

Stress and Stress Coping Strategies Among Iraqi Foreign Language Teachers: A Mixed-Method Inquiry

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Abstract. *In today's society, the modern way of life is often associated with a significant level of stress. Education field is no exception. The occupational stress encountered by EFL teachers can be defined as the adverse emotions they experience as a result of different elements of their job. The stress experienced by individuals is often a response to perceived threats stemming from the pressures and expectations placed upon them. Consequently, the objective of the present investigation was to examine the stressors encountered by EFL instructors and the techniques they employ to manage it. The study involved 115 EFL teachers. Data was gathered through the utilization of two questionnaires, specifically the Teachers' Stressors Questionnaires and the teachers' coping strategy questionnaire, as well as a semi-structured interview. In addition, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings show that the majority of teachers have experienced stress and that all of the suggested factors are significantly associated with the issue. The primary finding indicates that stress negatively affects the professional performance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators. Overall, these results hold important implications for the progression of future academic studies and pedagogical methodologies.*

Keywords: *EFL Teachers, English Teaching, Stress, Coping Strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's society, the modern way of life is often associated with a significant level of stress. Furthermore, individuals who are employed tend to find their workplaces more stressful compared to the past (Teimouri et al., 2019). As Kyriacou (2011) posits, teachers' occupational stress refers to the adverse emotions that teachers undergo as a result of the different facets of their job. This stress arises from a sense of being overwhelmed by the requirements they face. A crucial effect in the area of foreign language education is shown by emotions (Pavlenko, 2011). Being anxious and stressed might impede the learning process and effect the ability to acquire a language (Aida, 1994; Worde, 2003). Horwitz et al. (1986) come to a conclusion that anxiety of a foreign language might be seen as a valid blend of feelings, behaviors, cognitive processes, and self-conceptions that are related to the settings of education. To add more, they stem from the noticeable challenges of acquiring a new language.

On a parallel level, Botes et al. (2020) claimed that a certain manifestation of anxiety is noticed which is particularly related to second languages. This anxiety is described as an emotional reaction that is negative and occurs when the leaning or using a foreign language is performed. Many studies and research have proved that there are adverse connections between the academic performance of students in language acquisition and the anxiety related to that foreign language.

If there is a misalignment between the expectations of their role and their capacity to handle them, the teachers might suffer from a work-related stress and leading to the experience of detrimental adverse feelings (Drossel et al., 2020). Every teacher faces their own individual stressors, but two commonly studied sources of stress for teachers are their work environment and their interactions with students (Skaalvik, 2017). Teachers use either conscious or unconscious coping mechanisms to handle the overwhelming pressure and demands they face. Coping strategies refer to the actions taken to effectively deal with stressors or challenges that are beyond one's ability to handle (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). It integrates cognitive and behavioral strategies for the purpose of addressing psychological challenges (Chaaban & Du, 2017). The coping challenges faced by teachers impact the effectiveness of learning and teaching (Toropova et al., 2020), which is why researchers have shown great interest in exploring teachers' coping strategies." Therefore, this research explored the types of coping strategies that Iraqi EFL teachers adopt while facing stress in their classroom.

Statement of the problem

EFL teachers may encounter occupational stress, which can lead to a range of health issues that in turn could impact the learners and the wider society. The teaching profession, including English language teaching, is not immune to this, and EFL teachers commonly experience elevated levels of stress (Tum, 2012). Kyriacou (2000) asserts that the occupation of teaching in schools is now commonly acknowledged to be one of the most stressful. Piechurska-Kuciel (2011) regards the teaching profession as highly challenging as educators are required to exhibit appropriate behavioral traits essential for managing interactions. According to Hepburn and Brown (2001), teachers are seen as bearing the brunt of the demands stemming from their everyday duties and the contemporary educational framework.

The primary focus of most research studies on foreign language anxiety has been centered on the anxiety felt by foreign language learners, while relatively little emphasis has been placed on the anxiety experienced by foreign language teachers (Amengual-Pizarro, 2019). Horwitz (1996) was the first to suggest that non-native language teachers may also be vulnerable to foreign language stress. According to Horwitz (1996), even though it is assumed that non-native language teachers have a strong command of the foreign language, they are still considered language learners. Due to the continuous nature of language learning and mastery, it is expected that many non-native language teachers will face challenges when communicating in the foreign language. If occurrences of inadequacy and discomfort in a foreign language happen frequently and persistently, it is possible for non-native language instructors to experience ongoing anxiety in regards to that foreign language.

As posited by Horwitz (1996), the anxiety experienced by non-native language teachers has the potential to detrimentally impact the field of foreign language education in a multitude of manners. To begin, educators who are non-native speakers and who exhibit heightened levels of anxiety towards the subject language are inclined to utilize it less frequently during their instructional sessions. Furthermore, anxiety and stress related to learning a foreign language can impede non-native teachers in facilitating meaningful interactions with students, proficiently utilizing the desired language, and exemplifying positive language learning behaviors. According to her, non-native teachers of a second language may opt for teaching approaches that allow them to avoid actively using the language they are teaching when they feel uneasy speaking it.

Additionally, non-native foreign language teachers who are feeling anxious may unintentionally impart pessimistic attitudes towards language acquisition to their students. The argument posited is that when apprehensive non-native teachers demonstrate unease in their dissemination of the language being taught, it can instill the belief in students that they will also encounter difficulties in speaking the language.

Teaching is a multifaceted procedure that is greatly impacted by the emotions, perspectives, and discernment of the instructor. EFL educators frequently experience negative feelings as a result of the inadequate prior knowledge and limited language skills of the learners (Gizaw, 2005). Benesch (2017) similarly pointed out the complexity of examining the emotions of EFL teachers. It requires multiple perspectives, careful investigation, and meticulous observation. Iraq, as one of the developing countries, suffers from crucial problem because of the heavy burdens, limited resources, very crowded classrooms, let alone motivation that seems to be unavailable. Strong feeling of being taken and lacking motivation might be the result that teachers get when facing difficult or impeding situations. This would ultimately impact the teachers' capacity of being able to concentrating on the tasks and noticeably impede the challenges which the teachers might come across.

The factors mentioned above have the ability to cause various feelings such as anxiety that might affect the learning process of the teachers of a foreign language such as English. To be more accurate, those affected teachers possess limited emotional intelligence, a matter that makes them feel it is a challenging process to address the emotional challenges that result from the responsibilities of their daily teaching (Dastgoshadeh & Javanmardi, 2021).

Those teachers' cases have been widely studied because of the difficulties and obstacles those teachers encountered. Regardless of this, management of stress and coping strategies were neglected in this field of study. The current circumstances serve as the impetus for the

initiation of the current study, which aims at exploring the employment of stress coping strategies by EFL teachers across various teaching scenarios.

Significant of the study

The effects that stress has may be noticed on educators and their institutions as well. Teachers might not be well-satisfied with their job. This might have an important role in determining the whole performance and effectiveness of teachers (Jepson & Forrest, 2006). Thus, what may enhance the educational experience and refresh the teaching-community health is highlighting the origins of work-related stress and implementing proactive strategies to address it. Supporting this idea, Nagra and Arora (2013) state that being free from stress, teachers can effectively teach and create positive learning environment in classrooms, thereby transforming the school into an engaging and enriching place for students. The existence of numerous studies on occupational stress, particularly in relation to teachers (Amanu, 2013; Amengual-Pizarro, 2019; Liu & Wu, 2021; Giezzel & Rosario, 2023), serves as evidence that this issue holds significant importance for researchers worldwide and warrants additional investigation.

Moreover, while conducting research in the designated field, the observer observed that certain EFL instructors exhibited unfavorable attributes (such as negligence, lack of enthusiasm, inattentiveness, tardiness, etc.). These conduct patterns imply that teachers within the research environment may experience pessimistic emotions in their profession since every action is impacted by one's emotions (Pettinelli, 2016). The review of prior literature has also confirmed the absence of any research studies undertaken on the specified subject within the project's geographical context. According to what has been presented earlier, the present study was an attempt to study, identify, and analyze stress-level that Iraqi EFL teachers might face or suffer from, the factors that cause this stress, and the coping stress strategies the teachers might employ. By doing this, it might be possible to provide a specific opportunity for understanding the type and level of stress Iraqi EFL teachers might face and highlighting the factors that contribute to this stress. Finally crucial solutions and remedies might be suggested to reduce stress and create effective learning environment.

To add more, stress is considered as a pressing issue on the part of teachers. This pressure may not only affect the teachers' physical status, but may also have an effect on their satisfaction of their job. As a result, it seems important to have various studies tackling this issue. To fill this gap in knowledge, the present study aimed to contribute to the existing body of cross-cultural research on this topic. Specifically, it aimed to explore the sources of stress among teachers, which have been insufficiently explored in the Iranian context. The ultimate

goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors causing job dissatisfaction among teachers and to propose strategies to help them navigate their profession successfully.

Study questions:

1. To what level Iraqi foreign language teachers at secondary schools experience stress?
2. What strategies Iraqi foreign language teachers apply to cope with their stress in the classrooms?
3. How Iraqi foreign language teachers cope with their stress while teaching?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' Stress and its Sources

According to Brundage (2007), teacher stress is characterized by their reaction to adverse emotions such as frustration, worry, or melancholy. Rezik (2017) refers to the stress experienced by EFL teachers as unpleasant emotions or states of unhappiness. Rizqi (2017) suggested that the stress experienced by EFL teachers manifests in a multitude of ways, impacting their behavior, emotions, mental well-being, and physiology as a result of continued pressure within the classroom. Teachers encounter stress in two distinct ways: first, from the stress sources they face, and second, from their reactions to stress. Stress sources encompass a range of factors associated with the nature of their work and the environments in which they operate, which impact a teacher's cognition, emotions, and motivation (Toropova et al., 2020). The escalation of the situation can be attributed to the inappropriate behavior of students, inadequate school administration, and societal perceptions of teachers. Students face challenges such as misbehavior and a pessimistic attitude towards education. Schools encounter obstacles like substandard facilities, heavy workloads, and a lack of support for teachers. Societal issues encompass inadequate support, disrespect, and condemnation (Rihani & Sagar, 2015). Teacher stress is caused by a combination of factors such as excessive workload, insufficient income, a negative work atmosphere, unclear job responsibilities, additional activities beyond work, domestic obligations, as well as other related aspects (Atsbeha, 2015). Brundage (2007) also supports the ideas of the previous researchers. He proposes that teachers undergo stress due to inadequate support from school leaders, varying feedback, inadequate pay, handling overpopulated classrooms, and facing challenges with students. Consequently, these issues may pose a threat to the psychological well-being of teachers.

The experience of occupational stress among EFL teachers in various circumstances is typically considered as an intricate psychological occurrence influenced by multiple factors

that determine the level of stress teachers encounter in their profession. Additionally, it can differ from person to person depending on individual characteristics, psychological aspects, and the surrounding environment. The level of stress and its symptoms in teachers can be influenced by various factors. Factors influencing teaching effectiveness may comprise of the candidate's age, marital status, length of teaching experience, gender, the physical state of the classroom, and the demeanor of the teacher. The personal and social attributes of the students, their interactions with school administrators and parents, the educational setting, and the specific grade level being instructed all play a significant role. Other considerations include family concerns, financial status, and variations in the curriculum. These are just some of the factors that can contribute to the level of stress experienced by teachers (Sadeghi & Sa'adatpourvahid, 2016).

According to Travers (2001), teachers and educators are frequently constrained to carry out their responsibilities suboptimally as a result of unfavorable working conditions. An example of this can be observed in language schools, specifically within the context of this particular study in Iran, where it is not uncommon to encounter institutions located in rundown structures with small, overcrowded classrooms and insufficient ventilation. These locations are mostly residential properties that were not originally intended for educational use. Consequently, these subpar conditions can create frustration and irritation for teachers during their teaching sessions.

Anxiety, frustration, anger, and tension are the fundamental components characterizing teachers' job stress, as noted by Kyriacou (2001). The substantial contributors to such stress among teachers are primarily attributed to work conditions and student interactions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). According to Byrne (1994), work overload is described as the concurrent existence of multiple objectives and the difficulty of managing numerous roles. Loughran (2006) defines teachers' work overload as the escalating work requirements combined with restricted time availability for completion. In contrast, encouraging classroom engagement and cultivating meaningful relationships with students can help reduce feelings of burnout and bring a sense of purpose to the teaching profession (Spilt et al., 2011). However, establishing a successful connection with students requires adept social and emotional abilities (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers with advanced social skills are able to understand a wide variety of viewpoints and effectively apply them in their communication with students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Furthermore, teachers who possess emotional intelligence adeptly manage their interactions with students by understanding and addressing their emotional requirements. (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Teacher's Coping Strategy

Amanu (2013) provided an explanation of the strategies used by EFL teachers to handle challenging situations they encounter in their daily work, referring to various studies conducted by researchers. Likewise, Akbari and Eghtesadi (2017) outlined the concept as the utilization of various methods to manage challenging incidents or circumstances related to teaching. According to Carver and Connor-Smith (2010), coping strategies refer to mental and physical actions taken to manage psychological stress or surmount obstacles. They also acknowledge that coping techniques encompass various classifications. Consequently, coping strategies can be described as intentional and premeditated efforts or actions undertaken by educators to handle difficulties associated with their work.

Furthermore, three key coping strategies utilized by EFL instructors have been recognized: i) avoidance of the problem; ii) directly addressing the issue; and iii) assessing potential solutions to overcome the barrier. Furthermore, Plana et al. (2003) referenced the categorization of coping strategies by Billings and Moos (1981) into three main groups: i) cognitive involvement, ii) behavioral action, and iii) avoidance. They detailed that active-cognitive strategies entail the assessment and resolution of possible stress factors in order to proactively address them. Active behavioral approaches suggest that individuals play an active role in managing stressful circumstances. In difficult situations, avoidance maneuvers may be employed as a means of avoidance (Plana et al., 2003).

Harvey (1999) conducted a thorough investigation into coping mechanisms, dividing them into five distinct categories: behavioral, emotional, professional, social, and institutional. Engaging in household chores, attending social gatherings, seeking relaxation, and moderate alcohol consumption are a few illustrations of behavioral methods. In order to alleviate people's concerns during difficult situations, errors, and transformations, emotional strategies are utilized. Efforts focused on managing difficulties in a professional manner involve gaining thorough knowledge, cultivating efficient methods of self-control such as thorough preparation, strategic planning, strong organizational abilities, introspective capabilities, ensuring proper rest, and additional strategies.

The text delves into the enhancement of social abilities through engagement with peers and relatives, alongside self-socialization. Furthermore, it highlights coping mechanisms associated with both individuals and establishments. Examples of coping strategies associated with institutions may involve aligning actions with the organization's policies and values, working closely with superiors and school administrators, and employing comparable techniques (Harvey, 1999).

Related studies

Giezzel and Rosario (2023) carried out a research project with the aim of identifying the stress management techniques and coping mechanisms employed by CTED students to improve their academic performance. The researchers employed a descriptive approach and collected data through a survey questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that the participants identified financial problems as a occasional source of stress, whereas cultural issues rarely caused stress. Additionally, the study determined that the students utilized sleep as a strategy to manage stress, and frequently employed cognitive reappraisal as a coping mechanism. In their quantitative research, Bakhtiari and Afzali (2022) investigated the stressors faced by EFL teachers and their coping mechanisms during the Covid-19-induced online education. A study involving 86 Iranian EFL teachers from three language schools was conducted, utilizing two tailored questionnaires to pinpoint stress factors. The research findings showed that the most noticeable sources were related to students.

Novitasari and Murtafi'ah (2022) built a qualitative study to identify the origins of teaching anxiety among EFL pre-service teachers, as well as the coping strategies employed to address this anxiety. The study found out those teachers experienced anxiety because of a lack of teaching experience, personal characteristics, fear of making errors, challenges in managing time, insufficient motivation from learners, and technical problems.

Liu and Wu (2021) found out in their study that Chinese college English teachers expressed foreign language teaching anxiety primarily because of a lack of confidence in their English skills, fear of speaking English, and concerns about potential negative consequences. In a similar manner, Amengual-Pizarro (2019) conducted a quantitative research involving 75 prospective primary school English teachers in Spain. The findings revealed that a majority of the participants had moderate to high levels of anxiety in the language classroom. It was further discovered that the main factor contributing to this anxiety was the teachers' inadequate proficiency in English.

Pasaribu and Harendita (2018) examined 50 preservice Indonesian teachers who were studying English. They found that there were many factors that play a crucial role in the feeling of anxiety. These factors were preparation, confidence, proficiency in English, knowledge of students, teaching methods, classroom management, and evaluation.

Furthermore, Pelsler and Wyk (2016) documented the established information regarding the subject matter of teacher involvement in stress alleviation within the framework of educational management and leadership. Their study concentrated on the influence of theoretical perspectives on educators and how teachers encounter stress based on their

engagement or lack thereof in school management. It has been discovered that while there are numerous instances where elements of various theories can be utilized in stress management practices, the fact remains that managerial leadership continues to hold significant importance in schools. Transformational and distributed leadership are often not considered as practical solutions for managing stress in schools.

In a similar manner, a qualitative study was conducted by Sammephet and Wanphet (2013) with four Thai preservice English teachers to investigate the potential factors contributing to teachers' anxiety. The findings indicated that the participants' anxiety primarily stemmed from their personal traits, as well as the context of supervision and teaching.

3. METHODOLOGY

Design

The objective of this research, as previously mentioned, was to assess the stress levels experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Iraq's educational setting, along with the factors contributing to this stress and the strategies they employed to cope with it. To fulfill this objective, a descriptive survey design incorporating mainly quantitative methods but also incorporating qualitative elements was adopted (Creswell, 2009). This design facilitated the exploration of the problem, pinpointing of the relevant elements, and enhanced comprehension of the pressure faced by EFL educators, the triggers for it, and the coping mechanisms employed. Consequently, this facilitates the creation of a successful strategy that advocates for stress and burnout prevention. Subsequently, the following procedures within the methodology - beginning with sample selection and concluding with data analysis - will be elaborated upon.

Participants

Two sampling methods were used to determine the sample for this study: convenience sampling and judgmental sampling. Convenience sampling was employed to select samples for the quantitative study, while judgmental sampling was utilized to choose samples for a semi-structured interview. In this research, the participants consisted exclusively of teachers specializing in English, with majors in English teaching, linguistics, translation, and literature. The focus of the study is on secondary schools located in Wassit city and its surrounding areas. The investigation pertains to educators operating within a distinctive environment presenting specific requirements and obstacles. Visits were made to secondary schools in the specific region, where a total of 160 questionnaires were distributed to EFL teachers through school principals. Following one week, a sum of 115 surveys were gathered. In contrast, a judgmental

sampling technique was utilized for the qualitative component of the research, leading to the selection of 11 teachers for more in-depth analysis. The participants selected represented both genders.

Instruments

- **Teachers' Stressors Questionnaires**

The questionnaire was employed for the purpose of gathering quantitative information. Bakhtiari and Afzali (2023) emphasized the importance of the theoretical model, while Shaalvik (2017) focused on stressor categorization. The questionnaire consists of two primary sections, one focused on the work environment and the other on interactions with students, as outlined by Skaalvik in 2017. Each section contains six questions. Utilizing a 4-point Likert scale, respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement from completely agree to completely disagree.

- **Teachers' Coping Strategies Questionnaires**

The researcher employed a modified version of Carver's Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997) to investigate the strategies employed by educators in managing stress. This abbreviated form of COPE consisted of 28 items divided into 14 distinct subscales, each containing two items. The strategies were categorized into three distinct groups: those focused on addressing the problem, those focused on managing emotions, and those aimed at avoidance. Each strategy was then subdivided into either four or six categories for further analysis. The survey used a four-point Likert scale format for participants to provide their responses.

- **Interview**

To have a thorough understanding and obtain enough information concerning the stressors and how individual may cope with them, some participants (11) ones, were interviewed. The initial segment of the interview revolved around the main concepts discussed during the interview. The subsequent part focused on identifying the specific sources of stress experienced by the participants

Procedure of the research

Three instruments were employed here for collecting data. To do so, the researcher verbally asked the participants for their consent. Because of the participants' limited writing skill, the verbal form was used. Having a limited writing skill, participants might face some difficulties in understanding and filling the written consent form. At first, the researcher provided the participants with a thorough explanation of the objectives of his study focusing on its academic nature. The provision of this information aimed to enable them to make an

educated choice regarding their involvement in the research. Each participant received an email that included a questionnaire on demographic information, a journal containing study information, and two questionnaires for the study.

In order to gain a deeper understanding, the researchers interviewed a total of eleven participants. Initially, they created a set of semi-structured interview questions. The interviews were conducted separately in both Arabic and English languages. The duration of each interview session lasted approximately 25 minutes for every participant. Each participant was informed that only their individual ideas would be taken into account when drafting the report, and that a pseudonym would be assigned to identify each idea owner. Furthermore, an agreement was established to disseminate the findings of the research with the participants. Consequently, the participants actively participated in the study procedures.

Data analysis and Interpretation techniques

There were two distinct methodologies used for data analysis: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data was analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean with the help of SPSS software version 21. The qualitative data was subjected to a thorough thematic analysis and interpretation, involving a systematic arrangement, coding, organization, and close examination of the data to detect emerging themes and sub-themes. The subsequent phase entailed analyzing the importance of the participants' spoken accounts, which were subsequently condensed and integrated with the identified themes. Ultimately, the results were presented in a narrative style.

4. RESULTS

Quantitative result

Here, the quantitative descriptive statistics of the participants' responses on the first questionnaire instruments are presented. Regarding the first research question (To what level Iraqi foreign language teachers at secondary schools experience stress?), the researcher utilized Teachers' Stressors Questionnaires proposed by Bakhtiari and Afzali (2023). As it was already mentioned, two categories were introduced in this questionnaires. The initial category pertains to stressors in the workplace and encompasses six main components: reduction in typical job satisfaction, decrease in perceived efficiency, challenges in maintaining work-life balance, inability to fulfill the role of a mentor, changes in workload, and absence of adequate academic support. Table 1 below shows the frequencies of participants' responses:

Table 1. frequencies of participants' responses on work-related stressors

No	Item	Totally agree	Agree	Disagree	Totally disagree
1	A decrease in effectiveness can cause stress.	41	24	30	5
2	Change in workload is stressful	30	27	24	19
3	Managing work-life balance is stressful.	39	28	20	13
4	Lack of receiving academic support is stressful.	24	27	25	24
5	Being unable to fulfill the responsibilities of a mentor causes stress.	17	24	31	28
6	Decrease in usual job satisfaction is stressful	45	21	18	16

Finding from frequencies revealed that the most significant work-related stressor for Iraqi EFL teachers was: Decrease in usual job satisfaction. Next important work-related stressor for them was: A decrease in effectiveness. And the third important component of causing work stress was managing work-life balance for them. Participants expressed the view that balancing the demands of work and personal life is challenging and cannot be easily prioritized. The less stress component for them was playing mentor in their classrooms. Iraqi EFL teachers thought that it was not difficult for them to act as mentors in their classrooms. They said that taking on a leadership role as a teacher has a positive effect on how engaged and successful students are. However, becoming a mentor in the classroom as an experienced and knowledgeable teacher is not hard to achieve.

The most common work-related stressor for teachers was a change in workload. Teachers claimed that they were experiencing high levels of stress due to additional responsibilities and changes in their job duties. The fifth work-related stressor one was the lack of receiving academic support in virtual education. Based on what the participants said, receiving regular support with academic work is important for improving professional development. It helps create a good environment for sharing ideas, knowledge, and opinions.

The second group of stressors that affect students includes six factors: disengaged students, a reduction in students' learning speed, shifts in students' expectations, obstacles in communication between teachers and learners, and managing passive learners. Table 2 below shows the frequencies of participants' responses:

Table 2. frequencies of participants' responses on Student-related stressors

No	Item	Totally agree	Agree	Disagree	Totally disagree
1	Handling communication obstacles between teachers and students can be stressful	35	27	22	16
2	Decrease in students learning rate is stressful	39	33	20	8
3	Dealing with students' disciplinary problem is stressful	49	30	12	9
4	Dealing with uninterested students is stressful	48	28	14	10
5	Dealing with passive learners is stressful	33	29	22	16
6	Change in students demands is stressful	36	26	19	19

Taking the results from (Table 2.) into consideration, it can be seen that the first significant student-related stressors was item number 3: Dealing with students' disciplinary problem. Iraqi EFL teachers think that dealing with students' discipline is the most challenging component regarding controlling stress. From their point of view students' discipline helped them to listen to the lesson carefully and stay focused during teaching. The second most frequent student-related stressor was: Dealing with uninterested students. For EFL teachers, one of the most difficult job in the classes was attracting students who are not interested in learning. Learners in this way lose their contact with their classmates as well as teachers. the third most rated component regarding controlling stress was Decrease in students learning rate. Most teachers panic when they face such a problem in their classroom. Next was Change in students' demands, and the last but not least, EFL instructors held the belief that communication obstacles reduced the establishment of a positive relationship and compromised the creation of a safe educational setting. Table 3 bellow shows the descriptive statistics of each category in details:

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of each category of Stress among participants

No	Category	Mean	S.Dev	F
1	Work-related stressors	41.7	1.98	34.2%
2	Student-related Stressors	69.3	1.07	65.8%

As table (3) demonstrated, EFL teachers' stress is mostly Student-related stress (f:65.8%, Mean: 69.3, SD: 1.07). Participants believed that students stress factors will link them more

significantly to stress. Some student-related factors were found to have a greater predictive power in determining the issue compared to others.

The second inquiry of the study pertained to the various approaches employed by Iraqi foreign language teachers in managing their classroom stress (What strategies Iraqi foreign language teachers apply to cope with their stress in the classrooms?). In order to respond to this question, second questionnaire called teachers' coping strategies Questionnaires was utilized.

Table 4. frequencies of participants' responses to the coping strategies Questionnaires

No	Item	I've been doing this a lot	A medium amount	A little bit	I haven't been doing this at all
1	I have been engaging in work or other activities as a distraction from my thoughts.	13%	20%	45%	25%
2	"I've been telling myself that this is not actually happening."	13%	40%	32%	10%
3	I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.	3%	24%	47%	26%
4	I've been using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.	15%	18%	38%	28%
5	I've been getting emotional support from others.	4%	41%	35%	18%
6	I have stopped attempting to cope with it.	17%	31%	40%	12%
7	"I have been taking steps to improve the situation."	6%	22%	39%	33%
8	"I have been in denial about it actually occurring."	15%	32%	33%	20%
9	"I have been expressing my negative emotions through words."	2%	19%	45%	34%
10	I have been receiving assistance and guidance from others.	30%	31%	30%	10%
11	"I have been relying on medications or substances to help me cope with it."	8%	8%	42%	42%
12	"I have been attempting to view it from a different perspective in order to make it appear more optimistic."	34%	27%	25%	14%
13	I've been criticizing myself.	11%	28%	34%	27%
14	"I have been attempting to devise a plan on how to proceed."	33%	30%	29%	8%
15	Someone has been providing me with support and empathy.	12%	29%	32%	27%
16	"I have decided to stop trying to handle the situation."	16%	30%	29%	27%
17	I have been searching for something positive in the current situation.	1%	22%	40%	37%
18	"I have been joking about it."	11%	17%	38%	34%

19	I have been engaging in various activities to distract myself from thinking about it, such as going to the movies, watching TV, reading, daydreaming, sleeping, or shopping.	31%	28%	27%	17%
20	I've been accepting the reality of the fact that it has happened.	28%	39%	25%	8%
21	I've been expressing my negative feelings.	29%	31%	21%	19%
22	I've been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.	15%	35%	29%	21%
23	I've been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do.	25%	38%	28%	9%
24	"I have been adapting to live with it."	4%	14%	47%	35%
25	I have been carefully considering the actions to be taken.	31%	39%	20%	5%
26	"I have been holding myself accountable for events that transpired."	16%	19%	35%	30%
27	"I have been engaging in prayer or meditation."	28%	35%	23%	14%
28	"I've been joking about the situation."	8%	29%	38%	25%

The second research question focused on the coping mechanisms employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators. The coping strategies questionnaire items pertained to three distinct categories of coping strategies: problem-solving, emotional strategies, and avoidance strategies. As we can see from the frequencies provided based on the participants' answers to questionnaire in table above, with the reference to the overall evaluation of coping strategies by Iraqi EFL teachers, the findings clearly exhibited that the familiarity and profitability with coping strategy components is rather strong, and it is at appropriate level of acceptance. They seemed to be familiar with how the coping strategies work, and how these components may impact their teaching and learners' learning. EFL teachers seemed to be able to completely embrace and implement the coping strategies in their teaching process.

Table 4.8. Means and SD for each Component in coping strategy

NO	Component	No.	Mean	Standard deviation
Problem-focused strategies				
1	Active coping	115	59	0.99
2	Use of information support	115	31	1.08
3	Positive reframing	115	22	1.06
4	Planning	115	79	0.92
Emotional-focused strategies				
5	Emotional support	115	17	1.09
6	Venting	115	72	1.05
7	Humor	115	29	0.45
8	Acceptance	115	81	0.89
9	Self-blame	115	11	0.90
10	Religious	115	67	1.11

Avoidance strategies				
11	Self-distraction	115	34	0.96
12	Substance Use	115	59	1.13
13	Denial	115	26	0.99
14	Behavioral disengagement	115	45	1.08

The researcher calculated the overall mean score (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) obtained from the EFL teachers' responses to the questionnaire for each of three coping strategy component. As demonstrated in table above Iraqi EFL teachers tapped their coping strategy familiarity first and foremost by Problem-focused strategies (M: 47.75, SD: 1.01). The second most frequently used coping strategies by participants was emotional strategies (M: 46.16, SD: 0.91). The next one as it is obvious were Avoidance strategies that were rated as the last categories (M:41, SD:1.04).

5. Discussion

Regarding the first research question, the study utilized Teachers' Stressors Questionnaire that proposed by Bakhtiari and Afzali (2023). Research findings indicated that stress experienced by Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators is predominantly linked to their students rather than their work environment. The data revealed that a decline in job satisfaction emerged as the most common source of work-related stress for these teachers. Job satisfaction for EFL teachers is intricately tied to the level of stress experienced during teaching. Another commonly cited issue is a decrease in perceived efficiency. The findings indicated that a decline in self-efficacy contributes to feelings of stress. This suggests a possible link between teachers' self-efficacy levels and their experience of stress. The third most common cause of work-related stress pertained to balancing personal life with professional responsibilities. The questionnaire proceeded to examine stressors related to students.

Handling disciplinary issue with students was rated as the first significant student-related stressors for EFL teachers of Iraq. Teachers face challenges when students exhibit disruptive or aggressive behaviors like arriving late to class, cheating on exams, and intentionally not paying attention to the teacher. The second cause of stress from this point of view was dealing with uninterested students. EFL teachers always care about providing entertaining activities as well as environment to attract students who are not into learning. This is one of components that makes a big amount of stress for them. The results of this part of study is in accordance with studies of other researchers such as Usher et al., (2021) In an open-ended survey, inquired about the primary source of stress during the pandemic among undergraduate students. Around

33% of the participants identified challenges related to motivation and self-control. Bakhtiari and Afzali (2023) in which they also found work-related and student-related stress as two main source of stress for EFL teachers. Ayalew and colleagues (2022) found similar results in their research, indicating that stress has a detrimental impact on the working behavior of EFL teachers. The stress can originate from either students or the environment.

Regarding second research question that was looking for Iraqi EFL teachers' coping strategies, another questionnaire called teachers' coping strategies Questionnaires was utilized. EFL teachers' coping strategies were analyzed against main three components in the questionnaire: Problem-focused strategies, emotional strategies, and Avoidance strategies. Results came from their responses to the questionnaire that EFL teachers tapped their coping strategy familiarity first and foremost by Problem-focused strategies.

Then second most frequently used coping strategies by participants was emotional strategies, and that rated one was avoidance strategies. These findings suggest that teachers accept the obligation of handling stressful circumstances. They embrace their responsibility as an essential element of resilience within the challenging environment of classes and strive to strategize, gather knowledge, or redefine the significance of the challenges. The findings align with a previous study conducted by Kim et al. (2020), which demonstrated that one's perception of stress can forecast job-related stress and indirectly influence teacher attrition by the end of the academic year. Also, Alrashidi (2022) conducted a separate investigation which emphasized the significance of anxiety experienced in teaching foreign languages within the EFL classroom.

The research findings from the qualitative part of the study indicated that the stress faced by EFL teachers was impacted by various environmental and personal elements. It was also concluded that the level of motivation for many participants was affected by work-related stressors, including underperforming students, disruptive behavior, disinterest in learning, excessive workload, inadequate salary, and low societal appreciation.

To add more, the interviewed teachers also showed the influence of online education on their private life. According to their statement, the challenge of managing personal and work life brings about stress and impacts their mental health. Teachers discussed how students' technology-related challenges were linked to the amount of stress teachers experienced.

Problems with internet connection and software issues which some students faced also played a significant role. These problems impeded the students and hampered their involvement and participation in courses. Furthermore, it was revealed that teachers experience heightened stress levels as a result of their apprehensions regarding students' insufficient motivation. The

qualitative dimension of the study also confirmed a correlation between students' involvement and the anxiety felt by teachers. During interviews, the participants articulated that learners' engagement encompasses the effort invested in educational tasks, active participation in learning activities, and self-regulation. They emphasized the critical importance of student engagement in effectively delivering educational courses.

Numerous educational institutions were discovered to possess insufficient understanding when it came to integrating technology resources in order to actively engage students. A considerable number of respondents relied on conventional teaching materials and techniques used in standard classroom environments, without integrating any interactive components into their instructional programs. The results of this study is in line with Other studies such as Aydin (2016), Asif (2017), Pasaribu and Harendita (2018), Novitasari and Murtafi'ah (2022) investigated the sources of teachers' stress and proposed types of strategies that they utilized to cope with stress.

6. CONCLUSION

Because EFL teachers face numerous stress factors, stress has emerged as a significant danger in their teaching environment. Consequently, this research investigated the stress experienced by EFL teachers and the elements that contribute to it (job satisfaction, students-teacher commination, life-work balance, mismanagement, demotivation, lack of efficiency, and etc.) and coping strategies. In order to achieve these objectives, the researcher employed a descriptive survey approach that predominantly focused on quantitative analysis, as well as sequential explanatory methods involving qualitative data. Consequently, the results indicated that stressors linked to students were the primary causes of stress. According to the findings, teachers predominantly employ problem-oriented coping methods rather than focusing on emotions or avoiding the issue. In general, these outcomes underscore the significance of stress and anxiety experienced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in the context of teaching English in a classroom setting. Consequently, it is crucial to ensure the implementation of necessary measures to improve the creation of more effective and encouraging settings, which could aid English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators in Iraq in mitigating or alleviating the adverse consequences of stress associated with teaching a non-native language.

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