

# EFL Teachers' Stress and Coping Strategies: The case of public primary schools in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia<sup>1</sup>

Estrés de los docentes de EFL y estrategias de afrontamiento: el caso de las escuelas primarias públicas en Jimma Zone, Etiopía

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<sup>1</sup> Received: October 24th, 2022 / Accepted: November 19th, 2022

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## Abstract

EFL teachers usually experience stress as a result of environmental and personal factors. However, the problem and its triggering factors appear to be overlooked in the study context. Thus, the goal of this study is to look into EFL teachers' stress, the factors that contribute to it, and the coping strategies used in public primary schools in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia. Mixed methods design, cluster sampling, and judgmental sampling techniques were used in the investigation. A total of 100 EFL teachers took part in it. Data was collected using a questionnaire and an interview, and descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data. The findings demonstrate that the majority of the teachers have experienced stress and that all of the posited factors have a substantial association with the problem. The major finding is that stress negatively affects EFL teachers' working behavior. In light of this finding, it is suggested that coping strategies training be provided. The study has pedagogical implications as it suggests that emotional intelligence and stress coping techniques be included in EFL teaching methodology courses. Finally, because the sample is too small to generalize to various situations, more research on a large scale is suggested to understand the magnitude of the problem's expansion in the region.

**Keywords:** EFL teachers, stress, factors, association, coping strategies, regression coefficient, and beta coefficient

## Resumen

Los profesores de EFL suelen experimentar estrés como resultado de factores ambientales y personales. Sin embargo, el problema y sus factores desencadenantes parecen pasarse por alto en el contexto del estudio. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este estudio es analizar el estrés de los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera, los factores que contribuyen a él y las estrategias de afrontamiento utilizadas en las escuelas primarias públicas de Jimma Zone, Etiopía. En la investigación se utilizaron técnicas de diseño de métodos mixtos, muestreo por conglomerados y muestreo por juicio. Participaron un total de 100 profesores de EFL. Los datos se recopilaron mediante un cuestionario y una entrevista, y se emplearon estadísticas descriptivas e inferenciales para analizar los datos. Los hallazgos demuestran que la mayoría de los docentes han experimentado estrés y que todos los factores planteados tienen una asociación sustancial con el problema. El principal hallazgo es que el estrés afecta negativamente el comportamiento laboral de los profesores de EFL. A la luz de este hallazgo, se sugiere que se brinde capacitación en estrategias de afrontamiento. El estudio tiene implicaciones pedagógicas, ya que sugiere que la inteligencia emocional y las técnicas de afrontamiento del estrés se incluyan en los cursos de metodología de enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera. Finalmente, debido a que la muestra es demasiado pequeña para generalizar a varias situaciones, se sugiere realizar más investigaciones a gran escala para comprender la magnitud de la expansión del problema en la región.

**Palabras clave:** Profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera, estrés, factores, asociación, estrategias de afrontamiento, coeficiente de regresión y coeficiente beta.

## Resumo:

Os professores de EFL costumam experimentar estresse como resultado de fatores ambientais e pessoais. Porém, o problema e seus fatores desencadeadores parecem passar-se por alto no contexto do estudo. Portanto, o objetivo deste estudo é analisar o estresse dos professores de inglês como língua estrangeira, os fatores que contribuem a ele e as estratégias de confrontação utilizadas nas escolas primárias públicas de Jimma Zone, Etiópia. Na pesquisa foram utilizadas técnicas de desenho de métodos mistos, amostragem por conglomerados e amostragem por julgamento. Participaram um total de 100 professores de EFL. Os dados foram recopilados por meio de um questionário e uma entrevista, e foram empregadas estatísticas descritivas e inferenciais para analisar os dados. As descobertas demonstram que a maioria dos docentes experimentaram estresse e que todos os fatores propostos têm uma associação substancial com o problema. A principal descoberta é que o estresse afeta negativamente o comportamento trabalhista dos professores de EFL. Considerando esta descoberta, sugere-se que se ofereça capacitação em estratégias de confrontação. O estudo tem implicações pedagógicas, posto que sugere que a inteligência emocional e as técnicas de confrontação do estresse são incluídas nos cursos de metodologia de ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira. Finalmente, devido a que a amostra é demasiado pequena para generalizar a várias situações, sugere-se realizar mais pesquisas a grande escala para compreender a magnitude da expansão do problema na região.

Palavras chave: Professores de inglês como língua estrangeira, estresse, fatores, associação, estratégias de confrontação, coeficiente de regressão e coeficiente beta.

## Introduction

### Background of the Study

Modern education began in Ethiopia in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Emperor Menilik II was compelled to accept modern education in the country for three major reasons. First, the Italian invasion of 1895 taught the Emperor a valuable lesson about the importance of modern education. After the war, he stated, “We need to educate people to ensure our peace and to reconstruct our country” (MoE, 1998, as cited in Zewude, 2018, p. 9). Second, following the Battle of Adwa, numerous European countries wanted to establish diplomatic relations with the country. Third, the creation of multiple government services such as telecommunications, transportation, and banking has raised the demand for educated workers. As a result, the first school, Minilik II School, was established and began teaching foreign languages like English, Arabic, and Italian (Zewude, 2018).

Since then, English has been taught at various levels. The language is taught as one of the mandatory courses and serves as a medium of instruction in the country's secondary and postsecondary education systems. This shows that the target language plays a pertinent role in the country's educational system. According to research undertaken

by ት/ሚ<sup>1</sup> (2017), there are a variety of issues in the country's EFL education system, notably at the primary school level. In the Grade 8 General Examination, the majority of the students scored below the passing mark on the subject. Many EFL teachers also expressed dissatisfaction with their students' low performance, which brought to them unhappy feelings and stress. Teachers, according to Negash (2006), play a vital role in either improving or worsening the learning process since they are mediators between the subject matter and pupils. Teachers, based on Nyamubi (2017), are the nucleus of classroom instruction and play a crucial role in learners' accomplishments because they are better at identifying and addressing learning problems than others. As a result, if the teachers do not perform properly, the students' learning outcomes will suffer. Some research, such as Wossenie (2014) and Amanu (2013), has found teachers experienced various negative emotions such as low emotional intelligence and efficacy, lack of coping skills, etc., which potentially lead EFL teachers to persistent stress. However, empirical data that documented EFL teachers' stress and their coping mechanisms are lacking in the study context, which necessitates the present study to be undertaken.

1. ( ት/ሚ ) is an Amharic (local language) abbreviation equivalent to the abbreviation MoE (Ministry of Education).

## Statement of the Problem

Teaching is a complex process that is heavily influenced by the practitioner's feelings, perceptions, and judgment. EFL teachers are often subjected to negative emotions due to learners' poor background knowledge and weak language competence (Gizaw, 2005). In line with this Benesch (2017) also noted that EFL teachers' emotion needs to be examined through a range of lenses to imply that the issue is perplexing and demands careful investigation and meticulous observation. Gu et al. (2022) further pointed out that teaching is an emotional practice that is influenced by an abrupt alteration in the teaching approach and the teaching context. These premises suggest that EFL teachers possibly undergo a range of emotions dominated by negative feelings such as stress, anxiety, anger, sadness, loneliness, etc. These premises suggest that EFL teachers possibly undergo a range of feelings ruled via poor feelings along with pressure, tension, anger, unhappiness, loneliness, and many others. Particularly, they may experience stress due to learners' culture and way of life, which differ from the target language's culture (Gizaw, 2005). This tendency, therefore, presents significant obstacles to EFL teachers, resulting in persistent stress. This, in turn, harms educational quality and student achievement. According to Agustiani (2016), the teaching and learning process is an important component of high-quality education. If education quality is debilitated, the first step is to review the teaching-learning process. The assessment needs to look at (i) students' levels of engagement in the learning process, (ii) teachers' roles in the teaching-learning process, and (iii) the learning environment. Above all, she emphasized, a teacher's responsibility is broad since he or she is the manager and/or leader of the whole learning process, which requires a lot of attention.

Various EFL teachers' problems have been researched nationwide and globally; however, the issue of stress and coping techniques seem neglected, and/or very limited attention has been given to it in the study area so far. This situation inspires the present study to be undertaken on the topic of EFL teachers' stress in their job, its triggering factors, and combating strategies in the study context. Teachers' stress is, thus, an emotional strain caused by various environmental and personal risk factors. These are variables that lead teachers to develop stress and become unproductive in their work. The problem persists if the teachers are failed to use effective coping techniques. These refer to various strategies (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) that are applied constantly to manage the problem. The present study, therefore, raised some general questions: *Do EFL teachers in public primary schools in the study context suffer from stress? What are the factors that trigger the teachers' stress in the study context? Which factors predict the problem more? These queries urged the researcher to conduct a study on stress and coping strategies used in particular reference to EFL teachers working at a public primary school in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia.*

The given problem poses a serious threat to developing countries like Ethiopia because, in these countries, resources are scarce, a high workload, large class sizes, and

a lack of incentives. Teachers may feel exploited and demotivated as a result of these circumstances, which might hinder their ability to focus on their work and tolerate the challenges they have faced. These factors also produce negative feelings such as stress, which can easily influence EFL teachers with low emotional intelligence who are unable to deal with emotional problems that arise from their daily teaching activities (Dastgoshadeh & Javanmardi, 2021). Furthermore, studies on teachers' emotions such as Shishigu (2015), Gobena (2018), and Gonzales (2010) revealed that most Ethiopian teachers were subjected to a variety of stressors due to lack of resources, low social value, etc. The project area's reality was more or less similar to that of the study settings of the above researchers. This situation may cause stress in EFL teachers, which can have a detrimental impact on their job performance, dismantle their engagement, and even lead to job burnout. However, there has not yet been a study on EFL teachers' stress.

In addition, while working in the study area, the researcher noticed that some EFL teachers displayed undesirable characteristics (e.g., carelessness, lack of passion, lack of attention, appearing late to class, etc.). These behaviors suggest that the teachers in the study context may develop negative emotions in their job because every behavior is influenced by emotion (Pettinelli, 2016). The literature review also confirmed that no research studies on the stated topic have been undertaken in the project area. Therefore, this study sets a goal to look into the level of stress experienced by EFL teachers, the variables that contribute to it, and the teachers' use of the coping mechanism. This would allow us to gain firsthand experience of EFL teachers' stress, identify triggering variables, and provide potential solutions to the problem.

As previously said, several studies (Brundage, 2007; Toropova et al., 2020) have revealed the presence of risk factors that cause EFL teachers to become stressed; nevertheless, in the context of this study, it is difficult to find a research study on the topic. As a result, the stress of EFL teachers, the factors that contribute to it, and their techniques of coping were explored in this study. This strain is not a one-time occurrence; rather, it develops over time as a result of ongoing influences resulting from a variety of environmental and personal factors (e.g., work overload, maladministration, lack of reward, lack of motivation, and perceived stress). This study, therefore, examined the level of the problem, factors that were associated with it, and coping techniques employed by focusing on EFL teachers working at public primary schools in Jimma Zone. Teachers' stress is characterized as an unpleasant working experience or negative feelings such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, and depression that arise as a result of some component of their job (Wole 2002). This stress is caused by a combination of environmental and personal variables as well as a failure to apply adequate coping strategies, which relate to a person's constantly changing cognitive, behavioral, and emotional efforts to manage external and/or internal pressures that result in stress. The study, thus, explored EFL teachers' stress and coping techniques by focusing on EFL teachers from a public primary school in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia. To achieve this, the following questions were formulated.

## Research Questions

1. To what level do EFL teachers at primary school in Jimma Zone experience stress?
2. What are the factors associated with EFL teachers' stress?
3. Which factors predict EFL teachers' stress more?
4. How often do EFL teachers apply strategies to cope with stress on their job?

## Literature Review

### Perceived Stress

According to Brundage (2007), a teacher's stress is defined as their reaction to undesirable emotions such as anger, worry, or depression. Rezik (2017) describes EFL teachers' stress as bad feelings or unhappy emotional states. EFL teachers' stress, according to him, is defined as the appearance of behavioral, emotional, mental, and physiological reactions as a result of ongoing tension in the class. Teachers' stress is divided into two categories: (1) stress sources and (2) stress responses. Sources of stress include aspects of the job content and working conditions that influence a teacher's cognition, emotions, and motivation (Toropova et al., 2020).

The situation is exacerbated by students' bad behavior, school mismanagement, and/or social attitudes towards teachers. Misconduct and a negative attitude toward studying are examples of student issues, whereas school administration challenges include a lack of facilities, workload, and a lack of concern for instructors, among others. Lack of support, scorn, and criticism are some of society's problems (Rihani& Sagar, 2015). Work overload, inadequate income, toxic work environment, job ambiguity, extracurricular activities, household duties, and other factors all lead to teacher stress (Atsbeha, 2015; Wole 2002). Brundage's (2007) perspective also backs up the preceding researchers' notions. According to him, teachers are stressed due to a lack of administrative support, inconsistent feedback, low compensation, overcrowded classrooms, and conflicts with students. As a result of these concerns, teachers' psychological well-being may be jeopardized. A teacher with diverse levels of stress will exhibit a variety of behaviors. For example, if a teacher's stress level is moderate, she or he will arrive late or miss class. The teacher's commitment is harmed when he/she is under a lot of stress for a long period. According to Brundage (2007), more than half of new teachers quit their job after seven years due to stress. This researcher added that more than two-thirds of new teachers quit their job within the first four years due to stress, which often leads to illness and drinking.

Various studies on EFL teachers' stress levels and other negative emotional states may be found all around the world. There have been studies done on the stress of Ethiopian teachers in general and EFL teachers in particular (Gobena, 2018; Atsbeha, 2015; Shishigu, 2015; Wossenie, 2014; Amanu, 2013; Haile, 1997). Amanu (2013) claims that several EFL teachers have expressed significant levels of stress as a result of unfavorable school circumstances such as poor working conditions, time constraints, inadequate pay, low social standing, and curricular demands. Atsbeha (2015) also added that negative community perceptions, excessive workloads, poor management, poor interactions, delayed pay, daily routines other than teaching, insults and occasional assaults from parents, political activity, student misconduct, and an inconvenient job are all factors that lead teachers to stress.

According to Antoniouet al. (2013), elementary school teachers are more stressed than secondary school teachers. High job demands, student misbehavior, poor working conditions, role conflict, lack of autonomy, and negative school culture are all sources of stress for EFL teachers. The three primary approaches to occupational stress in teaching are: first, educational expectations; second, physiological factors focusing on teachers' reactions to work pressure, such as frustration; and third, the interaction between job demands and teacher resources (Toropova et al., 2020). EFL teachers appear to be negatively influenced by stress and stress-related factors as a result of personal and environmental pressures. Based on Wossenie (2014), the stress in EFL teachers is caused by work overload, poor living conditions, unusual interactions with colleagues and administrative bodies, and inadequate involvement with students and parents. Amanu (2013) also indicated if the scenario that creates stress in EFL teachers persists, they are at risk of burnout and work-related health problems. Therefore, it's plausible to conclude that stress is a serious issue that most EFL teachers suffer from for personal and contextual reasons.

## Coping Strategies

Amanu (2013) described EFL teacher coping techniques as attempts made by a teacher to overcome hard situations that she or he experiences in everyday activities, citing numerous researchers. Similarly, Akbari and Egtesadi (2017) defined the notion as the employment of diverse approaches to deal with work-related difficult events or situations. As a result, coping strategies are defined as a teacher's purposeful and planned attempts or activities to deal with work-related challenges. They also identified three important EFL teachers' coping strategies: i) fleeing from the problem; ii) confronting the problem; and (iii) analyzing choices for overcoming the impediment. Furthermore, as referenced by Plana et al. (2003), Billings and Moos (1981) classified coping techniques into three: i) active-cognitive, ii) active-behavioral, and iii) avoidance. Active-cognitive strategies, according to them, refer to assessing and managing potentially stressful conditions to take preemptive action. Active-

behavioral techniques suggest that observable efforts to control stressful situations are made. Finally, avoidance tactics are denial techniques that can be adopted when confronted with a tough scenario (Plana et al., 2003).

Harvey (1999) delved into additional detail on coping mechanisms and grouped them into five categories: behavioral, emotional, professional, social, and institutional. Routine duties such as housework, participation in social events, relaxation, and consuming some alcohol are examples of behavioral techniques. Emotional tactics are employed to put people at ease when problems arise, mistakes are committed, and changes are made. Professional coping tactics include: collecting in-depth knowledge; creating self-management skills such as being well prepared; planning, organization, and self-reflection abilities; having enough sleep; and so on. Social coping skills are explored with friends and family, as well as self-socialization. Finally, human and system-related institutional coping methods are identified. Working in accordance with the institution's policies and ideals, cooperating with supervisors and school officials, and so on are examples of system-related coping mechanisms (Harvey, 1999).

## Conceptual Framework

The present study offers a conceptual framework that served as its blueprint. The model demonstrates the likely relationship among the hypothesized components, stress, and gainsay. It states that environmental factors like workload, inadequate income, low social value, and maladministration as initial risk factors that induce negative personal characteristics such as demotivation, dissatisfaction, and lack of suitable pedagogical knowledge. It also shows how all the environmental and personal factors, in one way or another, interact with each other and influence stress. The ongoing influence of these variables led to persistent stress experience that ultimately affects everyday activity and leads teachers to unfavorable results (negative gainsay). Thus, unless suitable coping strategies were established the situation resulted in frustration, carelessness, late coming, absenteeism, poor performance, etc. (Figure 1). Therefore, the possible relationship that is postulated to exist among the variables is depicted in the diagram below.

## Conceptual Framework of Factors Associated with Stress and Coping Strategies

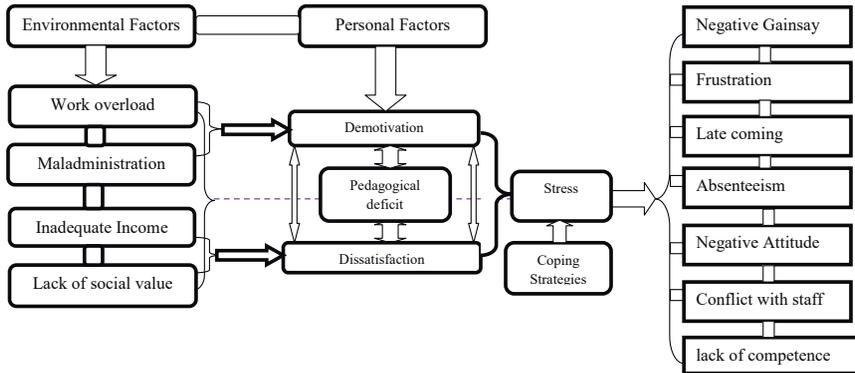


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Factors Causing EFL Teachers' Stress, Coping Strategies, and Gainsay (For this study)

## Research design and methodology

### Research design

The goal of this study, as indicated earlier, was to evaluate EFL teachers' stress and its associated factors. Hence, a survey design of the descriptive study with quantitative dominant over qualitative /QUAN $\Rightarrow$  qual/ mixed explanatory methods was utilized (Creswell, 2009). This design permitted to explain the problem, determine the relevant elements, and comprehend EFL teachers' stress, its triggering causes, and their coping techniques better. This, in turn, enables to offer a viable strategy that facilitates stress and burnout prevention. Thus, the general methodological steps followed from the sample selection stage to the analysis of the data are outlined subsequently.

### Population, sample, and sampling techniques

#### Population description

In Jimma Zone, there were only 407 English majoring teachers and a large number of language majoring (English, Afan Oromo (local language), Civics and ethical education) teachers who teach English and the other two subjects in the study

environment. The main reason to choose the study location was that the researcher had worked in the area and had prior experience with the respondents and expected them to provide meaningful data for the study. Furthermore, no investigation was carried out on the EFL teachers' stress in that context.

### **Sample description**

To select the sample for this study, two sampling techniques were utilized: cluster random sampling and judgmental sampling. The first technique was utilized to choose samples for the quantitative study; whereas, the second one was employed to select samples for a semi-structured interview. However, in this study, only English majoring teachers were involved. This was done since it was discovered impossible to ascertain which topic area (English, local language, or Civics and ethical education) teaching induced stress to teachers' job if the language majoring teachers were made participants. Therefore, a total of 100 EFL teachers were randomly selected from the indicated number. On the other hand, for the qualitative aspect of the study, a judgmental sampling technique was employed. As a result, 13 teachers were taken for further probing from each of the districts, i.e. 3 teachers from the Goma district, 3 teachers from the Limu Kossa district, 3 teachers from the Omo Nada district, and 4 teachers from the Seka Chekorsa district respectively.

### **Instruments for data collection**

As mentioned earlier, two instruments were used to collect data: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guideline, which are discussed turn by turn as follows.

## **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was utilized to collect quantitative data. The scale is a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that consists of 69 items in eight subscales, namely perceived stress scale (10) items; lack of motivation (9); work overload (8), maladministration (8), low salary, and other benefits (8); low social value (6), job dissatisfaction (10), lack of proper pedagogical content methodology (10), coping strategies (15), which were adopted from various literature (Agegnehu, 2014; Cohen, 1994; Getachew, 2007; Gezimu, 2013; Jima, 2018).

The tool was piloted with 33 EFL teachers to test its feasibility in the study context. As a consequence, items' reliability testing, the correlation between items, and the overall correlation among items were determined through the measurement of the coefficient of alpha after the pilot test was done. The following coefficients of alpha were also obtained from the test: 0.3 and above for a single item and 0.80 for the entire items in the scale established to measure stress and its associated factors. These results

suggested that the overall items on the scale were dependable to employ for the main study. In the process, the items with weak alpha coefficients of subscales to measure characteristics linked with stress were deleted and only the items with good alpha levels were retained for the main study. According to Cohen et al. (2007) and Hinton et al. (2004), coefficient alpha is assessed at 0.3 and above for a single item and 0.7 and above for total items correlation. The coefficient alpha obtained met the required standards and made the subscales suitable to be used for the main investigation. Finally, the questionnaire was provided to 100 participants in one-to-one contact; however, only 93 of them filed and returned the copies, which made the response rate as high as 93 % with a 7% refusal rate.

### **Semi-structured interview guideline**

This instrument was designed in line with the purpose of the study, basic questions raised in the statement of the problem, and a review of the literature. It was applied to collect qualitative data directly from the participants that helped to learn their real experience of the problem and to corroborate the quantitative finding. Thus, the participants were probed about their stress and its associated factors, whereupon their responses were audio-taped and transcribed manually.

### **Procedures of data collection**

The data collection process was carried out using the aforementioned two instruments. Before collecting the data, participants' consent to be involved in the study was obtained orally. This was done because of participants' limited language proficiency, which is assumed to place a barrier to completing the written consent form and showing a willingness to fully participate in the study process. In the process, first, they were informed about the purpose of the study clearly, which is purely academic and it does not harm anyone before the survey questionnaires were administered. This was done to help them make an informed decision about their participation in the study process. During the interview, each of the selected participants was informed again that there is no right or wrong answer in his/her response (whatever responses the participant offered were equally relevant to the study) so that each interviewee was requested to reflect freely on his/her real experience and perception of the issue under investigation. Besides, each interviewee was told that his/her response was kept confidential, and in case he/she found the interview uncomfortable for him/her, he/she could withdraw from the process at any time. Also, each participant was informed that during report writing, only his/her idea was taken and a pseudo-name was assigned to the owner of the idea. Finally, a promise to share the findings of the study with the participants was given. Thus, these made them involved in the study process willingly.

## Data analysis and interpretation techniques

Two types of data analysis techniques (quantitative and qualitative) were used. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (e.g., percentage, mean) and inferential statistics (e.g., Regression and Beta coefficients of multiple regression analysis) with the help of SPSS software version 20. On the other hand, the qualitative data were analyzed and interpreted thematically. The analysis employed the steps of arranging, coding, organizing, and reading the data vigilantly to identify occurring themes and sub-themes. After that, interpretation was given of the meaning of the verbal descriptions, which were summarized and synthesized in relation to the themes that the participants conveyed. It was then presented in narrative form.

## Results

### Quantitative result

#### Perceived stress

Persistent stress is viewed as a major problem that may lead teachers to psychological problems. A teacher's stress, as mentioned earlier, is considered as an unpleasant working experience or negative emotion such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, or despair, stemming from some component of the work (workload, pupils' ill-behavior, maladministration, lack of motivation, etc.). It is an emotional, mental, and physical reaction to numerous stressors prevalent in the educational environment (Rezik 2017; Mahmoudi, & Özkanb, 2016). To examine this problem, the study posed a question:

- To what level do EFL teachers at primary schools in Jimma Zone experience stress?

For this purpose, a 10 items standard scale was adopted and applied. The data obtained were analyzed, interpreted, and demonstrated in Figure 2. The result obtained shows that the majority of the studied teachers 52 (55.5 %) experience stress fairly often. The other 23 (25.00 %) almost never experience the problem. The rest 18 (19.5%) of the participants occasionally feel stress.

### Factors Associated with Stress

The posited factors (lack of motivation, work overload, maladministration, low salary and lack of other benefits, lack of social value; lack of satisfaction, and lack of appropriate pedagogical knowledge) were believed to form a causal relationship and predict stress in the study context. The findings of the study's quantitative component

revealed that these factors were significantly linked to stress. It was also discovered that some of these variables are more effective at predicting the problem than others (see Table 1). The qualitative part of the study also backs up the results achieved from the quantitative aspect of the study. Accordingly, the findings of the quantitative analysis are used to answer the following questions:

- What are the factors associated with EFL teachers' stress?
- Which factors predict EFL teachers' stress more?

As shown in Figure 2, the results obtained from the descriptive statistics showed that the majority (52.72 %) of the participants experienced a lack of motivation; 56.62 % of them underwent a high workload; 52.64 % of the teachers experienced maladministration in their respective schools, etc. The results achieved on all the posited factors are displayed in the figure below.

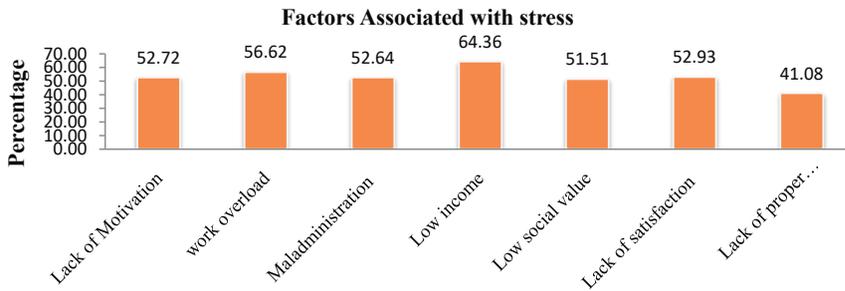


Figure 2. Factors Associated with EFL Teachers' FigureStress

The descriptive analysis results displayed above show the extent to which the studied EFL teachers were affected by the presumptive environmental and personal factors. However, inferential statistical analysis of the data is required to answer the questions posed above. This analysis provides significant coefficients that are used to determine the level of association and prediction brought by the independent variables in the regression model. Therefore, the results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (MLRA), i.e. Regression (R) and Beta ( $\beta$ ) coefficients are presented in Table 1. In which, the R coefficient determines the strength of the relationship that existed between the predictors and stress, whereas the Beta value determines the effect of each predictor on stress. Hence, the analysis depicts the level of association between the predictors and stress, as well as the influence each predictor has on the outcome variable.

Table1: Factors Associated with EFL Teachers' Stress

Model Summary					
		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
		.884 <sup>a</sup>	0.781	0.763	2.829
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>					
Model1		Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	7	345.849	43.228	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	85	8.001		
	Total	92			
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	Beta				
Std. Error					
(Constant)	8.524		-1.709	0.091	
Lack of motivation	0.094	.133	-2.277	0.025	
High workload	0.069	.668	8.963	0.000	
School maladministration	0.128	.231	4.069	0.000	
Low income	0.153	.107	1.685	0.026	
Low social Value	0.242	.058	0.884	0.039	
Job dissatisfaction	0.111	0	0.007	0.022	
Lack of appropriate pedagogical knowledge	0.138	.076	1.215	0.042	
Dependent Variable: Stress					

As can be seen in Table 1, the model of MLRA was employed to produce regression and beta coefficients. The result indicates Adj. R square = 0.0.781,  $F(7, 85) = 43.228$ ,  $P < 0.05$ . This implies that all the predictors in the model explain 0.781 of the variability of EE. In other words, the combination of the seven predictors contributed 78.1 % to the development of stress. The remaining 21.9 % of the influence might have come from other factors that were not accounted for in this study. Besides, the relative contribution of each predictor can easily be compared and explained using

the beta value ( $\beta$ ) indicated under the standardized coefficient, i.e., the highest beta ( $\beta$ ) suggests the strongest level of prediction. Thus, in this study, work overload ( $\beta = .668$ ), maladministration ( $\beta = .231$ ), and lack of motivation ( $\beta = .133$ ) were found to be strong and significant predictors of stress, respectively. In other words, a unit of change in the level of workload causes .688 change in stress, and a unit of change in maladministration contributed .231 variability on stress and so on. The other predictors such as low salary and lack of other benefits, lack of satisfaction, and lack of social value were found to have a significant influence on stress, but they were not as strong as the aforesaid two predictors.

The finding obtained from the qualitative aspect of the study also indicated that the presence of various environmental and personal factors caused stress among EFL teachers. It also revealed that the level of motivation of most participants was diminished due to work-related stressors such as poor performance of students, bad behavior, lack of interest in learning, high workload; poor salary, and low social value. In this regard, Teacher 6 pointed out that the poor learning interest of the students disappointed him. He went on to say that it happened because the area is a cash crop area, where the students could readily obtain the money that they used to meet their temporary needs. This implies that the social environment outside the school did not encourage learners to concentrate on their education and rather waste their precious school time to collect the cash crop, which enabled them to generate income to fulfill some of their needs. The condition further led them to be absent from school which hinders their knowledge acquisition and skill development and makes them self-reliant and competent individuals in the future. The given working situation and the learning behavior of the students always put the teacher in conflict with many students who were absent from classes and who did not complete the activities that he gave them. He repeatedly called and reported to their parents about their behavior, but he could not see any improvement. Such an experience was common and overwhelming to him, but he had no option except to work for a living.

Teacher-7 also stated that her weekly load was 25 periods (a period is a 40-minute lesson), and the class size was large (on average 70). She added that she was a mother and had children and that she was responsible to look after them. At home, she accomplished routines such as cooking, cleaning, etc. In addition, she took some work (e.g., lesson preparation, marking students' assignments, etc.) to her home. These activities consumed much of her time and took away her time for relaxation. The other respondent, Teacher-8 pointed out that her salary was low and she found her work and the wage that she earned was not balanced. Also, the attitude of the community towards the profession was discouraging. These experiences drove her to emotional strain such as stress. Moreover, the participants also explained the presence of maladministration that impedes their work engagement. In this regard, Teacher-5 said, "I believe problems observed in this school are beyond the school leaders' capacity, which requires the intervention of the regional state." [Teacher-5, interview, 9.03.2020]

The result obtained on work overload denoted that most respondents suffered from the problem, which was the most common challenge to EFL teachers in the zone. The respondents claimed that they felt overloaded due to the shortage of EFL teachers and the large class size. For example, Teacher-3 stated that the workload was high because there was a dearth of English teachers in that school. Other participants also stated that it was not only the weekly class hours and large class size that brought challenges to them but also extra duties such as serving as homeroom teachers, preparing teaching aids; taking care of one's family, etc. However, there was a slight variation from school to school with regard to workload distribution. In a few schools, teachers were relatively given manageable loads (they were assigned to teach 20 periods per week), but in most schools, they were given a high workload, i.e., 30 periods per week together with co-curricular activities.

The finding obtained on the issue of school maladministration revealed that various school leaders were unfair in their evaluation and treatment of teachers. They were not playing a meaningful managerial role to create a conducive work environment. For instance, they did not supply adequate sources for the teaching-learning process; they did not keep the school physical environment neat and conducive for the teaching-learning process; they could not mobilize resources to build a staff lounge; they could not furnish school libraries well; they did not share school activities with teachers; they did not discuss school issues openly with staff members. Also, they did not work with the community to correct students' character, improve students' performance, etc. In general, their working behaviors created an unfriendly work environment that discouraged the teachers, harmed their morale, and triggered stress in their job. In this regard, Teacher-10 stated that the school leaders were ineffective in their work because they did not listen to teachers.

Moreover, the finding obtained on teachers' monthly income indicated that most EFL teachers perceived that their salary was inadequate to live by and there were no other benefits given to them. They explained that the market inflation severely affected their living conditions, and no measure was taken to reduce their burden and to normalize the situation. In this regard, Teacher-11 reflected that the salary he was paid was insufficient to buy necessary goods. He said that inflation had increased at a faster rate, but that the salary remained small. Concerning teachers' social value, most of the interviewees raised that their social value deteriorated from time to time. For instance, Teacher-12 pointed out that the cause of teachers' low social value was the low income that they earned and the poor living condition to which they were subjected. He indicated that teachers were dressed poorly compared to the local community, even sometimes they were dressed poorer than their students. The rest of the teachers also believed that the bond of trust that existed between teachers and the community deteriorated, which affected their professional life. Furthermore, as a result of their overall working conditions, teachers' job satisfaction has declined due to a range of environmental challenges.

Finally, the finding obtained on teachers' pedagogical competence also suggested that most of them had knowledge gaps. Even, some of the participants indicated their weaknesses; for instance, they pointed out that they had a gap in teaching primary skills (listening and speaking) others also indicated that they had a gap in teaching all the skills of the target language and they sought on job-trainings to fill their gap.

## Coping Strategies

Coping techniques are a collection of techniques for dealing with stress and other work-related pressures. The goal of this study was to see how often EFL teachers in the study context utilize coping mechanisms to regulate their stress because unchecked stress may lead the teachers to various health problems. To examine this issue, the present study sets a question:

- How often do EFL teachers apply strategies to cope with stress on their job?

To address this question, a fifteen (15) item standard scale was adopted and used. The data collected with the instrument was analyzed and interpreted, and the results were displayed in Figure 3. As shown in the Figure, the mean overall score indicates that 49 (53.12 %) of responders almost never use coping methods. In addition, 18 (19.26%) of the participants barely used coping strategies, according to the findings. Only 26 (27.62%) of the respondents used coping methods on a regular basis. Based on the results, it is possible to infer that the majority of the studied teachers failed to use coping mechanisms to reduce their stress levels, which may harm their psychological well-being and the teaching-learning process.

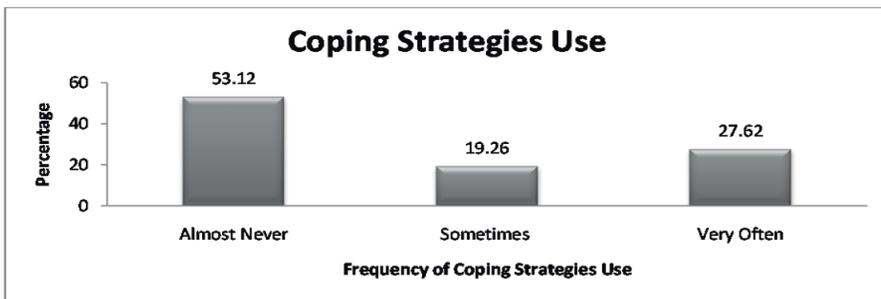


Table 3. EFL Teachers' Coping Strategies Use

## Qualitative results

For the qualitative aspect of the study, 13 EFL teachers were purposely selected and interviewed. The responses obtained were analyzed thematically, and the results obtained are presented following the qualitative questions posed to the respondents, which were designed based on a review of the literature and study objectives. Therefore, the results obtained from this component of the study were presented in line with the given questions henceforth.

## Perceived stress

### Could you possibly tell me if you felt stressed due to your job teaching?

Teacher 1 said that he was stressed due to his work overload in response to the question posed. Additionally, he taught that students' mother tongue, which is different from the target language presented, challenged and added stress to him because the students wanted him to translate everything in the lesson into their mother tongue, which he found difficult. Furthermore, the class size was extremely large (more than 70 students), which impeded the teaching-learning process. He was also stressed by the absence of teaching resources (e.g., textbooks) because it hampered his frequent examinations and comments. He was generally stressed as a result of the obstacles posed by the school and students. Unfair treatment and a lack of resources were the school-related challenges. Resistance to participating in assigned activities, ill-discipline, and disrespect are all issues that students showed, and that brought stress to him. Teacher-2's viewpoint is more or less comparable to Teacher-1's viewpoint. He expressed exhaustion and stress as a result of a high workload, stating that he taught six periods per day and 30 periods per week. Furthermore, he was exhausted and fatigued due to the school's large class size. Teacher 4 agreed, stating that he was stressed owing to work overload, pupils' poor behavior, and a lack of resources. Teacher 5, on the other hand, stated that he was not stressed because he enjoyed his work as a teacher. He mentioned that he prefers to spend most of his time at work.

Teacher 6 expressed her exhaustion that stemmed in response to her daily work. She also stated that despite teaching 25 periods per week, marking students' activities was exhausting and difficult because the class size was large. She also spent her after-school hours planning lessons for the next day, marking pupils' homework, and so on. Furthermore, as a mother, she had responsibilities at home, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for her family, all of which made her feel anxious.

Teacher 7 said that he was stressed because of work overload: he explained that he was busy all week doing activities like teaching, assessing, and completing professional development (CPD) activities, which caused him to be stressed. Teacher 8, on the other hand, stated that she felt tired but not stressed and that the explanation was

her workload. She had a lot of responsibilities at school and outside, which left her exhausted but not stressed. Nonetheless, Teacher 9 stated that he was occasionally stressed because of his students' lack of competence and that he did not perceive any development even when he provided extra help in make-up classes. He also expressed his dissatisfaction with the scarcity of resources (particularly textbooks).

Teacher-11, the other respondent, admitted to feeling stressed sometimes. She was running out of time at the time to complete activities like marking students' examinations and filling their scores on their mark sheets, preparing report cards, and so on. She was also stressed since the time allotted for the task that she was given was insufficient. She stated her feeling as:

I usually feel stressed at the end of a semester and year because I am supposed to complete an additional activity such as organizing mark sheets and preparing report cards. The time set by the school to complete and turn in the report card is often short, which does not take into account the class size. Despite being unresolved, this causes me stress.

[Teacher-11, interview, 12.03.2020].

Teacher 13, on the other hand, stated that she did not feel stressed because she followed her annual plan properly.

In summary, the findings indicated that most EFL teachers who took part in the survey experienced stress at various levels as a result of numerous environmental challenges. Their main source of stress was work overload, which put them under a lot of strain and took away a lot of their family and social time, as well as their time to rest. This issue has an impact on both the personal and professional lives of teachers.

### **Coping strategies**

This study also investigated EFL teachers coping strategies use. The quantitative finding on this issue was presented in the previous subsection. This subsection provides the result obtained from the qualitative aspect of the study, which is used to substantiate the quantitative result. This qualitative component of the study posed the following question:

#### **I wonder if you tell me the coping strategies you use to manage stress on your job?**

For the given question, Teacher-1 stated that he tried to stay calm and patient. He described that when he encountered something strange in his life, he never rushed to take any action even in his workplace, rather he thought again and again about the incident. He explained his experience as follows:

Naturally, I am calm and patient and confront challenges that happened in my life. I passed a lot of ups and downs. Usually, I spend my time thinking about how to overcome them. I also think that there would be individuals whose challenges are worse than mine. Thus, I tell to myself to stay calm.

[Teacher-1, interview, 7.03.2020].

Teacher-2, on the other hand, indicated that patience was his method. He remarked that patience is the key to solving any problem. He went on to say that if he wasn't patient, he wouldn't have been in that position because the job was full of obstacles. He also indicated the way how he overcame the obstacles in the following way:

I feel that a teacher needs to be like the earth. He should develop the skills to accommodate different challenges, etc. You see, the earth is quiet and tolerant that never shakes when the Bull Dozer moves on it. It also permits to bury dead matters and never forbids excavation. Therefore, a teacher needs to be just like that and he has to stay calm and tolerant of everyday challenges that come from students, parents, leadership, etc.

[Teacher-2, interview, 12.03.2020].

Another responder, Teacher-3, stated that anytime he had a major problem, he shared it with his family or close friends and sought assistance on how to solve the problem. Such a practice aided him in overcoming work-related difficulties. Teacher-4, on the other hand, viewed his job as challenging because it required him to engage with a variety of people. The students frequently failed to complete assignments, causing him to become irritated and stressed, and they frequently invited him to argue with them. He tried to get things in order so he could leave the area for a bit. He also expressed his experience as follows:

In this school, the class size is very large, and I teach and assess more than 70 students in each class. It is very tedious. Besides, several students show indifference to completing tasks given to them, which often triggers a conflict between us. The parents of the students and school leaders are not supportive of me. These conditions are the sources of my temper and/or stress.

[Teacher-4, interview, 12.03.2020].

Teacher 8 also stated that she used a variety of ways to deal with difficult situations. She took into account the age of the students when dealing with tensions that came from them. She stated that the majority of her students were of the fire age, which often made them emotional, which she found offensive but tolerated. Teacher-9's opinion also revealed that she had a habit of expressing her problems to others. She stated that anytime she experienced work-related challenges, she sought assistance from her

coworkers and school authorities, who assisted her in overcoming the obstacles. If the difficulty was very personal, she went to church to pray for God's help. Likewise, teacher Teacher-10 and Teacher-11 shared the opinion of Teacher-9. They indicated that sought God's intervention in order to overcome the challenges they faced. Finally, Teacher-12 and Teacher-13 pointed out that they preferred to discuss the problem they faced with the department head, coworkers, and friends to get their assistance and resolve it. Particularly, Teacher-13 stated the following:

When I encounter a work-related challenge, I often raise it in the department meeting. Then, the department discusses the matter and suggests a possible solution. Then, I apply the suggestion and see if a possible change occurs. Finally, I report what I encounter to the department.

[Teacher-13, interview, 15.03.2020]

## Discussion

### Quantitative finding

As mentioned earlier, two tools were utilized: a fill-in (closed-ended) questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The data collected was then analyzed, evaluated, and presented in the manner described above. This section will discuss the findings obtained in response to the questions provided in the introduction part of this paper:

- To what level do EFL teachers at primary school in Jimma Zone experience stress?
- What are the factors associated with EFL teachers' stress?
- Which factors predict EFL teachers' stress more?
- How often do EFL teachers apply strategies to cope with stress on their job?

### Perceived stress

Several studies such as Amanu (2013), Atsbeha (2015), Wale (2002), Sadeghi and Sa'adatpourvahid (2016), have found that teachers have faced a variety of problems because of work-related stress. Environmental factors such as work overload, low income, poor administration, and low social value contributed to teachers' reported stress. Teachers become demotivated, dissatisfied, and stressed because of these problems. The current study's findings also confirmed that EFL teachers in the study context were frequently stressed as a result of a variety of environmental and personal

factors. Teles et al. (2020) discovered a link between stress and emotional exhaustion and fatigue. As the level of perceived stress rises, so does the severity of these factors. Likewise, studies by Wossenie (2014) and Amanu (2013) showed that EFL teachers with low emotional intelligence and with ineffective use of coping strategies underwent persistent stress. The current study's findings, therefore, support the conclusions of the aforementioned studies, which demonstrated that the majority of the study participants (55.5%) suffered from stress regularly.

Moreover, according to Brundage (2007), teachers' stress was developed by a lack of administrative support, inconsistent feedback, low compensation, overcrowded classrooms, clashes with pupils, and a lack of resources. Many EFL teachers in the present research context also reported a shortage of resources, according to the findings. In this way, it agrees with the findings of the previous study. The current study is also consistent with Amanu (2013), who found that many EFL teachers in public primary schools were stressed due to adverse school conditions such as poor working conditions, work overload, maladministration, time pressure, insufficient remuneration, and low social status. Generally, the quantitative findings of the study confirmed that the majority of EFL teachers in the study setting experienced stress, which is supported by the qualitative data showing EFL teachers in the study context experienced various environmental and personal risk factors: work overload, lack of appropriate administration, lack motivation, low monthly income, low social value, and dissatisfaction. Therefore, EFL teachers in the research setting faced stress, which had a substantial impact on their everyday activities and teaching practices.

### **Coping strategies**

Coping strategies are several techniques used to deal with stress and other work-related environmental and personal stressors. Several studies have found that chronic stress is a major factor affecting EFL teachers' mental health conditions and job effectiveness. Students, parents, and leadership may all contribute to teachers' stress and the problem may become a source of conflict in the work environment. The situation further alters teachers' moral and has an impact on their commitment. EFL teachers are expected to use suitable coping skills that enable them to handle stress in order to avoid this psychological strain. As a result, the purpose of this study is to look into how teachers use coping techniques.

The results of the study's quantitative component revealed that the majority of the participants (53.12 %) did not use appropriate coping mechanisms to control their stress. This disclosed that the majority of the participants were unable to use coping strategies when confronted with work-related emotional stress. In this regard, the current finding supports Akbari and Egtesadi (2017), who found that the majority of Iranian EFL teachers did not use appropriate coping methods to manage job-related

stressors. The current study's finding is also in agreement with that of Plana et al. (2003) finding, who discovered that failure to regulate stress is linked to job-related emotional strain. The current data on coping strategies, in general, suggests that most EFL teachers in the study context struggled to consistently utilize various coping techniques to control their stress. Next, the findings obtained from the qualitative aspect of the study are discussed.

## Qualitative findings

### Stress

Several EFL teachers, as mentioned earlier, undergo stressful situations as a result of their job teaching (such as a lack of resources, work overload, students' disobedience, maladministration, low pay, and low social value) as well as the problem posed by their living conditions (Rizqi, 2017). The qualitative finding of this study revealed that the majority of the EFL teachers underwent persistent stress as a result of various environmental and personal factors such as student misbehavior, a lack of teaching resources (textbooks and teachers' guides), work overload, school maladministration, a low income, lack of motivation, and lack of satisfaction. These factors had a negative impact on the teachers' psychological well-being, working behavior, and commitment, which further exposed them to recurrent stress.

According to various studies such as Amanu (2013), Haile (1997), Sadeghi & Sa'adatpourvahid (2016), stress may weaken engagement and lead to job burnout. The result of the qualitative part of the present study also revealed that the majority of the studied EFL teachers experienced stress because of numerous environmental conditions such as a heavy workload, a lack of resources, students' ill-discipline, poor income, etc. In this view, the finding of the current study is in harmony with that of Mahmoudi and Özkanb(2016), who found that a substantial number of teachers were stressed owing to the nature of their jobs. The present study's findings also revealed that the majority of the study participants believed that they were under a lot of stress as a result of numerous risk factors. This problem harmed their job performance because teachers with a higher level of stress demonstrate a lower level of commitment and performance. The problem also has a harmful psychological, professional, and social impact, which manifests itself in a variety of ways, the most prominent of which is poor achievement.

Teaching, including EFL teaching, is now considered one of the most stressful jobs in the world (Antonioni et al.,2013; Motallebzadeh et al., 2014; Nayernia& Babayan, 2019). The findings of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the present study affirmed that this problem affects several teachers in the study area. In this sense, the current study finding is similar to that of Sadeghi and Sa'adatpourvahid (2016), who

found that chronic stress causes work-related psychological disorders. As a result of such chronic stress, teachers' performance was harmed and their dedication was hindered. Many other studies such as Getie (2020), Ptáek et al., (2019), Sadeghi and Sa'adatpourvahid (2016) have found that teachers are less satisfied with their job when they are stressed. This, in turn, has an impact on the teachers, teaching, and students' progress, which necessitates intervention in the form of appropriate stress coping strategies. Following this, the findings obtained on the use of coping techniques are discussed.

### Coping strategies

The study also looked into how EFL teachers used coping strategies to deal with job-related stressors. In this regard, the finding from the interview analysis revealed that the examined EFL teachers used a variety of coping methods to deal with their work-related stressors. The strategies they used were divided into three categories: emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. Some of the participants said they were using emotional strategies such as (i) staying patient (Teacher-1); (ii) never getting offended easily and never reacting in any way to the offender (Teacher-2); (iii) sharing difficult experiences with family and/or close friends to get help (Teacher-3); (iv) interest and passion for the profession (Teacher-5), and (v) pray for help or seek God's intervention in order to overcome obstacles (Teacher-10, Teacher-11). These are the emotional coping mechanisms used by several EFL teachers studied to deal with their stressors.

Behavioral strategies were the other strategies employed by the participants in the study. These strategies include (i) self-encouragement to develop a sense of resistance and resilience (Teacher-2), (ii) building self-determination and staying optimistic (Teacher-3); (iii) trying to manage things by leaving a classroom for some time while students displayed offensive behavior (Teacher-4); (iv) managing pressure related to the teaching-learning process through consistent effort (Teacher-5); and (v) face reality, tolerate students' bad behavior, and handle them tactfully (Teacher-6); (vi) adjust oneself based on feedback from colleagues and change one's behavior (Teacher-7); (vii) manage students skillfully to gain their attention and trust, taking into account their age (fire age), and developing strength to overcome challenges (Teacher-8); (viii) discussing problems with the department head, coworkers, and friends to get their assistance (Teacher-7, Teacher-9; Teacher-12, and Teacher-13).

In addition, the participants of the study used cognitive coping strategies. For example, sticking to one's plan (the annual plan) in accomplishing one's task (Teacher-10), as well as cognitive restructuring or considering that a similar problem may occur to anyone (Teacher-3). Therefore, the qualitative finding obtained on the teachers' coping strategies showed that several EFL teachers in the study context utilized behavioral strategies, which were followed by emotional and cognitive strategies, respectively. The strategies used by the teachers in the study are similar to the strategies discovered and characterized by various researchers (e.g., Chang,

2009; Akbari & Eghtesadi, 2017; Plana et al., 2003; Harvey, 1999). Chang (2009), for example, divided coping mechanisms into three categories: emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. Coping mechanisms were characterized by Akbari and Eghtesadi (2017) as i) escaping from the problem, ii) confronting the problem, and iii) examining choices to overcome the problem. Billings and Moos (1981), as cited in Plana et al. (2003), in their part, categorized coping strategies as active-cognitive, active-behavioral, and avoidance techniques. Harvey (1999) also divided the strategies into behavioral, emotional, professional, social, and institutional categories. The stated techniques and their classifications have a lot of things in common, with minor differences and overlaps. The strategies indicated by Chang (2009), among the stated classifications, are consistent with the techniques employed by EFL teachers involved in this study. As a result, it's viable to deduce that the EFL teachers who were studied used emotional, behavioral, and cognitive strategies to cope with work-related stressors. However, the findings depicted that they did not use them persistently as a result they failed to manage stressors completely.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, the study's findings revealed that the examined EFL teachers used emotional, behavioral, and cognitive techniques to cope with risk factors; nonetheless, they were unable to entirely control them. This implies that teachers in the study context were dealing with stress and accomplishing their daily work to the bare minimum because they were found to be experiencing difficulties that could contribute to job burnout. In other words, the problem may have arisen as a result of a lack of adequate knowledge and skill in work-related problem-solving procedures or coping strategies. This gap also exposed the teachers to considerable job-related emotional stress, lowering their resilience in the face of potential stressors. Therefore, the current finding could mean that the researched EFL teachers were able to use various coping skills to control the risk factors, yet the strategies they used possibly appeared inadequate and inappropriate to combat the stressors.

## Conclusions

Due to the presence of various risk factors in the work environment, stress has become a severe threat among EFL teachers in public primary schools in the study setting. As a result, this study looked into EFL teachers' stress and the factors that contribute to it (job overload, insufficient pay, low social worth, mismanagement, demotivation, discontent, LAPCK, and stress) and coping strategies. To attain these goals, the researchers used a descriptive survey design with quantitative dominant over qualitative sequential explanatory methods. The findings, thus, showed that the majority of the EFL teachers surveyed suffered from persistent stress, as well as the presence of various environmental and personal factors that contributed to the problem in the study area. The outcome of the study also revealed that the majority of

the studied teachers did not apply proper coping techniques frequently to manage their stress. Accordingly, the majority of the studied EFL teachers experienced a high level of stress as well as they did not apply proper coping strategies to manage the problem. These situations have the following implications for the teachers, the teaching-learning process, and the students.

## Implications and Suggestions

Teachers with positive emotions teach successfully, whereas teachers with stress and other negative emotions do not (since emotion influences every behavior). Teachers who are stressed are unable to effectively prepare for daily lessons, and they may have poor relationships with students, colleagues, and school administrators. The students may not be properly supported to enable them to acquire the target language. Most importantly, the issue not only affects EFL teachers and their students' English achievement but also affects the students' overall educational attainment because English is the medium of instruction for these students who are preparing for secondary and tertiary levels of education. They may encounter problems in attaining the goal of education at the given levels. Therefore, serious attention needs to be given to EFL teachers since protecting them means protecting the overall educational process and quality of education.

To reduce the problem's impact, it is suggested that EFL teachers in the study context receive on-the-job training on effective coping methods such as emotional, cognitive, and behavioral strategies (Chang, 2009; Kamtsios, 2018; Maroofi & Ghaemi, 2016). On the one hand, emotional coping methods enable them to manage their emotions more effectively during times of stress. For example, a teacher who uses the strategies may attempt to make a good out of a terrible event. Teachers, on the other hand, can use cognitive coping skills to stay calm by employing logical thinking and taking time to express emotions. Finally, relaxing activities such as visiting natural places, exercising, walking, listening to music, and so on are included in behavioral coping strategies. These solutions assist them to cope with the problem and lessen their bodily stress.

Furthermore, the training may raise their understanding of the problem, its triggering factors, how to deal with it, and the need for a healthy work lifestyle. This may benefit not just the teachers' psychological well-being, but also their pupils' academic progress and future prospects. As a result, EFL teachers in the study context should receive short-term training on effective coping strategies and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, teacher training institutions should include coping techniques and emotional intelligence courses in their EFL methodology courses so that trainees and future teachers are aware of potential job-related challenges that lead them to stress and how to address them. Thus, this training assists trainees in becoming prepared in advance for the potential obstacles they would face in their actual work environment,

as well as preparing to confront and cope with comparable challenges in their future work lives. Finally, the study's findings revealed that the problem was driven by environmental variables such as work overload, maladministration, insufficient income, a lack of social value, etc. As a result, the regional and zonal education bureaus should collaborate closely to ensure that EFL teachers in the study area have a manageable workload, fair administration, adequate income, and social value. Such treatments help teachers to manage work-related stress, promote a good attitude toward their profession, demonstrate commitment to their daily work, and improve the teaching-learning process.

## Limitations and suggestions

The study has certain limitations, even though it gives many helpful insights into EFL teachers' stress, other associated difficulties, and coping strategies. Because the study was conducted in a specific setting and with a small sample size, the results can never be generalized to a larger group of EFL teachers that work in public primary schools throughout the region and the country. As a result, more research on a large scale is needed to determine the degree and magnitude of the problem in the region and nationwide.

## Declarations

Authors contribution statement

### Competing interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

## Acknowledgments

The authors extend their due admiration to individuals who substantially contributed to the successful completion of the study, particularly, EFL teachers who were involved in the study.

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**How to reference this article:** Ayalew , T., Woldemariam, G. S. ., & Alemu, A. EFL Teachers' Stress and Coping Strategies: the case of public primary schools in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia. *GIST – Education and Learning Research Journal*, 25. <https://doi.org/10.26817/16925777.1516>