

THE LEVEL OF MENTAL HEALTH AMONG A SAMPLE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS IN ALGERIA

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Abstract

The mental health of teachers is so importance as it is associated with their professional performance and their ability to meet the needs of students and provide a healthy and supportive learning environment. The aim of this study was to find out the level of mental health among a sample of middle school teachers and identify differences in mental health levels between males and females. The study sample consisted of 82 teachers aged between 24 and 52 years, with a mean age of 34.63. The sample included 27 males and 55 females. A descriptive research method was utilized, and the mental health scale built by Labibah Ahmad Abu Al-Amarin (2008) was employed. The results indicated the following:

- 1- The level of mental health among the sample participants was low.
- 2- There were differences in the level of mental health between genders.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations and suggestions were proposed.

Keywords: Mental health, education, middle school teachers.

Introduction :

School is considered as one of the most important institutions of socialization after the famil , and plays a pivotal role in the formation and development of the child's personality through the environment that provides.It also provides the student with knowledge, behaviors and skills models in addition to helping him determine his inclinations and trends which will later be reflected through a constructive and active personality in his society. The teacher is considered as one of the most important elements of the educational learning process due to the roles he plays in order to stimulate classroom interaction and Promotes students behaviors. He, especially at the preparatory stage, plays a vital and influential role in the life of students. In fact, the teacher is not only the person who transfers knowledge, but also a counselor, a guide and trainer of students in various aspects of development according to the principles of mental health.

So, the teaching profession is one of the most difficult professions from the point of view that the teacher bears the burden of socialization through the upbringing and education of the younger generations, which has become a very difficult task in light of the current conditions that have been more and more difficult. The teacher also incurs lot of hardship and pressure, which increase with the diversity of his various tasks and roles.

Mental health is also one of the main pillars in building human happiness, as it greatly affects the quality of life and the ability to adapt to various challenges and pressures. Mental health is concerned with the mental, emotional and psychological state of an individual, and can be influenced by various environmental and social factors.

There are many challenges that individuals face in their daily lives, whether at work, study, personal relationships, or dealing with changes and pressures resulting from daily events and circumstances. Among the professions that are under great psychological stress, we find teaching. Teachers face multiple challenges in the educational work environment, including the psychological pressure resulting from the great responsibility they have to take care of the upbringing of students and their academic and personal development. Middle school teachers can also face challenges in dealing with teenage students, dealing with changes in teaching curricula and technology, as well as being exposed to many administrative and professional pressures.

Thus, it is obvious that the personalities of teachers with their various aspects are considered as the most important means adopted by them in the process of teaching. Teachers' behavior, beliefs, attitudes and emotions inevitably contribute in a direct or indirect way in influencing and refining the personality of pupils. Successful people in society often emphasize that their teachers are credited with their success and self-realization, and they also praise the efforts exerted by them in order to instill values and principles and enhance their selfconfidence. In the same context, Hasna Mohammed 2009 emphasizes that the construction of a healthy personality of the pupil is primarily related to the behavior of the teacher. According to her (the teacher is the main pillar of the school education , he must exert his effort and potential in achieving the constructive goal of education, as there should be a balance and harmony between the educational goals of the school and the goals of its curricula and programs and behaviors of its teachers . (Hasna Mohammed 2009 :218).

In order to guarantee a well done teaching – learning process the prevailing school climate is so important. If the uncomfortable atmosphere is dominated as a result of the presence of conflicts between the different members of the educational institution and their incompatibility, such negative climate will certainly affect the performance of the teacher. Moreover, it may even lead to mental and physical suffering if the bad conditions exceed the accepted limits.

In fact, the teacher is exposed to financial, human or organizational pressures and problems which may generated by the negative climate prevailing in the institution where he practices his work. Moreover, it can also caused by his suffering in his personal life from family, health or economic problems .These problems can negatively reflected on his mental health through a high level of anxiety, frustration and poor psychological and social compatibility, which in turn will be reflected on the level of his professional performance and his various roles.

Sri Ajlal Mohammed 2000 pointed out that many factors affect the health and well-being of the teacher in psychological, physical and social terms, which may prevent him from performing his duties fully. If the teaching profession requires a healthy body, it also needs strong and balanced mental health. Mental health means that an individual is compatible with himself, feels happy, adequate and psychologically comfortable, is able to realize his ambitions and invest his abilities, face life's requirements and psychological challenges. Moreover, his personality is integrated and balanced.

The topic of mental health of employees in general and teachers in particular has aroused the research curiosity of many researchers in order to describe the phenomenon and its relationship to many variables. In addition, they seek to find strategies and propose solutions to increase their level of mental Health.

Among the studies that touched on the subject of mental health, we mention the study of Sami Mahmoud Nawas 2002, which aimed to reveal the relationship between the school climate and mental health among secondary school students in Gaza. The study sample consisted of 576 students. The results found that the level of climate prevailing in secondary schools in Gaza governorates is average. There are no significant differences in students' perception of the school climate attributable to gender. There are no significant differences in students' perception of the school climate attributable to specialization.

For the Suli Iman study 2014, it aimed to reveal the relationship between the school climate and mental health among middle and secondary school students. The sample size was 978 pupils from Ouargla city in Algeria. The study found that the pattern of school climate prevailing in middle and secondary schools is open and that the level of mental health in middle and secondary schools is high. She also found a positive correlation between school climate and mental health.

Concerning the study of Hamza Shaa 2014, it also sought to reveal the relationship between psychological stress and mental health among teachers, based on several questions about the nature of this relationship, gender differences and years of experience. To achieve these goals, the descriptive and associative method was adopted, and the sample size was 113 teachers from some primary schools in the city of Messila. The results have shown that there is an Reversed correlation between psychological stress and mental health, and the results also found the absence of differences between the sexes as well as experience in both psychological stress and mental health.

For the study of bufateh Mohammed and bin Aoun Aisha 2017, the aim was to identify the relationship between the quality of the school environment and mental health of a sample of primary school teachers, as well as to know the differences in their assessment of the quality of the school environment and their mental health Attributed to the variables region and experience. The sample of the study consisted of 60 primary school teachers. The results concluded that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the quality of the school environment and mental health and that the level of mental health is average among primary school teachers.

However, the study of Eid Ibrahim Sheikh and Zamili Mustafa 2018, aimed to identify the level of mental health of teachers, and its relationship to their performance level while their salaries are irregular. The study sample consisted of 176 teachers, and used a questionnaire to achieve the objectives of the study consisting of 44 paragraphs, distributed over two dimensions, the most important results of the study: The psychological health and professional performance of the majority of teachers were negatively affected by salary irregularities. there is a clear correlation between the level of mental health of teachers and their professional performance level in light of their salary irregularities. the results also showed that there are statistically significant differences between the average responses of the study sample members Attributed to gender variable favor of female.

The aim of Mohammed qawareh's research 2018 was to find out the extent to which mental and physical health contribute to improving both the level of teaching performance and motivation for achievement among middle-school teachers. The comparative descriptive method was relied on, and the study sample consisted of 120 teachers. To achieve the research goals and collect data from the research sample, a set of tools was applied to measure both mental health, teaching performance and motivation for achievement. The results of the research have shown that there is a correlation

between mental and physical health, teaching performance and the level of motivation for achievement among the middle school teachers.

As far as the study of tomiyat Abdul Razzak and Zinke Ahmed 2021 is concerned, it sought to examine the nature of the relationship between mental health and sports and functional performance of physical education and sports teachers in secondary schools. The descriptive method was used, and the research sample consisted of 20 teachers of physical education and sports in the state of Massila. The researchers used a mental health scale and a job performance assessment questionnaire. The study showed the following results: physical education and sports teachers enjoy mental health, there are different levels of functional performance of the teachers in lesson planning, lesson implementation, evaluation, organization and management of the class.

While the study of Marwa mursali 2021 dealt with the topic of mental health and its relationship with the quality of life among secondary school teachers. To achieve this goal, the descriptive method was adopted, using the mental health scale prepared by Mohammed Fahmi Al-rukaibi, as well as the quality of life scale prepared by Kazim and Mansi on a sample of 80 teachers selected randomly from some high schools in Umm Al-buaki city. After collecting the data and processing them, the results were as follows: There is no relationship between the level of mental health and the level of quality of life among the sample of the study, there are no differences in the level of mental health among the teachers attributed to the variable of specialization and qualification .

In the other hand, Leigh McLean et al 2017 examined the trajectories of depressive and anxious symptoms among early-career teachers (N = 133) as they transitioned from their training programs into their first year of teaching. In addition, perceived school climate was explored as a moderator of these trajectories. Multilevel linear growth modeling revealed that depressive and anxious symptoms increased across the transition, and negative perceived school climate was related to more drastically increasing symptoms. Results suggest that this career stage may be a time when teachers are particularly vulnerable to declines in mental health, and speak to some within-school features that may be related to teachers' experiences.

The aim of Méléa Saïd et al 2022 study was to assess the mental health and vulnerability of teachers in France, using pre-covid-19 data. A comparison was made between a sample of 12,839 teachers and a sample of other employees from humanitarian professions randomly selected from a total of 32,837 employees in four health indicators. It turned out that the percentage of teachers who reported poor perceived health and depressive symptoms, but were more susceptible to professional stress compared to other employees. High school teachers were also more likely to report depressive symptoms, while they were less likely to report persistent neck/back problems when compared to elementary school teachers. In general, the study did not support the idea that the health of teachers in France was particularly at risk in the pre-pandemic period.

As the mental health of teachers has been significantly affected during the covid-19 pandemic, like many employees, the Canadian Federation of teachers conducted a mental health survey in October 2020, revealing that 69% of teachers feel anxious about their mental health. This percentage increases compared to the previous survey conducted in June 2020, where only 44% of teachers expressed concern about their mental health.

The study of Paul Ratanasiripong et al 2021 investigated factors that impacted the mental health and burnout among kindergarten, primary and secondary school teachers in Thailand and presented

a comprehensive intervention program to improve their wellbeing. This cross-sectional survey study included 267 teachers from five public schools in Thailand. The survey instruments included the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators Survey, along with data on demographics, health behaviors, finances, professional work, relationships and resilience.

Findings indicated that family economics status, relationship quality and resilience were significant predictors of depression; family economics status, classroom size and resilience significantly predicted anxiety; family economics status, gender, sleep and resilience significantly predicted stress. For teacher burnout, relationship quality and age were significant predictors of emotional exhaustion; resilience and number of teaching hours significantly predicted personal accomplishment.

Concerning Jimenez, Edward C 2021 study aimed to know the level of mental health and stress among teachers in Luzon schools in Philippine and the relationship of mental health and stress level with the development of educational resources. The study used the descriptive method and relied on an electronic questionnaire to collect data. The sample size was 205 teachers from 25 primary schools. The study found that the respondents suffered from Sleep Disorders at most once a week. They also live social well-being almost every day. They also revealed that their level of mental health was good. The regression analysis also found that mental health significantly affects the development of teaching resources.

Due to the fact that our topic concerns an active category in society that contributes to building the fate of the nation through the upbringing of future youth, this research paper tried to study the level of mental health among a sample of middle school teachers by answering the following two questions:

- What is the level of mental health of the research sample?
- Are there any statistically significant differences in the level of mental health attributable to the sex variable?

Research hypotheses: to answer the research questions we assumed the following:

- The level of mental health of the research sample is high.
- There are statistically significant differences in the level of mental health attributed to the gender variable.

The objectives of the study: the current study aims to:

- Determining the level of mental health among the members of the research sample.
- Detection of differences in the level of mental health between males and females.
- The current research also aims to expose a set of studies that delve more deeply into the factors affecting the level of mental health of teachers and strategies to contribute to support them.

The importance of the study:

This study seeks to shed light on one of the most important topics affecting the basic pillars of society, namely education. The importance of the topic lies in the investigation of the mental health of teachers which is considered the most important elements of the educational learning process as he contributes to the upbringing of human wealth and the mainstay of its future.

Concerning the applied importance of this study, its results may be a starting point for other studies seeking to find out the level of mental health and school and its relationship with other variables

affected by it. It can also help in building mentoring programs that help teachers raise their level of mental health.

2. Literature review

Definition of mental health: the World Health Organization defined mental health as the compatibility of individuals with themselves and with the outside world in general with a maximum of success, satisfaction, agreeableness, proper social behavior and ability to face the realities of life and accept them. (Ashraf Mohammed Abdul Ghani, 2001, 2).

Hamed Abdus Salam zahran 2005 defines mental health as a relatively permanent state in which an individual is psychologically compatible (personally, emotionally and socially, i.e. with himself and his environment), feels happy with himself and with others, is able to realize himself and exploit his abilities and potential to the maximum extent possible, is able to face the demands of life, his personality is integrated together, his behavior is normal, and he is well-mannered so that he lives in peace (Hamed Abdus Salam Zahran, 2005. 29).

3. Methodology:

3.1. Study Group

The study was conducted with middle school teachers teaching in 7 middle schools situated in Algiers and blida in the North of Algeria. The electronic measurement tools and sociodemographic questions were shared through social media to a total of 124 teachers. The responses from 42 teachers, who completed their forms with data missing or were randomly completed, were excluded from the analysis of the study .So, the research sample consisted of 82 teachers aged between 24 and 52 years with an average of 34.63. The number of males was 27 (32,92%) while the number of females was 55 (67,07%).

the method used in the current study is the descriptive method that suits the objectives of the research.

3.2. Instruments used in the study:

The mental health scale: the scale was developed by Ibtisam Ahmed Abu al-Omarin was in 2008 . It consists of 72 items divided into four sections

- The personal dimension consists of 30 items.
- The social dimension consists of 17 items.
- The professional dimension consists of 14 items.
- The religious dimension consists of 11 items.

In this study, the psychometric characteristics of the scale (reliability coefficients) were investigated again. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.73. This result show that the mental health scale to be a valid and reliable measurement tool. Higher scores indicate a high level of mental health.

3.2. Study results and discussion:

To process the data and verify the validity of the study hypotheses, we relied on the Social Sciences statistical package program (SPSS)

3.2.1 Results of the first hypothesis:

The first hypothesis states that:

- The level of mental health is high among the members of the research sample.

The one sample T test was used to process this hypothesis to find out the significance of the differences between the default arithmetic mean and the arithmetic mean of the sample obtained by the measurement. The results of the statistical processing are presented below

Level of significance	value T	the default arithmetic mean	SD	arithmetic mean	N
0,05	13,25	72	11.27	63	82

Table No. (1)

the results of the (T) Test for a function to compare the difference between the default arithmetic mean and the arithmetic mean of mental health scores

The previous table shows the difference between the arithmetic mean of the mental health scores and the default arithmetic mean. The value of (T) was (13,25), which is a statistically significant value at the level of 0.05. This assures us that the difference is statistically significant. And since the arithmetic mean of the scores of the sample is smaller than the default arithmetic mean, it can be said that the level of mental health among the sample members is low.

3.2.2 Discussion of the first hypothesis:

The results of the first hypothesis agreed with the findings of the study of Eid Ibrahim Suleiman and Zamili Mustafa, 2018, Abdul Azim and Abu Kuik Basem 2007 and Leigh McLean 2018. The results obtained can be explained by several factors that interacted with each other to reflect negatively on the mental health of the members of our research sample.

- The study was conducted in the third trimester of the academic year 2022-2023, specifically the end of April. The period corresponded to the period of school tests and the month of Ramadan (a month of fasting), as it was a busy and stressful period due to the teachers' preoccupation with correcting the tests and preparing for the end-of-year exams period. In fact, The teachers didn't react with the scale at first, and we had to send a link of the electronic scale on their social media groups and reminded them and thank them for their cooperation.

- It should be noted that weeks before the application of the scale, a wave of the corona virus spread, and although it was not as severe, it led, to a small extent, to spreading panic, stress and anxiety. According to the report of The World Health Organization (who) in a scientific summary the first year of the covid-19 pandemic witnessed a significant increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression in the world by 25%.

- The middle school stage corresponds to the early and middle adolescence stage. In fact adolescence is one of the most difficult life stages as it is difficult to deal with. A teenager is characterized by emotional instability and mood swings, as well as opposition and love of independence, this is what poses a great challenge in dealing with them and teaching them. Moreover, intensive school curriculum do not give the opportunity for the teachers to build friendly relationships with students based on empathy and acceptance in order to pave the way for their leadership with comfort and invest it in classroom management.

- This result is also attributed to the role that the school climate plays in the professional life of the teachers and the extent of its impact on their mental health. The teacher spends more than 20 hours a week at school performing his various duties and roles, including educational and administrative ones. Many times, he even takes the school environment at home with him to complete the rest of his correction and preparation duties and he finds himself busy finding solutions to various

problems facing him at school. The school, with its physical and Human Environment challenges, takes a significant part of the teacher's time. If it is a supportive and ensures the achievement of good interaction, it will certainly be motivating environment, it will also push him to creativity and achievement more in his tasks. But if the school climate is bad and there are frequent conflicts and quarrels between different school employees, the means and tools are not available, chaos will spread which in turn will negatively affect the self-efficacy of the teacher and the students ' performance. What made matters worse is the overcrowding classes and the lack of the appropriate working conditions.

3.2. 3 Result of the second hypothesis

In order to process the second hypothesis, the independent samples T test will be used to compare the differences between two independent groups. The results of the latter are shown in the following table:

Level of significance	value T	SD	arithmetic mean		Gender
0.05	0.88	5.32	69.77	27	Male
		5.12	56.23	55	Female

Table No. (2) shows the

results of the Test (T) to indicate the differences between the average scores Mental health of males and females

The previous table shows the results of statistical processing to determine the significance of differences between males and female in the level of mental health. The arithmetic mean for males was (69.77) with a standard deviation of (5.32), while the arithmetic mean for female was (56.23) with a standard deviation of (5.12), and the value of (T) was (0.88), which is a statistically significant value. Thus, it can be said that there are differences in the scores of mental health between males and females among the members of the research sample. Males have a higher level of mental health than females.

This result reflects what was expected in the research hypotheses. These results also support the findings of the study of the emotions of Maluki 2014 and Eid Ibrahim Sulaiman Sheikh and Zamili Ayman Mustafa mental health 2018. She also disagreed with the results of the 2014 Hamza Shaa study.

3.2.4 Discussion of the second hypothesis:

Although the level of mental health was low for all members of the research sample, females suffer more from their low mental health. This result can be attributed to the fact that the members of the research sample belong to adulthood, where sexual differentiation is evident in all aspects of development and at all levels including the emotional, mental and physical aspect. These aspects are greatly influenced by many factors such as social, economic, health, professional ... Its effects on the level of mental health of both sexes are reflected to varying degrees based on the physiological differences imposed by genetics and social differences imposed by the environment and socialization, especially in Eastern societies that pay special attention to gender differences in education. Despite the fact that our sample of teachers are exposed to the same conditions and the same professional challenges, they share the same environment and generally receive the same treatment, social customs and norms assign females the task of taking care of family burdens that

may be stressful often, especially if she is a mother and has children who are studying or infants. It was the case of 55 of the members of our research sample who are females, equivalent to more than 67,07% . The multiplicity of female tasks increases the percentage and degree of stress to which she is exposed, and therefore its repercussions may be reflected on the level of her mental health.

It is also worth noting that the study was conducted in the corona pandemic period and its waves are still hitting one after the other, which increased the anxiety and fear that inevitably led astray at the level of mental health of our research sample of females. In the same context , Melissa Corrente 2022 confirmed that many studies have found that the mental health of females was affected more by the corona pandemic compared to males . We also point out that the period of application of the study tool coincided with the second half of Ramadan, in which traditions and customs impose many rituals that burden the ladies.

Conclusion:

This study revealed the level of mental health of a group of middle school teachers to know to wick extent thier dailly duties affected them or the extent of their psychological toughness and their ability to adapt to various circumstances and satisfaction with themselves and their reality, as well as their pursuit of their goals and performance of their roles with determination and constancy.

The study found that the level of mental health is low among the members of the research sample. It revealed that there are statistically significant differences between males and females .That is to say , the teachers are influenced by the professional conditions that they live daily and affect thier mental health . Thus, we highlight once again the role that the teachers play in raising generations and preparing them to carry the torch of responsibility. Perhaps the most useful tool that the teachers use in this task is themselves with their cognitive, behavioral and emotional aspects, as they are direct model for the students. Therefore, it is worth the guardianship authorities to pay great attention to the mental health of teachers by improving the level of school climate and providing all the appropriate conditions to bring out the best of them.

So the mental health of teachers is important to ensure the effective and quality performance in their work and positive impact on students' life and society in general. If teachers have a good state of mental health, they will have a higher level of happiness and job satisfaction. Since mental health is one of the key factors for achieving personal and academic success of students, teachers contribute strongly to supporting and enhancing the mental health of their students. They are able to positively influence the psychological state of students and guide them towards educational achievement and development of their social skills. Thus, the high level of mental health of the teacher will be positively reflected on the high level of mental health of his students.

Recommendations and suggestions:

In light of the findings of the current study, we recommend the following:

- Strive to improve working conditions in schools by providing the necessary means.
- Work to improve the educational system as a whole and revise the curricula so that teachers are given more freedom and open the field for innovation.
- enhancing human relations through the enactment of laws and decisions that preserve the boundaries and dignity of various individuals active in the educational process. These relationships should be based on respect, appreciation and cooperation

- Delve deeper into the study of the mental health variable and its relationship to many variables such as emotional intelligence, social skills, emotional competencies .
- We also propose to build counseling programs that contribute to raising the level of mental health of teachers by training them on self-control strategies and mental, emotional and social skills that contribute to their professional, social and psychological adjustment.

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