

Differences in Anger, Stress, Coping, and Blood Pressure in Elementary School Teachers During High and Low Stress Periods

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Teachers, Stress, Anger

Purpose: Few studies have examined anger, anger expression, or coping strategies in teachers. The aims of this study were to document levels of anger, stress, coping, methods of anger expression, and blood pressure in teachers and to compare these variables measured at a time of low stress and a time of high stress.

Method: Eighty-six (81 females and 5 males) elementary teachers from eight schools in the southeastern United States were assessed in December 2002 and of these 86, 78 (74 females and 4 males) were measured again in February or March of 2003.

Teachers completed the Stress Inventory for Teachers, The Hassles Scale, The Uplifts scale, the CRIS, STAXI-2, Ways of Coping, and had blood pressure measured at times which were teacher designated as high and low stress. Because instruments were normed by gender, data for males and females were analyzed accordingly. The research design was descriptive repeated measures

Findings: There were significant differences between the designated high and low stress periods in female teachers in Anger Control-Out in the school situation ($p=.015$), Tension Control ($p=.008$), Cognitive Restructuring ($p=.02$), Functional Beliefs ($p=.011$), and Coping Resource Effectiveness ($p=.009$). There were no differences in systolic or diastolic blood pressure. Between high and low stress periods. During the high stress period, six teachers had systolic blood pressures (SBP) of 140 or greater and 44 were prehypertensive (SBP 120-139). Eight (9.6%) had diastolic blood pressure readings (DBP) of 90 or greater, and 12 (14.4%) had prehypertensive DBP of 80-89. During the low stress period, 7 (7.9%) had systolic blood pressures of 140 or greater, 41 (51.5%) had systolic blood pressure readings in the prehypertensive range (120-139). Three (2.6%) had diastolic blood pressure readings of 90 or greater and 16 (19.8%) had diastolic readings in the prehypertensive range (80-90).

Discussion: Female teachers had less ability to control tension, control outward expression of anger, use cognitive restructuring, lower stress through their belief systems, and perceived fewer resources for coping during the designated high stress period than during the low stress period. In addition, a majority of teachers were either prehypertensive or hypertensive. Training for teachers in the use of coping resources and appropriate anger management techniques may be helpful in dealing with stress both at home and in the classroom. There is a need for blood pressure screenings as well as consideration of stress and anger in teachers both at home and in school environment.