of friends may partly be responsible for the increase in psychological well-being. When analysis was made about how people make new friends, it appeared that there were several meeting points that provide the opportunity for people to become acquainted. Among these meeting points were staff rooms and staff meetings. This leads to the suggestion that in order to promote development of a new social network, there have to be some meeting points available. These meeting points can provide a chance for repeated contact to happen which eventually will result in attraction and friendship development. Both new teachers and their potential friends are likely to make new initiative acts.

When comparing the number of friends the teachers have according to their personality, some significant differences can be seen. Those with high open-personality characteristics appeared to make more friends at both the first and second sets of interview. This seems to support an earlier suggestion that open-personality characteristics may be partially responsible for determining the number of friends people have. Therefore, it becomes possible to suggest that open-personality characteristics should be encouraged for those with limited social network. This is to ensure that they can also access the benefit of having a large and stable social network, particularly to help provide a buffer for them from potentially harmful effects of stress.

As a conclusion, transitional stress is indeed a serious matter and it can have harmful effects should preventive steps not taken. On the other hand, new teachers appear to be relatively good at coping with this event and there seems to be a lot of support available to them particularly in the form of helpful information from their co-workers. However, to encourage more of these positive social supports for new teachers, there should be more places or situations to allow the teachers to interact. Programs that aim to help new teachers to cope when posted to new schools should provide them with information and skills of how to cope with their new tasks. In addition, they should also facilitate opportunities for people to develop their own support system.

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