INVESTIGATING WORK STRESS PERCEPTIONS AND ITS RELATION TO THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS OF WORK STRESS AMONGST A GROUP OF TEACHERS

by

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DEDICATED TO
-Gerhardus Lee van Heerden-

In memory of my beloved brother. Thank you for your support and care.
I will miss you forever.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1   BACKGROUND

Since 1976 people used the term 'stress' as a syndrome of human responses (Jex, Beehr, & Roberts, 1992). The term was often interpreted differently and today it is evident that there has been confusion about the term work stress (Jex, Beehr, & Roberts, 1992). Sager and Wilson (2001) indicated that differences in the way work stress is defined must be minimized. In doing so, future studies will find it less challenging to make comparisons to related constructs. Literature shows that there are different perspectives that aim to clarify the vague construct of work stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Researchers tend to avoid the problem of this vaguely defined construct by choosing to examine stress without a clear definition or framework. "The meaning of job stress remains to be established." (Sager & Wilson, 2001, p. 52).

It is difficult for researchers to study work stress in the absence of a standard definition for the concept (Sager & Wilson, 1995). According to Jex et al. (1992) the agreement of important terms and constructs are absent in work stress research. Researchers also struggle to compare the work stress construct with other related constructs because of the lack of a standardized definition (Sager & Wilson, 2001). Fevre and Kolt (2008) pointed out that the study of work stress is of great importance to both workers and their employers.

According to Kinman and Jones (2005) work stress is a dynamic construct and it will go through rapid changing processes in the working environment as experienced by employees. It is often not realised how powerful and varied the work stress term is, and how it may influence the daily life of an individual (Kinman & Jones, 2005). When participants were asked in

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studies what the meaning of work stress is; no one could give a clear definition for this construct. The participants interpret work stress by referring to personal, social and environmental factors. They also refer to the outcomes of stress (Kinman & Jones, 2005). It is also indicated that the majority of participants stated that stress is unavoidable and not much can be done to manage it (Kinman & Jones, 2005). Participants may possibly feel this way because they don't have a proper understanding of work stress. The construct is unclear and vaguely defined by individuals (Kinman & Jones, 2005).

Kinman and Jones (2005) argue that more studies should be carried out to investigate how employees themselves define work stress. In addition to this, Kinman and Jones (2005) stated that more successful interventions could develop if the perspectives of employees are considered. "The concept of stress is not only of academic interest: its increasing salience in modern Western society as a metaphor for human misfortune, dissatisfaction and suffering has been documented" (Kinman & Jones, 2005, p. 102). Sager and Wilson (2001) also mentioned that research about work stress is increasing. The popularity of this construct indicates that individuals will proceed to use this construct in order to describe feelings and familiarities experienced in the workplace (Kinman & Jones, 2005).

It is important to realize that when individual perspectives and experiences (of work stress) are being described, there may not be any shared meanings (Kirkcaldy, Athanasou, & Trimpop, 2000). Firth (1985) provides evidence that the concept of work stress is based on personal meanings. He also asserts that the use of different theories, models and methods to define work stress is essential to create a better and fuller understanding of the construct and the environment it is found in.

It is assumed by the researcher that the daily experiences in the work environment of education differ from teacher to teacher. However, possible links between the experiences of work stress of these teachers and theoretical work stress concepts could be identified by the researcher. Therefore the individual perspectives and experiences of Grade 3 teachers will be investigated to obtain evidence of the concept of work stress in order to compare the perceptions of work stress of these teachers with theoretical work stress models and methods.

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1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is currently no standard definition that exists for the concept of work stress (Sager & Wilson, 1995). The lack of a standard definition makes it complicated for researchers to demarcate the concept of work stress (Sager & Wilson, 1995). The purpose of the research study will be to locate this construct in a theoretical framework that is relative to other constructs. There is a need to reduce the many different definitions in order to arrive at a standardised work stress definition.

Kinman and Jones (2005) suggests that rather than abandoning the concept of work stress completely, an effective possibility may be to study how and why people use the work stress label to define themselves and others in different work situations. Hobföll (1989) affirms that influential perspectives of work stress are offered with the purpose of defining the nature of what has been verified to be an empirical but unclear construct. Furthermore Hobföll (1989) indicated that researchers avoid the problematic issue of defining the concept of work stress. They instead choose to study the concept of work stress without a clear framework (Hobföll, 1989). Pienaar (1998, p. 14) stated that: "whatever the soundness of logic may be in the various approaches to defining 'stress', the general picture in the field can only be described as one of confusion."

The success of work stress research will be subject to the capability of researchers to prove that work stress is not an unclear concept, but it is rather a complex, multidimensional and environmentally determined concept (Hobföll, 1989). As previously stated Sager and Wilson (1995) argue that the actuality of multiple work stress definitions should not delay the research of this concept.

1.3   PURPOSE STATEMENT

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of work stress experienced by a group of Grade 3 teachers and its relation to theoretical explanations of work stress. Firth (1985) states that the concept of work stress is based on personal experiences and perceptions. In addition to personal experiences and perceptions, existing theories and models can be used to create a better understanding of this concept (Firth, 1985). Once

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the personal experiences and perceptions of the group of Grade 3 teachers have been gathered, the relation of the data to theoretical work stress explanations will be determined.

The main focus is not to support teachers in terms of possible work stress interventions but to investigate the work stress perceptions of the teachers and its relation to theoretical explanations of work stress. The teachers will only participate in the study as the sample group, to enable the researcher to determine whether any relations exist between the work stress experienced by the group of teachers and the theoretical explanations of work stress. Moreover this study will contribute to the research field of work stress with regards to the current literature as well as the development of work stress interventions.

1.4   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were developed for the purpose of this study:

- How do work stress perceptions of a group of Grade 3 teachers relate to theoretical work stress concepts?
- Can different theoretical work stress concepts defined through research be found in the work stress perceptions of a group of teachers?

1.5   ACADEMIC VALUE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

This research study aims to clarify the concept of work stress experienced by a group of Grade 3 teachers and to determine if work stress theory, as well as models, relate to the perceptions and experiences of these teachers. Based on the assumption that work stress is currently a significant problem in the world of work, research and solutions to decrease work stress are necessary. Work stress is vaguely defined and needs to be clarified for future work stress research to be effective. Researchers tend to avoid the problem of this vaguely defined construct by choosing to examine stress without a clear definition or framework (Sager & Wilson, 1995).

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Furthermore, this research study will make valuable contributions in terms of future research that will be conducted in the field of work stress. It is assumed that it is unacceptable to conduct work stress research with ill-defined work stress concepts. The perceptions and experiences of work stress of Grade 3 teachers can be of significant importance when future research is conducted on this specific topic. A well-defined work stress definition will aid further research of work stress experienced by Grade 3 teachers. This study could contribute to future research in terms of providing this definition of work stress, indicating possible links between work stress theories and models, and the work stress perceptions of a group of Grade 3 teachers.

On a practical level this research study will assist teachers gaining a better understanding of stress within their daily work situations. Future research about work stress experienced by teachers can use the results of this particular study as a basis for the definition of the concept of work stress. This study will emphasize the importance of taking subjects' personal perceptions, as well as experiences of their career stress, as a departure point for understanding their work stress experiences and on this basis build meaningful interventions in terms of stress management.

1.6   DELIMITATIONS

In terms of the context, the study is limited to the teaching industry. Only teachers from one specific English speaking school in Gauteng are considered as part of the study. The proposed study is limited to Grade 3 teachers that have been teaching for a minimum of two years. The study focuses on the perceptions of work stress and is limited to how the teachers perceive work stress. Stressors as such are not taken into account.

In terms of the literature review, the study is limited to published literature. Thus unpublished literature and opinion papers are excluded from this research. There are no limitations on the date the literature was published. Literature that dated from before 2005 as well as literature from 2005 to 2013 are included in the research. This decision was made based on the various definitions of work stress in the past that supports the process of obtaining work stress theories and models and allow comparison with the perceptions of the teachers. Work pressure increased and rapid changes in the work environment took

place over the past 20 years (Fevre & Kolt, 2010). It is assumed that this lead to a change in the meaning of the concept of work stress. Literature published before 2005 is therefore included so that the change in the meaning of work stress is accounted for. It is regarded as valuable criteria that can aid the development and identification of work stress theories and models.

Furthermore, literature with regards to strains and stressors are excluded from this study because work stress should not be defined in terms of stressors or strains, but rather as a construct in its own right (Kuchinke, Cornachione, Oh, & Kang, 2010).

1.7   DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

This study makes use of the following terms:

- **Investigating** refers to the systematic work of enquiry that will be conducted by the researcher in order to examine the work stress perceptions and its relation to theoretical explanations amongst a group of teachers.

- **Perceptions** is the way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted. The way in which a group of teachers understands and interprets the construct of work stress will be investigated.

- **Teachers** are people that are professionally trained in order to educate people for a specific purpose.

- **Theoretical explanations** are conceptual clarifications or justifications that give meaning and understanding to a specific discipline. The theoretical explanations of work stress are thus the clarification of the construct which assumes knowledge and acceptance.

- **Work stress** is the construct that is being investigated. The literature review stated clearly that there is still no generally accepted definition for work stress.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 WORK STRESS DEFINED AS A STANDARDISED CONSTRUCT

Many different definitions of the concept of work stress surfaced during a review of available literature. It is evident that work stress can be defined and interpreted in different ways. In the process of creating a possible standardised definition for work stress there are important considerations to keep in mind, namely: the development of the concept, different perspectives, current academic theory, the individual perspective and defining the concept of work stress across different occupations. The focus will be on current theories and models as well as the individual perceptions of Grade 3 teachers.

2.1.1 THE CONCEPT WORK STRESS DEVELOPED OVER TIME

The concept of work stress has a significant history (Calnan, Wainwright, & Almond, 2000). During war, people had no understanding of the concept of work stress (Patmore, 2008). The concept of work stress can be drawn back to the 1920's during the post war period where psychologists Walter Cannon (1925, 1939) and Hans Selye (1936) did laboratory experiments concerning this widespread concept (Calnan et al., 2000). Most of the earlier research on work stress was conducted in order to develop methods for the employment of mentally tough staff in the military (Calnan et al., 2000).

According to Hobfoll (1989), Walter Cannon (1932) was perhaps the first researcher in modern times to apply the concept of stress to people. Hobfoll (1989) asserts that Cannon was mostly concerned with the effects of lack of oxygen, cold and other external environmental stressors. He also stated that according to Cannon, a small number of stressors could be handled but a prolonged large number of stressors will lead to a breakdown. Hans Selye (1950, 1951-1956) carried the research of Cannon forward and illustrated that stress operates with physiological systems that protects the body of the human being (Hobfoll, 1989). This was called the General Adaptation Syndrome. In addition to this, Hobfoll (1989) stated that Eric Lindemann (1944) and Gerald Caplan (1964) were some of the first researchers to present a psychological view of stress. They

argued that it is critical to highlight that distress could arise as the product of conflict between stressful events.

According to Fevre and Kolt (2010), researchers complained about the inconsistency of the work stress definition since 1984. It is difficult to make comparisons across studies since the concept of work stress is rarely defined from a theoretical viewpoint (Sager & Wilson, 1995). Researchers have even suggested that there is no such thing as work stress, just because the definition is so vague (Fevre & Kolt, 2010). It is important to know the origin of the concept of work stress in order to study it and to gain a better understanding of this concept (Väänänen, Anttila, Turtiainen, & Varje, 2012). Väänänen et al. (2012) argues that the concept of work stress can be related to changes that took place in the work environment, in work content and in the society as a whole. According to Väänänen et al. (2012) the development of work stress research is protracted because of the changing nature of the work environment.

Väänänen et al. (2012) also states that work stress research began when industrial production and modern warfare increased the demand for knowledge about psychological problems and how people can cope with stress. When Western societies changed towards a service-oriented economy in the late 20th century, the workplace context of work stress also changed (Väänänen et al. 2012). It could be said that reformulation of work stress discussions and approaches were required. In addition to this Väänänen et al. (2012) provides evidence that between 1970 and 1990 the concept of work stress changed from a political issue to an organisational health concern. During the political oriented focus, work stress research was concentrated on work environment characteristics rather than the individual with subjective experiences (Calnan et al., 2000). The concept of work stress developed between 1960 and 1970 because of social changes (Väänänen et al., 2012).

During this period the research field in the USA was subjugated by the Role Stress Theory (Calnan et al., 2000). This theory focused on personal characteristics as opposed to the situational characteristics of the stress that is experienced (Calnan et al., 2000). At first work stress research was defined as an economical problem rather than the failure of an individual coping with stressful situations (Kinman & Jones, 2005). The focus soon shifted away from the social aspects of work stress to the micro level aspects such as the health

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concerns of the employee as an individual and facilitated its way into human resource management (Väänänen et al., 2012: Calnan et al., 2000).

The study of Väänänen et al. (2012) shows that work stress research is divergent. Different discussions and traditions about this concept have developed over many years providing us with information far beyond the original topic of interest (Väänänen et al. 2012). Kinman and Jones (2005) indicate that stress became such a popular phenomenon because of the explanatory value of this concept. Current research on work stress can explain feeling states, environmental factors and physical sensations (Kinman & Jones, 2005). Kinman and Jones (2005) also argue that representations of work stress will be affected by the rapid changes in the work environment and will thus not remain static.

2.1.2   IS THERE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING THE CONCEPT OF A WORK STRESS DEFINITION?

Over time, there has been little agreement with regards to the definition of the concept of work stress and what it entails (Jex et al., 1992). Often stress is defined according to other related constructs and this may lead to confusion (Jex et al., 1992). According to Jex et al. (1992) researchers typically defined stress as a stimulus, a response, or as a relationship between stimulus and response. This in turn led to a variation in the usage of this construct and often caused difficulty to integrate work stress findings. It may also be a possible reason why work stress research has progressed so slowly (Jex et al., 1992). Jex et al. (1992) asserts that the usage of the concept of work stress is unclear and causes difficulty and stagnation in the field of work stress research.

Devereux, Hastings and Noone (2009) mention that there is no comprehensive theoretical definition that explains staff stress. Even though this construct is so important, the concept of work stress is difficult to define and has proved to be vague within the work stress field of research (Jex et al., 1992). Miller, Buckholdt and Shaw (2008, p. 4) states that: "…there is no single unifying definition of this term in the literature". It is often seen in questionnaire items that some researchers use the word stress or closely related constructs without defining these constructs correctly (Jex et al., 1992). Researchers tend to use the word stress when they actually mean stressor or in some situations vice versa (Jex et al., 1992). Furthermore Jex et al. note that it is uncertain to which degree the word stress was used in

the past within questionnaires and thus the validity as well as the reliability of these results are questionable and unclear (Jex et al., 1992). This causes a methodological problem and should therefore be taken into consideration when conducting future research on stress (Jex et al., 1992).

According to Kirkcaldy, Athanasou and Trimpop (2000) the creation of a definition for work stress may lead to possible uncertainties because the concept of work stress is a snapshot of what an individual experiences as stressful within a specific moment. Kirkcaldy et al. (2000) argues that researchers are not able to make valid predictions on how individuals interpret stress because each individual experiences work stress in different ways across different contexts of their lives. Kinman and Jones (2005) assert that stress must be differentiated from strains in order to create a clear understanding of the concept of work stress. In 14% of the articles that was reviewed by Kinman and Jones (2005) the concept of work stress was not defined. Work stress is part of the everyday language in the work environment and still this concept lacks clarity (Kinman & Jones, 2005). One can clearly see that researchers understand that stress causes strains, however the meaning of stress still remains unclear and vague (Sager & Wilson, 1995). Sager and Wilson (1995) argue that the actuality of multiple work stress definitions should not delay the research of this concept.

Researchers also have the tendency to define stress as an illness because often stress leads to illness in the workplace (Kinman & Jones, 2005). Kinman and Jones (2005) explored conceptualisations of the concept of work stress from three interviews. They revealed that there is quite a varied amount of definitions of work stress and how it is understood. Currently there are many perspectives with the same goal to define the concept of work stress, however these perspectives are criticised as being too vague and are not empirically tested (Hobfoll, 1989). Hobfoll (1989) states that researchers study work stress without clear reference because they are avoiding the issue of defining the concept of work stress. People will continue to use the term work stress since it perfectly describes their everyday feelings and experiences even though there is still a lack of clarity about what work stress really means (Kinman & Jones, 2005). Hobfoll (1989) asserts that a clear theoretical background is needed in order to define the concept of work stress.

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Furthermore, he states that there are currently no defined borders in the work stress research that can be challenged. The concept of work stress is defined numerous times and can therefore not be rejected completely (Hobfoll, 1989). Fevre and Kolt (2010) also provides evidence of this by indicating that the concept of work stress has multiple definitions and can be conflicting at times. In a specific situation there could be little agreement between individuals on what causes stress and what is meant by this concept (Hobfoll, 1989).

Fevre and Kolt (2010) assert that people struggle to distinguish between the definition of stress and a stressor. After a previous claim that was made by another researcher which suggested that stress does not exist, Fevre and Kolt (2010) argued that stress does exist and can be experienced, but that this experience is complex and difficult to define. According to Patmore (2008) researchers failed to define the concept of work stress and that it will not be tolerated in other scientific fields. In addition to this, Patmore (2008) also notes that people tend to use the term "stress" as a cause in the one instance and thereafter as an effect. Furthermore, stress can be used to describe many different emotional states and possible problems in spite of the fact that the concept is so vague (Patmore, 2008). Patmore (2008, p.12) asserts that "…the term 'stress' was bogus, and that the theory and practice of 'stress management' was therefore by definition illogical, misleading and unscientific".

2.1.3   THE CONCEPT OF WORK STRESS IS MULTIDIMENSIONAL

Kinman and Jones (2005) stated that representation of work stress is multidimensional. Due to the fact that there is still no standardised definition of work stress, a wide range of approaches and definitions are adopted by researchers and a great deal of influencing factors are taken into account (Kinman & Jones, 2005). It is assumed that the individual himself/herself is the first major influence that causes this concept to be multidimensional. What each individual believes about work stress will influence the way he/she perceives it, manages it, as well as how they respond to it within different situations (Kinman & Jones, 2005). The definition of work stress that is personally created by each individual overlaps common meanings of this concept (Kirkcaldy et al., 2000). According to Hobfoll (1989) each individual will have a different reaction when they experience stress. Reacting to a

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stressful situation is a normal and stable personality characteristic, which differs from individual to individual (Hobfoll, 1989).

Due to the fact that each individual interprets stress in a different way, it can be understood that there is still no standardised definition for the concept of work stress. The knowledge of stress is obtained through a variety of sources from different situations and stages in an individual's life (Kinman & Jones, 2005). In the study of Kinman and Jones (2005, p. 109) most of the interviewees described work stress as follows: ''I would say stress is related to anxiety brought about by a whole series of pressures at work.'' and: '''I think it (stress) means a point at which people can't cope: either their day-to-day experience doesn't match their expectations or their past experience.''

It seems that there are many sources that an individual uses in order to develop such a definition and that there are many factors to consider when focusing on an individual's perspective of work stress. Influencing factors that should be taken into consideration when the concept of work stress is researched are: the faster pace of the work environment, the increase of job insecurity and the increasing demands of employers (Kinman & Jones, 2005). In addition to this Kinman and Jones (2005) assert that stress does not exist in a vacuum and thus cannot be studied by extracting the individual from his or her cultural and social context. Social, cultural and political factors are related factors and influence the concept of work stress on a micro as well as a macro level (Wainwright & Calnan, 2000). Furthermore, Calnan et al. (2000) asserts that socio-cultural factors and experiences should be taken into account when work stress is defined as these are the factors that shape the individual.

The concept of work stress is also influenced by political decision making and the changing society we live in (Calnan et al., 2000). "…the concept of work stress gained such great influence not only in various domains of scientific research but also in lay discourses and political decision-making…" (Väänänen et al., 2012, p.785). According to Kirkcaldy et al. (2000) an individual together with the work stress that he/she experiences is related to his/her situation. Other contexts and factors to consider that will have an influence on the concept of work stress are: the personal context, a person's position,

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organisational contexts, working conditions, physical dangers, excessive workload and unexpected events (Kirkcaldy et al. 2000). Firth (1985) used the relationship between a therapist and his/her clients to examine the meaning behind their stressful situations. The study found that childhood relationships also had an influence on how individuals perceive stress and experience it in different situations.

Sager and Wilson (1995) note that causal relationships exist between work stress and other related constructs and that a possible problem may arise because there is no validated causal framework to clearly explain these relationships. Since the concept of work stress is still vaguely defined, confusion exists about the causes along with the outcomes of work stress (Sager & Wilson, 1995). Change often takes place in the working environment and is one of the main constructs that has a causal relationship with the concept of work stress (Fevre & Kolt, 2010). Stressors outside of the work environment can also contribute to work stress and are also related constructs that have a causal relationship with the concept of work stress (Fevre & Kolt, 2010). Work stress does not stand alone but interacts and is influenced by other related constructs (Väänänen et al., 2012). Väänänen et al. (2012, p.790) states that "…work stress should be seen as part of a complex and dynamic system of transactions between the person and his [or her] environment."

2.1.4   SUBJECTIVE VIEW (INDIVIDUAL) VS. OBJECTIVE VIEW (ACADEMIC LITERATURE)

Kinman and Jones (2005) stated that, although there is conformity between theoretical stress concepts in scientific literature, the individual perception of work stress should be examined more often. According to Hobfoll (1989) the concept of work stress cannot be defined without the perception of an individual who experiences stress. Hobfoll (1989) argues that subjective work stress perceptions, as well as the objective perceptions should be taken into account when this concept is defined. Work stress can no longer be defined in an objective manner without considering the perception of the person experiencing the stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Fevre and Kolt (2010) argue that defining the concept of work stress is mostly academically centred and sometimes has little relevance to what people mean when they experience work stress. There are not many work stress experience

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examples in academic literature (Fevre & Kolt, 2010). Furthermore Fevre and Kolt (2010, p. 26) state that: "In the meantime, however, there does appear to be general agreement between academic and non-academic concepts of stress even though that agreement encompasses considerable confusion."

In the UK, together with many other countries, societal trends shifted the focus of stress research into a more individualistic direction (Väänänen et al., 2012). Calnan et al. (2000) states that work stress research focused on work characteristics and occupational health rather than focusing on what the individual worker actually experiences. Researchers have the tendency to study the assumed outcomes of work stress rather than the subjective outcomes that is experienced by the worker (Devereux et al., 2009). Different work stress experiences are unique to each individual but these experiences also represent generalised aspects of work stress experiences (Firth, 1985).

According to Väänänen et al. (2012) there are still clear differences between the objective (traditional) and subjective perspective of social and behavioural sciences. The objective approach still interprets the environment as a source of exposures that gets measured objectively (Väänänen et al., 2012). The subjective approach focuses on the individual perspectives and experiences in a certain situation (Väänänen et al., 2012). Dolan and Ender (2008) found a clear contradiction between how the organisation perceived work stress and how the employees perceived work stress. Firth (1985) argues that researchers do not admit that stress is an individual experience and process.

2.1.5   DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF WORK STRESS IN TERMS OF DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

Calnan et al. (2000) suggests that work stress should not be examined as a purely objective concept because an individual can feel stressed in one job and not in another. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors differs from job to job and can lead to different intensities of stress that affects different people in different situations within that specific job (Kuchinke et al., 2010). They also state that when an individual highly values his job, the individual is likely to spend less time in non-working areas of his life and that this may increase the levels of work stress (Kuchinke et al., 2010). Miller et al. (2008) also claims that what one

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employee experiences as devastating work stress another employee may experience it differently. Each individual responds differently to different situations and will thus perceive work stress in that specific job different than another individual (Kirkcaldy et al., 2000).

An employee's perception of what work stress is differs from what an employer thinks the meaning of work stress is (Kinman & Jones, 2005). They state that employers tend to emphasise individual failing and internal factors, whereas employees will tend to emphasise environmental factors when a perception of work stress needs to be developed. Most of the literature in work stress research is obtained from the perspective of a manager (Kinman & Jones, 2005). Kinman and Jones (2005) assert that perceptions and meanings of work stress will differ across different occupations and occupational statuses.

Sager and Wilson (1995) also state that the conceptualisation of work stress differs across occupations. They further explain that interpretations of work stress can be grouped into different schools of thought. They provide an example of how medical employees will fit into a different school of thought than psychology employees. This will thus lead to different interpretations of work stress across these different jobs (Sager & Wilson, 1995). Hobfoll (1989) explains that employees will respond differently to challenges in their work environments and since each job provides different challenges, the interpretation of work stress will differ across different occupations.

2.1.6   PREVIOUS ACADEMIC DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF WORK

Different work stress definitions that were developed by different researchers are listed in the following section. Whilst there are some resemblances, the majority of approaches are unique. The variation in definitions portray the need for a standardised, generally accepted definition of the concept of work stress.

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Table 1: Literature definitions of work stress

Source	Definition
Väänänen, Anttila and Turtiainen (2012)	"It is a multifaceted, environmentally determined phenomenon that results in specific adverse health consequences" (p.790).
Fevre and Kolt (2010)	"Stress is experienced as physical manifestations as well as psychological and emotional states, and behavioural outcomes often with little differentiation between these different aspects" (p. 26).
Kuchinke, Cornachione and Oh (2010)	"Work stress was defined in terms of three dimensions related to participants' work roles: conflict between and among different facets of the job, ambiguity related to priorities of different aspects of the job, and overload" (p. 401).
Devereux, Hastings and Noone (2009)	"The experience of stress is a cognitive process and an individual phenomenon. Within this cognitive-behavioural model, it is proposed that stress is neither inherent in the environment nor the person but results from the relationship between them which is called transaction" (p. 565).
Miller, Buckholdt and Shaw (2008)	"They are standpoints for seeing stress as an aspect of contemporary work settings and orientations to addressing its negative consequences" (p. 5).
Kinman and Jones (2005)	"'stress' was defined in several ways: as a stimulus from the environment, as a response to environmental stimuli, and as a stimulus-response relationship" (p. 102).
Sager and Wilson (1995)	"Job stress is a psychological process wherein a person perceives personal resources as taxed, resulting in an unknown potential for negative outcomes" (p. 59).
Edwards (1992)	"Stress is a discrepancy between an employees perceived state and desired state, provided that this discrepancy is important by the employee" (p.246).
Jex, Beehr and Roberts (1992)	"A stimulus definition of stress refers to a job stressor, which is any environmental event in the workplace requiring some type of adaptive response" (p. 623).
Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1986)	"Stress denotes the psychological state experienced by an individual when faced with demands, constraints, and/or opportunities that have important but uncertain outcomes" (p. 38).
Motowidlo, Packard, and Manning (1986)	"An unpleasant emotional experience associated with elements of fear, dread, anxiety, irritation, annoyance, anger, sadness, grief and depression" (p.618).

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Source	Definition
Lazarus and Folkman (1984)	"A particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (p. 19).
Parasuraman and Alutto (1984)	"The psychological response state of disturbed affect experienced by an individual in relation to various job demands or constraints encountered in the work environment" (p. 332).
Parker and DeCotiis (1983)	"A particular individual's awareness of feeling of personal dysfunction as a result of perceived conditions or happenings in the work setting" (p. 161).
Blau (1981)	"A relationship between the person and the environment…where either an environmental (job) demand exceeds a person's response capability (overload), or the person's capabilities exceed the environmental demand (underload), the resulting misfit represents stress" (p.280).
Frankenhauser (1980)	"A process of transactions between the individual and his environment" (p. 47).
Ivancevich and Matteson (1980)	"An adaptive response, mediated by the individual characteristics and/or psychological processes that are a consequence of any external action, situation or event that places special physical and/or psychological demands upon a person" (p. 9).
Selye (1980)	"The nonspecific (that is common) result of any demand upon the body be it a mental or somatic demand for survival and the accomplishment of our demands" (p. vii).
Schuler (1980)	"A dynamic condition in which an individual is: a. confronted with an opportunity for being/having/doing what (s)he desires and/or b. confronted with a constraint on being…what (s)he desires and/or c. confronted with a demand on being/…what (s)he desires and for which the resolution of is perceived to have uncertainty but which will lead (upon resolution) to important outcomes" (p. 189).
Gupta and Beehr (1979)	"A demand from any aspect of the work role that has extreme or noxious characteristics" (p. 374).
Organ (1979)	"Stress itself, as a technical term, refers to a pattern of complex albeit well-defined physiological reactions" (p. 206).

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Source	Definition
Monat and Lazarus (1977)	"Cognitive factors leading to the evaluation of threat" (p. 2).
Selye (1976)	"The state manifested by a specific syndrome which consists of all the non-specifically induced changes within a biologic system" (p. 64).
McGrath (1976)	"There is a potential for stress when an environmental situation is perceived as presenting a demand which threatens to exceed the person's capabilities and resources for meeting it, under conditions where he expects a substantial differential in the rewards and costs from meeting the demand versus not meeting it" (p. 1352).
Kahn and Quinn (1970)	"Stimulus definitions were derived from physics and were borrowed by organizational psychologists from the field of engineering. In this frame of reference, stress means any outside force on an object (person), and strain is a potentially harmful effect of the force on that object"

The concept of work stress can be defined in terms of different categories. These categories are listed in the previous sections and comprise: the development of the concept over time, whether there is a common understanding, the multidimensionality of the concept, subjective as well as objective views, and previous definitions of this concept. Future research can determine which category defines stress in the best way. Such a classification is however outside the scope of this study.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF WORK STRESS CATEGORIZED IN TERMS OF DIFFERENT THEORIES, MODELS AND INTERPRETATIONS

2.2.1 THEORIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE CURRENT DEFINITIONS WORK STRESS.

According to Väänänen et al. (2012) modern work stress research is influenced by the theories of Abraham Maslow (1943) and Carl Rogers (1951). Between 1950 and 1960 researchers indicated that employment did not provide for self-esteem and self-actualisation, which constitute the higher level needs of Maslow's theory (Väänänen et al., 2012). It can be assumed that, according to these levels, it was hypothesised that it would

increase intrinsic motivation and improve the wellbeing of the working mind. The humanist view was influenced by the work motivation theory of Frederic Herzberg and the stress-related coping mechanisms of Lazarus (Väänänen et al., 2012).

Väänänen et al. (2012) also indicated that there is a need to make a human actor part of the field of work stress research. Lazarus had another theory that consists of the stress appraisal process (Firth, 1985). Within this theory, a stressful situation was defined as a situation that is evaluated as threatening (Firth, 1985). The cybernetics or control theory is another theory that is discussed by Edwards (1992), who points out that it is widely accepted as an all-purpose theoretical framework for understanding the behaviour of humans. Kuchinke et al. (2010) defined stress for the purpose of their study in terms of the role theory. In the past the role theory could clearly direct behaviours in a certain job. However, because of the changing work environment we live in, behaviours of individuals in work environments aren't clearly definable anymore (Kuchinke et al., 2010). In addition to this, they also note that individuals take on greater responsibilities and have to fulfil role expectations which influence their commitment, career resilience, motivation, skills, and experiences.

As a result of the demanding work environment, their stress levels increase (Kuchinke et al., 2010). To make use of the role theory in defining the concept of work stress, Kuchinke et al. (2010) selected constructs with the purpose of measuring role conflict (multiple and mutually exclusive role expectations), role overload (too many role expectations) and role ambiguity (uncertain role expectations). Kuchinke et al. (2010) assert that positive correlations exist between the three dimensions when they are linked to work stress. Väänänen et al. (2012) provided a social theory-driven framework that relates to the new work stress era, underlying processes that are part of its development, and analytical observations on the subject of work stress. It is noticed that the modern work stress movement corresponded with intensive social change, amongst other examples the human rights movement and feminism (Väänänen et al., 2012).

Calnan et al. (2000) state that the USA research agenda was dominated by role stress theory during the 1960's and the 1970's. According to Calnan et al. (2000, p.297) "…the

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focus of which was very much on subjective characteristics and personal attributes rather than on the situational characteristics associated with the stress response.". The concept of work stress was politicized and made its way into human resource management in the corporate work environment (Calnan et al., 2000).

Devereux et al. (2009) affirms that there are numerous work stress theories that reflect its complexity. He discusses five of these theories, namely: person-environment, demand–support–control, cognitive–behavioural, emotional overload, and equity theory (Devereux et al., 2009). The person-environment theory illustrates that work stress does not result from the environment nor from the person, but instead from the fit between the person and the environment (Devereux et al., 2009). Devereux et al. (2009, p. 562) emphasises three differences in terms of the person-environment fit:

"Three distinctions are made regarding fit. The first and most basic distinction is between the person and the environment, which is a prerequisite for the conceptualization of person–environment fit. The second distinction is between the objective and subjective representations of the person and the environment. It is the notion of subjective fit, where there is a mismatch between workers' perception of the environment and perception of themselves that is seen as the major cause of work stress (Matteson 1987; Edwards et al. 1999). The third distinction in the person–environment model focuses on two further dimensions of fit. First, there is the needs-supplies dimension, where needs are described as the innate biological and psychological needs of the person, and supplies are described as the rewards of the job that meet the person's needs. Supplies can be financial, social, and related to the opportunity to achieve. Second, there is the demands-abilities dimension. This dimension describes the fit between the demands of the job and the abilities of the person to meet those demands (Edwards et al. 1999). Demands include quantitative and qualitative aspects of the work and abilities refer to the skills, time, and energy required to meet the demands. Stress is most clearly predicted to emerge on the needs-supplies dimension where the supplies do not match the person's needs, but may also occur in some situations where supplies exceed the person's need if, for instance, they inhibit the fulfilment of other needs."

It is predicted that stress will occur on the demands-abilities dimension as that is when the demands of the job surpasses the abilities of the person (Devereux et al., 2009). They also assert that it may possibly happen that the person's abilities exceed the demands of the job in situations where the person is too experienced for the job. The second theory that is discussed by Devereux et al. (2009) is the demand – control – support theory which is designed and developed by Karasek and Theorell (1990). This theory suggests that stress at work is influenced by the employee's perception of the demands of the job, the amount of control the employee has over his/her work activities and the support the employee receives at his/her job (Devereux et al., 2009).

According to Devereux et al. (2009) this theory suggests that employees will experience the most stress in jobs that are low in control, high in demands and low in support. The third theory that is discussed by Devereux et al. (2009) is Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Cognitive Behavioural Approach Theory. According to this theory "…stress is a cognitive process and an individual phenomenon." (Devereux et al., 2009, p. 565). Additionally this theory proposes that a stimulus only becomes a stressor when it is experienced as a stressor by the individual (Devereux et al., 2009). Devereux et al. (2009) asserts that this theory contributes to the understanding of why each individual differs in their stress responses.

Devereux et al. (2009) describe the fourth theory which is the emotional overload theory of Maslach (1982). Devereux et al. (2009) define this theory as having three dimensions, which include: depersonalisation, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion. Maslach (1982) refers to emotional exhaustion as the stress component. The last theory discussed by Devereux et al. (2009) is the equity theory, developed by Adams (1965). This influential theory advices people to seek equity when they are in a relationship with someone else (Devereux et al., 2009). They also explain that stress is predicted by this theory when inequity is perceived within a relationship. Kinman and Jones (2005) describe lay theories of work stress. The view represented by these theories is accurate in terms of the concept of work stress, seen as "residing neither solely in the individual nor in the environment but in the transaction between the two" (Kinman & Jones, 2005, p. 115).

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2.2.2 FRAMEWORK MODELS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE CURRENT DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF WORK STRESS.

Väänänen et al. (2012) state that a clear difference can be seen in the model of Cox and the earlier mechanistic stress models. The earlier stress models focused on men and their organisations as machines where the model of Cox points out that stress must be experienced and recognised by man (Väänänen et al., 2012). The relationship between an individual's perceptions, abilities, needs and the conditions at their job can be used to define the concept of work stress (Miller et al., 2008). This is called the Person-Environment Fit Model of work stress and it is developed by considering how the characteristics of the employee overlap with the characteristics of the workplace (Miller et al., 2008).

A model of conservation of resources is a new work stress model that is based on the belief that individuals attempt to protect, build and retain resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Once the individual experiences an actual loss of these resources they feel threatened (Hobfoll, 1989). Hobfoll (1989) asserts that people seek resources in a world that will provide them with success and pleasure. This is an important and long standing view that has been ignored in stress research. Freud (1900/1913) introduced the pleasure principle and Maslow (1968) suggested that people search for physical, social and psychological resources in a hierarchical order (Hobfoll, 1989). He also states that work stress is not the imbalance of response capacity and objective demands, but rather how the individual perceive these factors. Furthermore Hobfoll (1989, p. 516) asserts that:

> *"The definition of stress is derived directly from the model and the above mentioned basic tenet: Psychological stress is defined as a reaction to the environment in which there is (a) the threat of a net loss of resources, (b) the net loss of resources, or (c) a lack of resource gain following the investment of resources. Resources, then, are the single unit necessary for understanding stress."*

Wainwright and Calnan (2000) indicate that the model of Siegrist defines work stress in terms of the balance between the job performance of an individual and the rewards (intrinsic and extrinsic) the individual receives based on his/her job performance. This

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model is called the Effort Reward Imbalance model of work stress and is based on the principle that work stress can offer an opportunity to improve self-esteem and self-efficacy (Calnan et al. 2000). Wainwright and Calnan (2000) explain that when an imbalance exists between these two dimensions the individual will experience stress.

This model is based on a subjective assessment process because it depends on whether the employee thinks that the effort that is put into the job and the reward are in balance (Wainwright & Calnan, 2000). Hobfoll (1989) declares that the Homeostatic and Transactional models of stress are perhaps the most generally adapted models of stress. Moreover, Hobfoll (1989) states that a large part of these models are based on the research done by Lazarus in 1966, but are introduced by McGrath in 1970. Stress was defined by McGrath as a considerable imbalance between the response ability of the individual and the environmental demand (Hobfoll, 1989).

Johnson et al. (2005) discussed the original model of Cooper and Marshall (1976) which presents work stress in terms of five sources of stress in the organisation. This is called the ASSET Model and includes the following five sources: intrinsic sources to the job, the role of the individual in the organisation, relationships at work and organisational climate and structure (Johnson et al. 2005). The impact an individual's working life has on his/her personal life, the degree of satisfaction an individual gets from his/her job, the amount of autonomy an individual has in the workplace and the degree of commitment an individual has towards his/her job are additional sources that is also presented by the ASSET Model (Johnson et al. 2005).

It is indicated in the literature that the concept of work stress definition is explained in terms of theories and models. One of the main findings is the use of the word 'model' and 'theory' for similar explanations, even though these two words have different meanings. This may be a possible reason why defining the concept of work stress is complex and vague.

2.2.2.1 Specific models explained

The Stress Model of Behr and Newman

In 1978 a stress model was developed by Behr and Newman. This model is based on empirical research that describes the construct of work stress in such a way that it is easier to understand by others (Ottermann, 1990). Behr and Newman analysed different work stress phenomena in order to group them together. Work stress factors and other aspects that might have an influence on these specific work stress factors are taken into account in the stress model (Ottermann, 1990). Not all of these factors and aspects are empirically investigated but are still included in the model in order to demonstrate the influence and interdependence of the factors and different aspects of work stress.

Figure 1: The Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman (1978)

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│  │                        Time                              │   │
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│  │                                                          │   │
│  │  ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐         │   │
│  │  │                  │      │     Human        │         │   │
│  │  │ Personality      │      │  Consequences    │         │   │
│  │  │ Aspects          │      │                  │         │   │
│  │  └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘         │   │
│  │                                                          │   │
│  │         ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐         │   │
│  │         │              │   │   Adjustments    │         │   │
│  │         │   Process    │   │    Response      │         │   │
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│  │                                                          │   │
│  │  ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐            │   │
│  │  │  Environment     │   │    Business      │            │   │
│  │  │  Aspects         │   │  Consequences    │            │   │
│  │  └──────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘            │   │
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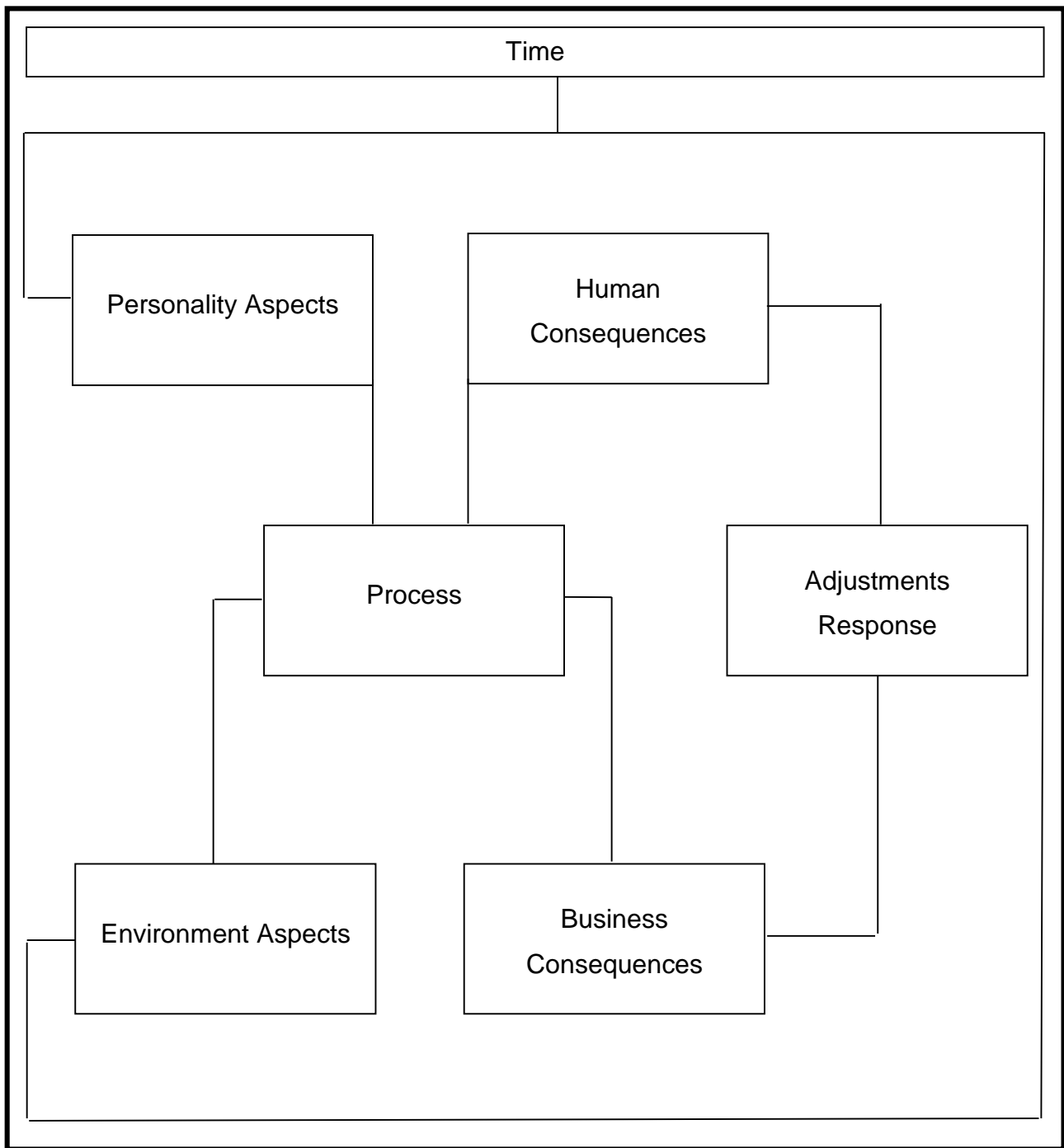
The model indicates that the personality factors and the environment factors are in relation to one another via the process factors. These factors develop a certain outcome which influences the organisation and the person involved. The person involved will demonstrate certain adjustment reactions which will then influence personal and environmental aspects (Ottermann, 1990).

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The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay

Stress is often defined in terms of the environment of an individual and how it is perceived (Cox & Mackay, 1981). Work stress is part of the environment that people find themselves in on a day to day basis (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The model is based on the perception that an individual has of his/her work environment and directly influencing the definition that the individual associates with work stress (Ottermann, 1990). Furthermore, Ottermann (1990) notes that work stress requires a transactional approach. The transactional stress model reflects the transaction between the individual and the individual's environment (Cox & Mackay, 1981).

Figure 2: The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay (1978)

Real Ability		Real Expectancy
Perceived Ability	Cognitive Judgment	Perceived Expectancy
	Imbalance = Stress	
Emotional Experience		Stress Response
	Psychological Response	Physiological Response
Cognitive Defence		Behavioural Response
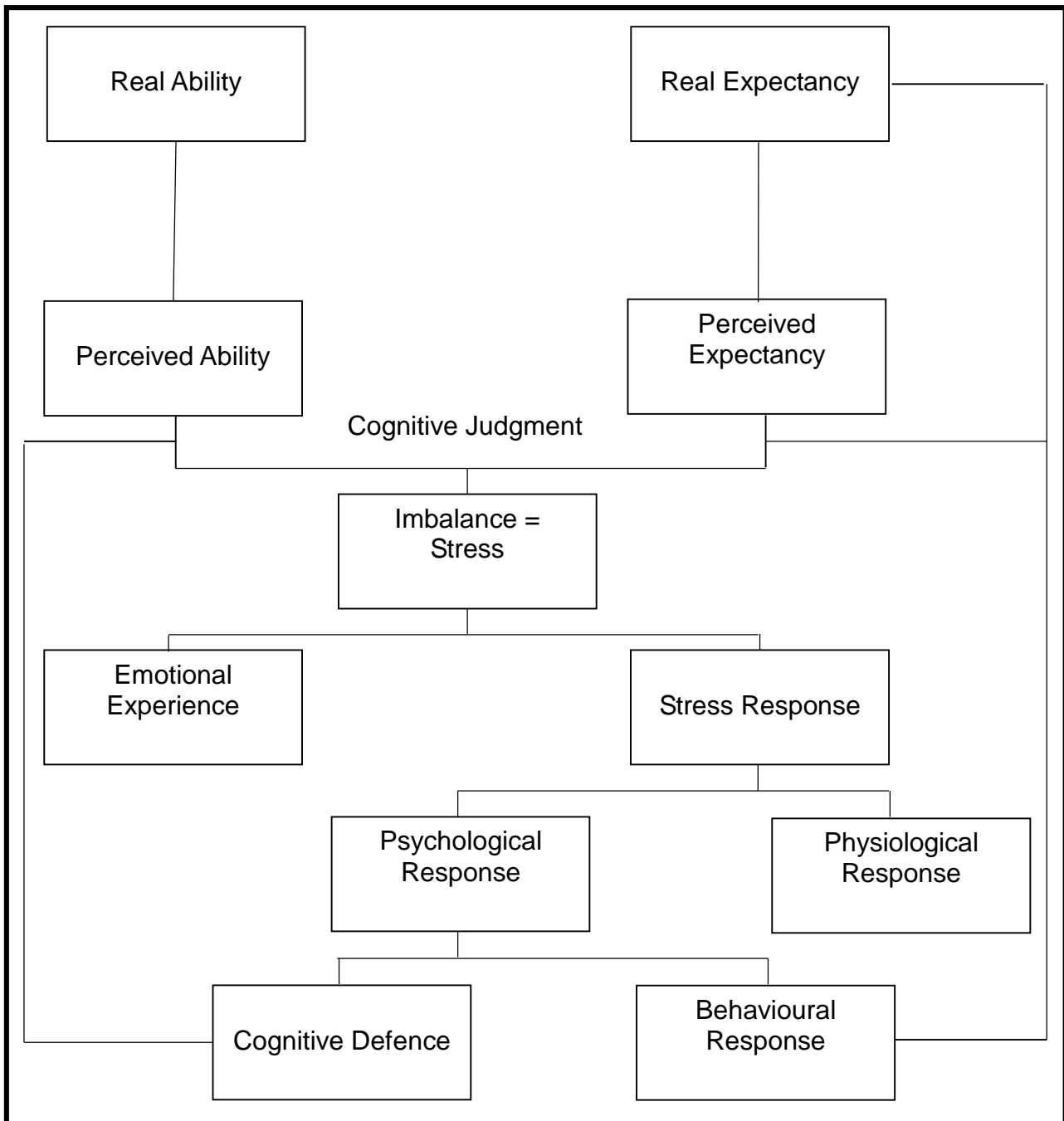
The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay (1981) consists of five phases:

- Sources of expectations
- Perceptions of expectations
- Psychophysiological stress responses

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- Outcome of coping response
- Feedback and evaluation

The sources of expectation comprise the factors within the external environment that is experienced by the individual (Ottermann, 1990). There are also internal factors which relate to the physiological and psychological needs of the individual. The perception of expectations is the second phase and refers to the ability of the individual to process the internal and external environmental expectations (Ottermann, 1990).

An imbalance between the expectations of the external and internal factors and the ability of the individual to cope with these expectations, will lead to stress (Cox & Mackay, 1981). Psychophysiological stress responses occur when an imbalance, as discussed, is experienced and these responses can be related to emotional experience. This emotional condition is accompanied by the change in the individual's physiological condition, as well as the cognitive and behavioural attempts, to decrease the stress that is experienced (Ottermann, 1990). It is assumed that the outcome of the coping responses refers to the real and the perceived consequences.

The Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans

This model postulates the interactional nature of the five factors during the stress process and the variables that may influence this process (Pienaar, 1998).

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Figure 3: The Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans (1988)
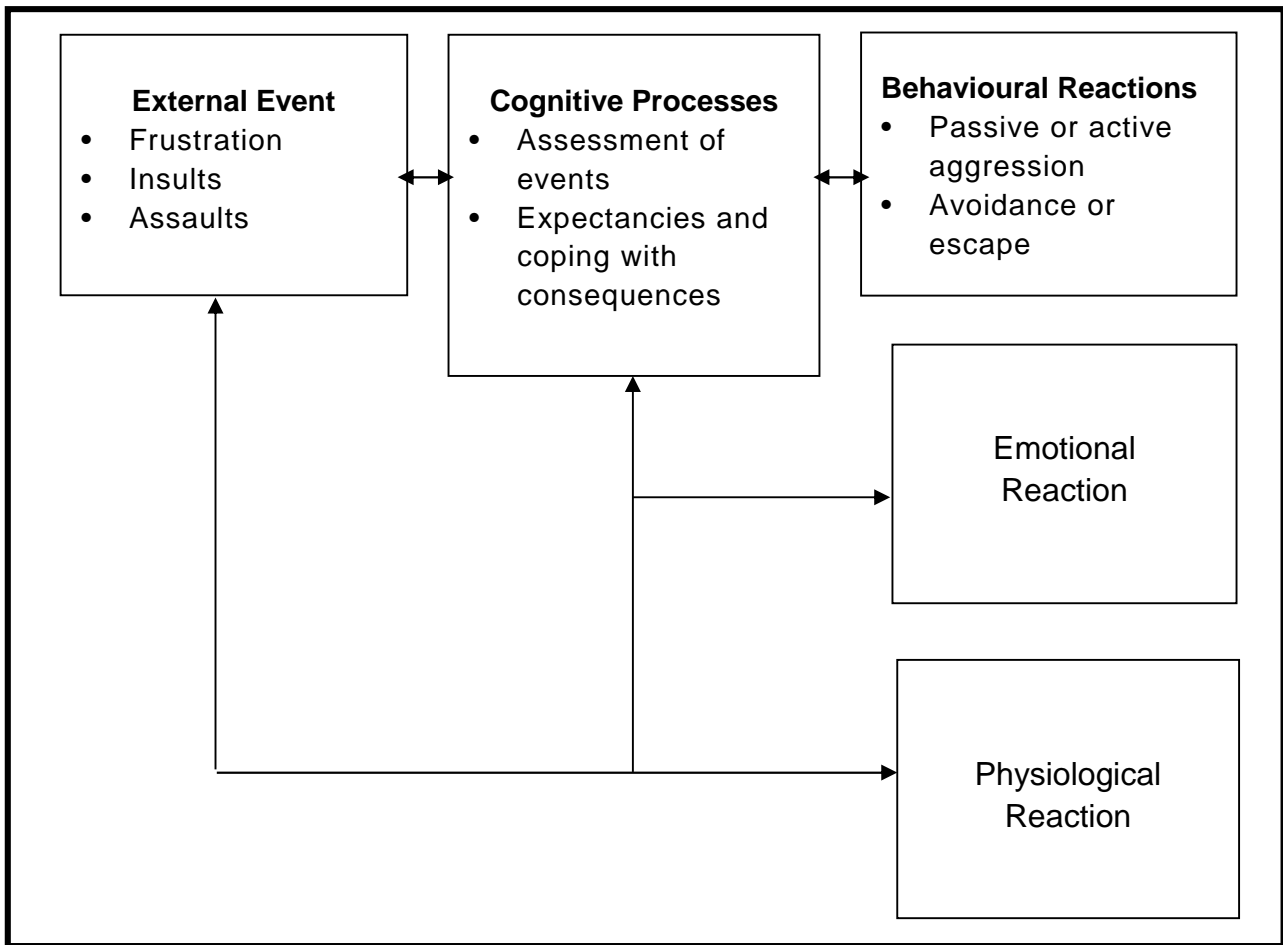
- **Factor 1 (stressors):** The stress experience originates from the causes of stress. Stressors are defined as situations that have the possibility to cause harm or an unpleasant experience (Pienaar, 1998).

- **Factor 2 (cognitive processes):** Thoughts, thinking styles and previous learning experiences are examples of cognitive processes that can influence stress (Pienaar, 1998). However, before cognitive processes can influence stress, a situation must first be experienced as stressful. An individual's expectation to cope with the stressful situation plays an essential role during cognitive processes (Pienaar, 1998). The extent to which stress is experienced can be determined by the expectation of the individual to cope with the possible stressors (Gerber, 1988).

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- **Factor 3 (behavioural response):** The observed behaviour of an individual to cope with stress refers to behavioural responses. Communication, exercising, eating and aggressive behaviour are examples of behavioural responses (Gerber, 1988).

- **Factor 4 (emotional response):** Positive and negative emotional response can take place. Satisfaction, happiness, anxiety, depression and fear are examples of positive and negative emotional responses (Gerber, 1988).

- **Factor 5 (physiological response):** The psychological response refers to the biological change that takes place in an individual's body during the attempt to adapt to the expectations of the changing environment (Gerber, 1988).

The Interactional Stress Model of Sutherland and Cooper

This model is explained in terms of the interaction between the individual and their environment (Pienaar, 1998). This model focuses on the observed expectations as well as the observed ability of the individual to cope with the stress. Pienaar (1998) indicates that stress is the cause of the relationship between the individual and the individual's environment.

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Figure 4: The Interactional Stress Model of Sutherland and Cooper (1991)
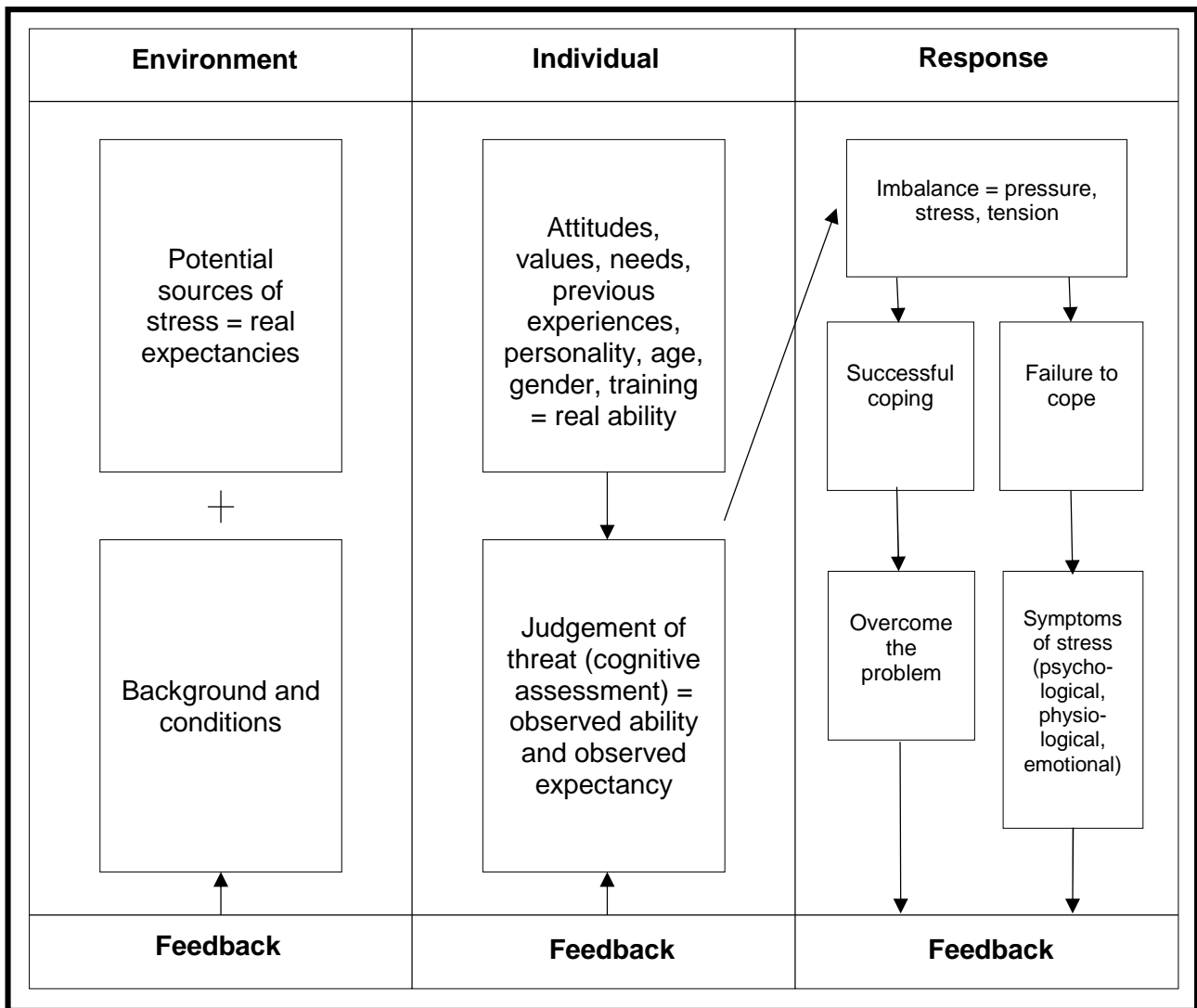
Pienaar (1998) suggests that potential sources of stress (events, situations or objects) exist in the environment. It is assumed that these sources are context-bound in terms of background factors as well as situational factors. Previous experiences, exposures, learning, development, successes and failures play an important part in the approach the individual adopts to observe the stress event. The cognitive judgement that takes place due to the previous learning experiences also influences the stress reaction of the individual (Pienaar, 1998).

If there is a lack of compatibility between the real expectancy and the observed expectancy, as well as the real ability and the observed ability to cope with the stress, an

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immense feeling of stress will be experienced. If the individual was able to cope with the stress situation the lack of compatibility will be recovered. However, if the individual was not able to cope with the stress situation, short- or long term physiological, psychological and behavioural problems may occur (Pienaar, 1998).

Lazarus and Folkman Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Model

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) psychological stress is a relationship between the individual and the environment considered as a potential threat to one's health. Mitchell (2004, p. 10) mentions that "No event or situation in itself is inherently stressful; instead, the stressor is defined by the subjective judgement of the situation that is appraised as threatening, harmful, or taxing of available resources." Two essential processes facilitate this person-environment relationship:

- The cognitive appraisal that evaluates the process to determine the reason and extent of a specific matter between the individual and the environment. It can also be seen as the course of classifying an encounter and its implication to a person's well-being.
- The coping process through which the person manages the strains of the person-environment relationship, as well as the subsequent emotions that generates from the specific situation.

There are three appraisals that make up the process of cognitive appraisal:

- Primary appraisal – Judging the encounter as irrelevant or stressful. Primary appraisals can take the following forms: harm/loss (damage that already took place), challenge (potential to gain something), or a threat (estimated harm/loss)
- Secondary appraisal – Judgement with regards to what can be done. This includes evaluating the consequences and benefits of the specific coping method that will be chosen based on the aim and goals of the individual.
- Reappraisal – A succeeding estimate based on new information that is obtained by the environment and/or the person during the occurrence of events. The primary

appraisal differs from the reappraisal in that it takes place at an earlier stage as the reappraisal process (Mitchell, 2004).

2.3   WORK STRESS RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Work stress amongst teachers has attracted significant attention (Burchielli & Bartram, 2006). "Internationally, a considerable amount of literature has emerged on the factors influencing job satisfaction and occupational stress among school teachers." (Darmody & Smyth, n.d., p. 5). However, further research is necessary in order to explore and disentangle the demanding stress that is experienced by teachers (Burchielli & Bartram, 2006). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) also request better research to be done, that is focused on an in depth holistic look (Burchielli & Bartram, 2006). (Chan, Chen, & Chong, 2010) define work stress amongst teachers as unpleasant feelings which occur when people think that they cannot cope with certain demands. Work stress is an important concept in organisations since it can severely affect the productivity of the employee (González-Morales, Rodríguez, & Peiró, 2010). It is assumed that if teachers experience work stress it will influence their productivity, as well as the children that are being taught.

"Teachers are exposed to high levels of occupational stress regardless of the level they teach." (Akpochafo, 2005, p. 826). Vazi et al. (2013) indicate that it is worldwide accepted and known that the teaching industry is extremely stressful. Furthermore, Vazi et al. (2013) mentions that if the stress, which is so existent within the teaching industry, is not treated properly, burnout may be the result. Okeke and Dlamini (2013) provide evidence that at least one third of all teachers suffer from life-threatening stress and exhaustion. In a longitudinal study involving 63 Swedish teachers Chan et al. (2010) asserts that stress problems for teachers are very serious. Work stress is a complex and comprehensive concept and must be grasped as very important (Akpochafo, 2005). It is reported by Chan et al. (2010) that a large percentage of responding teachers experienced an increase in work stress in the past years. Kokkinos (2007) also states that teaching is regarded as a highly stressful job.

It is assumed that in order to determine the work stress perceptions of the teachers, one must first determine the existing work stress definitions or perceptions of teachers.

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Kuchinke, Cornachione, Oh and Kang (2010) note that work stress should not be defined in terms of stressors or strains, but rather as a construct in its own right. Mulholland, McKinlay and Sproule (2013) provide evidence that teachers' perception and definition of work stress and strains differ significantly. In order to conduct research on the perceptions of work stress, previous work stress models and frameworks need to be considered with regards to teachers and work stress.

The most common framework used to understand the factors that are involved in a stress process is the stress and coping theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) (Vazi et al., 2013). "This theory suggests that stress is a two-way process: the environment produces stressors and the individual finds ways to deal with these stressors." (Vazi et al., 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, definitions from the literature should also be considered and is therefore listed below in Table 2.

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Table 2: Literature definitions of work stress in the field of education

Source	Definition
(Akpochafo, 2005)	"Any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium. Occupational stress refers to the physical, mental and emotional wear and tear brought about by the incongruence between the requirement of the job and the capabilities, resources and needs of the employee to cope with job demands" (p. 826).
(Burchielli & Bartram, 2006)	"Work stress can be defined as an adaptive response to a work situation that places special physical and/or psychological demands on a worker" (p. 313).
(Chan et al., 2010)	"A process of behavioural, emotional, mental, and physical reactions caused by prolonged, increasing or new pressures which are significantly greater than coping resources" (p.420).
(Darmody & Smyth, n.d.)	"Teacher stress may be defined as the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher" (p. 13).
(Kokkinos, 2007)	"Burnout is described as a tripartite syndrome that includes feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment that is a response to chronic stress in jobs where individuals work with people" (p. 229).
(Mulholland et al., 2013)	"A complex, relational psychological concept arising from the dynamic interactions between the individual and their working environment" (p. 1).
(Okeke & Dlamini, 2013)	"A form of emotional and automatised response to the perception of threat." (p. 1).

The work stress that is experienced by teachers can have both personal and economic consequences and can lead to a negative impact on the children that are being taught (Darmody & Smyth, n.d.). Darmody and Smyth (n.d.) provide clear evidence of a number of factors that are associated with work stress and the perceptions thereof.

These factors are:

- Micro-level factors
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Length of service

- Meso-level factors
  - Teaching multi-grade classes vs. teaching only a single grade
  - Involvement of parents
  - Relationship and interactions with other staff members as well as the principle
  - The control a teacher has over other school activities
  - Leadership positions within the school
  - Resources to teach
  - Quality of school facilities
  - Increase in responsibilities

According to Sager and Wilson (1995), the concern about the concept of work stress is increasing. Work stress is identified as one of the main problems in the work environment for the next century by Fortune magazine (Sager & Wilson, 1995). In the field of work stress research the concept of work stress has been intricate, because of the number of different definitions that are offered by past researchers (Sager & Wilson, 1995). It is clear that work stress researchers need a mutual ground in order to fit the work stress definition in to a pre-specified framework and to be able to separate the concept of work stress from other constructs (Sager & Wilson, 1995). Development of a standardized definition that is generally excepted is needed because it may help employers to design and develop interventions consistent with the perceptions of work stress from employers and employees (Kinman & Jones, 2005).

There is however currently no standard definition that exists for the concept of work stress (Sager & Wilson, 1995). The lack of a standard definition makes it complicated for researchers to demarcate the concept of work stress (Sager & Wilson, 1995). They assert

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that it thus makes it difficult to locate the concept of work stress in the theoretical framework relative to other related constructs. Therefore there is a need to reduce the many different definitions in order to arrive at a standardised work stress definition (Sager & Wilson, 1995).

Kinman and Jones (2005) suggest that, rather abandoning the concept of work stress completely, an effective possibility may be to study how and why people use the work stress label to define themselves and others in different work situations. Hobfoll (1989) affirms that influential perspectives of work stress are offered with the purpose of defining the nature of what has been verified to be an empirical but unclear construct. According to Hobfoll (1989), researchers avoid the problematic issue of defining the concept of work stress and instead choose to study the concept of work stress without a clear framework (Hobfoll, 1989).

It is assumed that investigating the perceptions and understanding of work stress amongst a group of teachers in relation to different theoretical explanations will contribute to the understanding of the concept of work stress in the field of education. Possible linkages between the perceptions of the teachers and the existing theoretical explanations of work stress are examined. Determining if there are any associations will contribute towards a clearer understanding of the concept of work stress in the field of education.

Research on the concept of work stress must change its perspective from examining an ambiguous concept to testing this concept directly in terms of different stress models and theories (Hobfoll, 1989). The success of the work stress research will be subject to the capability of researchers to prove that work stress is not an unclear emotional individual familiarity, but rather a complex and multidimensional, environmentally determined concept (Hobfoll, 1989). As previously stated, Sager and Wilson (1995) argue that the actuality of multiple work stress definitions should not delay the research of this concept.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1   RESEARCH PARADIGM / PHILOSOPHY

Creswell (2003) indicates that research starts with a certain assumption of how the researcher will go about learning about the specific field of enquiry. These assumptions can be called paradigms (Creswell, 2003). Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) describe a paradigm as a theoretical framework which influences the way the research is conducted and understood. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) also state that: "It is the choice of paradigm that sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research. Without nominating a paradigm as the first step, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design." This study adopts an interpretivist paradigm for the purpose of this research project.

According to Wahyuni (2012) interpretivists believe that the reality is made of people's perceptions and different social players. They believe that each person has his/her own unique experiences, perceptions and background and that this contributes to what reality is in the broader picture of social interaction (Wahyuni, 2012). The social reality that interpretivists believe in is subjective, because of different experiences and perceptions that are perceived (Wahyuni, 2012). This social reality is thus subject to change (Wahyuni, 2012). Walsham (1995) also asserts that interpretivism assumes that people's perception of reality is a social creation by human role players.

The investigation of work stress perceptions and experiences of Grade 3 teachers were researched from an interpretivistic point of view. This paradigm structured and informed the study because each teacher's perceptions and experiences of work stress is subjective and will contribute to the changing reality of work stress. It is assumed that each teacher has a unique experience of work stress in the classroom and school environment and perceives it different than another teacher. It thus contributes to what an interpretivist believes in terms of different perceptions and experiences that will contribute to what reality is in the broader picture.

Interpretivists prefer to interact and have conversations with the participants that are included in the study (Wahyuni, 2012). This study is thus based on conversations with the teachers taking part. Creswell (2003) states that open ended questions are needed in order to obtain information from the participants' real life setting and experiences. In order to understand the work stress perceptions of the teachers, an in depth description of their experiences is needed. A qualitative approach is embraced in order to describe the experiences and perceptions of the teachers.

According to Wahyuni (2012), rich descriptive data is provided by a qualitative approach and thus this approach is embraced in order to describe the experiences and perceptions of the teachers. Creswell (2003) notes that the meanings and perceptions of the individuals differ, which forces the researcher to search for intricate views and experiences.

When using the interpretive approach, the researcher depend on the views and experiences of the participants in the specific situation being studied (Creswell, 2003). Since the interpretation is influenced by the background of the researcher, the researcher will position her/himself according to his/her own experiences in order to interpret the meaning of the information gathered from the participants (Creswell, 2003).

Ontologically, interpretivism indicates that the reality is perceived through an interactive, methodological and systematic approach (Wahyuni, 2012). Weber (2004) provides evidence that the researcher and reality are attached. Weber (2004, p. v) clearly explains the characteristics of the interpretivist approach:

> *The life-world has both subjective and objective characteristics. The subjective characteristics reflect our perceptions about the meaning of some world. The objective characteristics reflect that we constantly negotiate this meaning with others with whom we interact. In other words, it is objective in the sense that it reflects an intersubjective reality.*

Considering the epistemology of interpretivism one should take note that knowledge comes from the consideration and understanding of meaning and different symbols (Wahyuni, 2012). Weber (2004) is of the opinion that the knowledge and understanding people have, arise from events people experience in their daily lives. Interpretivists try to make sense of their surroundings and the world in which they live, in order to build a socially constructed framework (Weber, 2004).

Table 3 indicates and explains the different aspects of the research paradigm 'interpretevism' according to the ontology of the paradigm, the epistemology, the methodology, the reporting style and the goodness and quality criteria of the paradigm.

Table 3: Research Paradigm

Paradigm	Interpretevism
Ontology	The real world consists of multiple realities that are socially co-constructed by the researcher and the research participants.
Epistemology	Knowledge ascends from subjective meaning.
Methodology	Qualitative understanding and interpretation of particular contexts. Naturalistic methods (interviewing, observations, analysis of existing text). Interactive process. Systematic analysis.
Reporting style	The researcher provides insights into the behaviour expressed and the meanings and interpretations that subjects give to their life worlds.
Goodness and quality criteria	Trustworthiness & authenticity. Credibility, transferability, dependability & conformability.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF INQUIRY STRATEGY AND BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN

A strategy of inquiry is selected that will best answer the research questions and adhere to the problem statement of this research study. A qualitative study is adopted in order to explore the work stress perceptions of a group of Grade 3 teachers. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, an explorative qualitative research strategy is chosen. A qualitative exploratory design enables the researcher to gain an in-depth perspective and understanding of the topic at hand (Creswell, 2003). A qualitative exploratory research design is proposed, as it will allow the researcher to explore the perspectives, perceptions, experiences, and feelings of the participants about the specific topic at hand. With such an inquiry strategy the research sample will be non-representative and small.

3.3 SAMPLING

3.3.1 TARGET POPULATION

The target population of the proposed study is South African Grade 3 teachers who have two or more years of experience in teaching at school level.

3.3.2 THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis in a research study is the component which is used to look for variability ("Collecting Qualitative Data," n.d.). The unit of analysis of this study refers to a primary school in the Pretoria area from which the data is collected.

3.3.3 THE SAMPLING UNITS

The sampling unit refers to the individuals from which the data will be collected (Kotze, n.d.). The sampling unit for this research study is Grade 3 teachers with more than two years of teaching experience, from a primary school in South Africa.

To obtain a balanced sample, the participants originate from different categories in terms of age and years of teaching experience. It is not possible to obtain a sample that included

males and females as the Grade 3 teachers from the school are all female. They do however vary in their level of experience and differ in age. The participants all have more than two years of experience in the field of teaching.

3.3.4 THE SAMPLING METHOD

A snowball sampling is used within the context of purposive sampling in order to identify the participants for this research study. Qualitative researchers will intentionally select their sample non-randomly (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Purposive sampling refers to the selection of individuals or objects that will produce the most information for the research study at hand (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Teachers are purposefully selected as participants because they should be able to produce the most valuable information related to the topic of this research study.

According to Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), snowball sampling or chain referral sampling is often used by qualitative researchers. This sampling method proposes referrals or people that are known to others to obtain the necessary participants for the specific purpose of the study. The researcher is known to a Grade 3 teacher in the identified school. This specific teacher has referred the researcher to other teachers in Grade 3 from whom consent was obtained to participate in the study.

3.3.5 THE SAMPLE SIZE

Marshall (1996) points out that a suitable sample size for qualitative research is the size that will effectively answer the research question. Accurately predicting the sample size at the beginning stages of a qualitative study might be difficult since the sample size can change due to emerging themes, categories and new findings throughout the research study (Marshall, 1996). Six participants participated in the study. The sixth participant, however, only had one year of teaching experience.

3.4   DATA COLLECTION

The data that was collected throughout the course of the research study is derivative from an intensive interaction with the research participants. Polkinghorne (2005) notes that qualitative data can also be referred to as language data and is the product of the interaction between the researcher and the participant.

3.4.1   DATA COLLECTION PLAN

Primary data was collected from the participating individuals. The researcher was solely responsible for the data collection. No training was needed to collect the data but the researcher had thorough knowledge of the data collection methods and the ethical considerations. The location where the data was collected was decided by the participating teacher. It is important that the participant feel comfortable in order for this study to be successful.

3.4.2   DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Interviews are defined as a conversation based on a specific predetermined purpose (Polkinghorne, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the participants. Interviews conducted within the framework of qualitative research are rarely structured and often consists of open ended questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). They also state that semi-structured interviews are often more flexible and will lead to information that the researcher had not necessarily planned for. The limitation in terms of semi-structured interviews is that different information will be obtained from different participants, which will make comparisons between the participants a difficult task (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Each interview was recorded and transcribed thereafter. Ethical procedures and aspects adhered to will be discussed in the research ethics section.

3.4.3   DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

A fixed data collection instrument was not used during this study. The research questions and problem statement were used as predetermined questions during the semi structured interviews. Additional applicable questions emerged throughout the data collection

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procedure. The theoretical explanations stated in the literature review were also used to create questions for the interviews.

3.5   DATA ANALYSIS

During the process of analysing the data the researcher makes sense out of the language data collected (Creswell, 2003). The researcher has to prepare the data for the analysis stage in order to gain a thorough understanding of the data. Creswell (2003) also states that the data analysis is an ongoing process within the framework of qualitative research. The researcher has continuously reflected on the data while the data was collected and analysed. Analytical questions were asked throughout the study. The data analysis process does not function as a separate aspect from the other activities during a qualitative research study.

The data collected was organised and prepared for the data analysis stage. This includes the transcribing of the interviews, typing the field notes gathered during the interviews and arranging the data according to selected work stress theories and models. After the data was prepared for the data analysis stage, the researcher thoroughly read through all the data in order to get a general sense of the data. The researcher had written notes in margins based on the data that was transcribed. Only then the detailed analysis started which included the coding of the data.

Different levels of coding are used to arrange the data into conceptual categories, namely: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding includes the start of creating specific categories of the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). The data is evaluated and general themes are developed to condense the data for further analysis. During the process of axial coding, links are made and broader categories are defined (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Core categories are then selected in the selective coding process to develop a single storyline around the main concern of the research study. The researcher, however, conducted the data analysis based on specific work stress theories and models which are the selective codes in this study.

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Creswell (2003) suggests that before the coding process starts, the researcher should consider the following steps:

- Obtain a sense of the data in its entirety by reading all the transcriptions carefully. Any ideas or thoughts that come to mind at this stage should be written down.

- A list should be made of all the topics that emerged from the data. Similar topics should be grouped together and can be placed in a table.

- Condense the topics that emerged from the data as codes and assign these codes to the appropriate sections of text. New themes and topics can emerge during this process.

- Assign descriptive wording for the topics and modify them into categories. At this stage the categories can be reduced by grouping the topics together if possible.

- After a final decision is made in terms of the categories, they should be sorted in alphabetical order.

- Gather the data in terms of the existing categories and if it is necessary the existing data can be rearranged.

The data that was gathered during the interviews was recorded with a voice recorder. The recorded interview was then transcribed after the interview in order to continue with the data analysis procedure. A consent form was provided to the participants containing all the relevant and necessary ethical procedures and considerations. The main purpose of the consent form is to protect the participant. The consent form provides the participant with information regarding the aims of the study and the nature of involvement of the participants. The consent form also informs the participant regarding the rights and risks associated with the involvement in the study.

3.6   ASSESSING AND DEMONSTRATING THE QUALITY AND RIGOUR THE PROPOSED RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Golafshani (2003) reliability and validity in the context of a qualitative study is referred to as trustworthiness, rigor and quality. A qualitative researcher should aim to eliminate bias and increase the truthfulness of the research conducted about a social phenomenon (Golafshani, 2003). Triangulation is used for the purpose of eliminating bias

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and increasing truthfulness. Triangulation is defined as a validity process where researchers aim to find conjunction between different sources of information in order to develop themes in a research study (Golafshani, 2003).

Golafshani (2003) states that the quality of a qualitative research study should be measured against the paradigm that was used in the specific study's own terms. The terms Credibility, Confirmability, Consistency, Applicability, Neutrality, Dependability and Transferability are the critical criteria for a qualitative study. Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p. 154) offers a list of general criteria that can be used by the researcher to evaluate this qualitative study:

1. *Purposefulness: The research question drives the methods used to collect and analyse data.*
2. *Explicitness of assumptions and biases: The researcher identifies and communicates any assumptions, beliefs, values, and biases that may influence data collection and interpretation.*
3. *Rigor: The researcher uses rigorous, precise, and thorough methods to collect, record and analyse data. The researcher also takes steps to remain as objective as possible throughout the project.*
4. *Open-mindedness: The researcher shows willingness to modify hypotheses and interpretations when newly acquired data conflict with previously collected data.*
5. *Completeness: The researcher depicts the object of study in all its complexity. The researcher spends sufficient time in the field to understand all the nuances of the phenomenon: describes the physical setting, behaviours, and perceptions of the participants; and gives readers a total, multifaceted picture of the phenomenon.*
6. *Coherence: The data yields consistent findings, such that the researcher can present a portrait that "hangs together." Multiple data sources converge into consistent conclusions (triangulation), and any contradictions within the data are reconciled.*
7. *Persuasiveness: The researcher presents logical arguments, and the weight of the evidence suggests one interpretation to the exclusion of others.*

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8. *Consensus: Other individuals, including the participants in the study and other scholars in the discipline, agree with the researcher's interpretations and explanations.*

9. *Usefulness: The project yields conclusions that promote better understanding of the phenomenon, enables more accurate predictions about future events, or leads to interventions that enhance the quality of life.*

3.7   RESEARCH ETHICS

Whenever human beings participate in a research study, ethics must be closely considered (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Each individual that participates in a research study has the right to be protected from any physical, emotional or psychological harm. No other risks may be brought upon the participants other than the risks that the participants face on a daily basis. Research participants must be informed about the research study that they are participating in and must then be given the opportunity to freely decide if they want to continue with the participation or not (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). They must also be informed that if they agree to voluntarily participate, they are allowed to withdraw at any time during the research study. The researcher is not allowed to provide the participants with any monetary or non-monetary rewards as a motivation to participate in the study.

Each participant was provided with a consent form before the interview started. The consent forms were signed by the participants and will be kept safe, together with the gathered data and other information, for 10 years as required by the ethical clearance committee of the University of Pretoria. The consent form also states the privacy rights of the participants together with the exact purposes of the information gathered. The information gathered is confidential and the participants will remain anonymous throughout the existence of the study. To ensure that the participants' identities are kept anonymous, code names are used that will refer to each specific participant.

The researcher also obtained written permission from the principal of the identified school in order to approach the teachers of this school as research participants. As the researcher is not allowed to approach the teachers during school working hours, the interviews were conducted outside of school hours.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.1   RESULTS

This chapter comprises of a discussion of the research study's results derived from the data gathered from the sample group. The primary purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relation between work stress experiences of a group of teachers and existing work stress theories and models.

The research questions for the study are the main focus of the discussion of the results:

- How do work stress perceptions of a group of Grade 3 teachers and theoretical work stress concepts relate?
- Can different theoretical work stress concepts defined through research be found in the work stress perceptions of a group of teachers?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six teachers. The questions were developed according to the different work stress theories and models that were specifically selected for this research study. According to Firth (1985), the concept of work stress is based on personal experiences and perceptions. The questions were therefore focused on the personal experiences and perceptions of the teachers.

The responses of the participants were recorded, analysed and documented according to each theory. Thereafter it was determined whether there was a relation between the experience of the teacher and the specific work stress theories and models. Various other work stress related aspects surfaced in the responses of the participants and are also discussed in this section. The theories that are used in this research study are presented as the predetermined selective coding themes.

The results of the data analysis through the utilisation of the thematic coding process are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Coding and analysis

Open codes	Axial codes	Selective codes
Too much work, not enough time	Time	THE WORK STRESS MODEL OF BEHR AND NEWMAN
Stress about the children's ability to finish		
Extracurricular activities	Responsibility	
Families		
Different types of people have different experiences of work stress	Personality aspects	
The more experience you have the better you are able to deal with work stress	Age and experience aspects	
Naughty children	Environment aspects	
Difficult parents		
Negative teachers		
The actions of the head master and others in management position		
When stressed, taking it out on the children.	Consequences	
Different than what expected from university to working as a teacher	Perceived vs real expectancy	THE TRANSACTIONAL STRESS MODEL OF COX AND MACKAY
Expected a different working environment		
The perception of the ability of a teacher is different from the real ability that is expected	Perceived vs real ability	
Feel incompetent because not using all skills taught		
Struggle handling kids – feel incompetent		
Diagnosed with cancer	Physiological response	
Lose weight		
Sleep a lot		
Hands sweat, breathing faster		
Get angry and sad	Emotions and psychological response	
Impatience, irritation, worried, unsure, scared.		
Thinking about the situation and previous experiences to be able to handle the situation.	Cognitive judgement	
Thinking of solutions and options to get out of situation.	Cognitive defence	
Family issues, mother in law, child sick	External factors/event	THE FIVE FACTOR STRESS MODEL OF MONTGOMERY AND EVANS
School children struggle in their personal lives		

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Personal love issues	External factors/event (continue)	THE FIVE FACTOR STRESS MODEL OF MONTGOMERY AND EVANS (continue)
Traffic in the mornings		
Can handle work stress because have learned to do so	Expectancy to cope	
Thinking of the situations and analysing different options and solutions.	Cognitive process (assess the event)	
Work faster, higher voice	Behavioural reaction	
Drink a glass of wine		
Drink pills		
Eat too much		
Cry when stressed	Emotional reaction	
Terrified of the event and the consequences		
Worried and unsure of what to do		
Get angry and irritated		
Diagnosed with cancer	Physiological reaction	
Lose weight		
Sleep a lot		
Hands sweat, breathing faster		
Took action because of stress event	Positive and negative consequences	
Consult others when stress event takes place		
A small stress event escalated because of perceptions		
Personal events influence work		
Family issues, mother in law, child sick	External factors	THE INTERACTIONAL STRESS MODEL OF SUTHERLAND AND COOPER
School children struggle in their personal lives		
Personal love issues		
Traffic in the mornings		
Previous experiences	Individual aspects	
Personality		
Success and failures in life		
Learning and development exposed to		
Thinking about the stress event	Judgement of stress event	
Making plans and thinking of solutions to cope with stress event		
Thinking back of previous experiences to assist with coping with stress		
Cry when stressed	Emotional, physiological and psychological response	
Terrified of the event and the consequences		

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Worried and unsure of what to do		
Get angry and irritated		
Diagnosed with cancer	Emotional, physiological and psychological response (continue)	THE INTERACTIONAL STRESS MODEL OF SUTHERLAND AND COOPER (continue)
Lose weight		
Sleep a lot		
Hands sweat, breathing faster		
Teachers that have a negative outlook on life influences the interviewee's perception of work stress	Relationships at work	THE ASSET MODEL OF COOPER AND MARSHALL
Other teachers that are rude and disrespectful		
Teachers that stress more		
Teachers that give assistance		
Good physical school conditions	Physical school environment	
Dirty school toilets		
Multiple roles as teacher, head of the grade, choir piano leader	Individual's role at work	
Netball, hockey coach		
Debate team coach		
Assist at the food stall during school breaks		
Assist with food provisioning at big sports events		
Work in the reading centre		
Job loss	Organisational climate	
Unsure about future development		
Seeing the school improve in many different aspects		
Personality influences the way work stress is perceived	Subjective stressor judgement	LAZARUS AND FOLKMAN'S COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH THEORY
Each situation differs and are evaluated differently by different people		
Thinking about the stress event	Cognitive appraisal	
Making plans and thinking of solutions to cope with stress event		
Thinking back of previous experiences to assist with coping with stress		
Cognitive processes take place to determine if the event is stressful or not		
Thinking of the stress situation	Primary appraisal, secondary appraisal and reappraisal	
Making plans and thinking of solutions to cope with stress event		
Thinking back of previous experiences		

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to assist with coping with stress		
Thinking of the situations and analysing different options and solutions.	Primary appraisal, secondary appraisal and reappraisal (continue)	LAZARUS AND FOLKMAN'S COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH THEORY (continue)
Question the situation. Think of a ways to handle the situation.		
Delegating tasks. Ask people to assist. Looked back on what I decided, proud feeling.		

The above coding process was approached from predetermined selective coding themes. Six work stress theories/models were used as the selective codes in the data analysis. Each of these theories/models are discussed in relation to its corresponding axial and open coding themes that were identified from the responses gathered from the participants.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.2.1 THE WORK STRESS MODEL OF BEHR AND NEWMAN

The Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman is based on work stress phenomena that are grouped together. Not all possible factors and aspects are empirically investigated, but are still included in the model in order to demonstrate the influence and interdependence of the factors and different aspects of work stress.

Interview questions based on the Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman

- Does time influence how you experience work stress? Please explain and give an example.
- Think about yourself. How you react and how you handle situations. Would you say that the person that you are (your personality) has an effect on how you experience work stress? Please explain and give an example.
- Does the environment that you are currently in (work situation) influence how you experience work stress? Please explain and give an example.
- Does the way you experience work stress based on the environment you work in, influence the school that you work at? Please explain and give an example.

- If it does, what adjustments do you make when you experience work stress? What would you do to handle the work stress that you experience?

The above are all based on the Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman. The questions are focused on time, the interviewee's personality, as well as the environment they work in. Questions also include the adjustments made when work stress is experienced and other influences regarding the person and the school environment. After analysing all the response data, it was determined that the teachers' work stress perceptions and experiences seem to be significantly aligned to and in relation to the Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman.

Within this selective coding theme six axial coding sub-themes were identified, namely: Time, Responsibilities, Personality aspects, Age and experience aspects, Environment aspects and Consequences.

Axial code: Time

Examples of participant responses:

- *"Time definitely has an influence because there are deadlines that we need to adhere to. Especially at the end of the quarter because you need to hand in your marks and you struggle to get it done. You then feel that you are under pressure and that then causes more stress."*
- *"I feel that the new curriculum which they call CAPS does not take time into account or the needs of the children for that matter. CAPS will for instance say that we need to finish a certain amount of work within one day. They expect everything to be done as well as the children to cope. Furthermore, there is a lot of admin to be done. There is not enough time for everything. That is when the stress even becomes worse. This will then influence my work later on."*

Time plays an overarching and significant role throughout the responses of the participants. Time pressure was a substantial factor and an identified axial code that was linked to the selective code (the theory). Within the school system time is always an influencing factor as the school syllabus is based on specific time frames that need to be

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strictly adhered to. Therefore, time forms part of the work stress perception of the participants and is linked to the Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman.

This sub-theme relates to the selective code: The Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the participants and the work stress model.

Axial code: Personality aspects
Examples of participant responses:

- *"I am a perfectionist in my mind so I want everything I do to be perfect and that creates a lot of stress. I will do something and then feel that it was not good enough. Or I will expect someone else to do things perfectly and when they don't do it right I will be stressed."*
- *"I am more of an introvert and through the years I have learned to handle myself. As child I was very shy but now being in the teaching industry you need to step up and not be shy. I had to teach myself to talk in front of people. It is one the one side good that a shy person steps out of their comfort zone, but it places so much more stress on a shy introverted person."*
- *"I am a very calm person so I can sometime leave things until the last minute and then when push comes to shove it can sometimes be a problem. It is something I have to learn. Just from last year until now, I have learned so very much and also changed accordingly. So now I have learned that I shouldn't leave stuff for the last minute, but do it well ahead of time. I am also very emotional so I will make a huge stress out of something that is actually very small. I will also cry when very stressed."*

Another significant link is indicated between the personality of the involved participant as explained by the theory and the interviewee's response. It seems that the way in which a participant experiences work stress is significantly influenced by the personality of the person. One individual can be very relaxed and calm and will therefore also experience various situations through the same personal lens of being calm and relaxed. Another individual might be a perfectionist and focused on smaller detail. Such a person might be

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prone to experience work stress in a more intense manner. It seems therefore that a participant's personality will influence the way he/she perceives and experiences work stress.

Axial code: Environmental aspects

Examples of participant responses:

- *"We have a new principal for three years now and my work stress decreased so much since he came here. I feel that I am a better teacher and I don't have so much stress anymore. He creates the environment for us to flourish in. It was different with the previous principal. It happened that I needed handbooks. We had a budget for stuff like that and when I would go to the principal and then he would shout at you and say that you are taking others people money. Now the principal asks us what handbooks we need, he gives us examples and asks what we would like. It created a whole new environment for us to work in."*

- *"The environment does have a big influence on my work stress perception. Sometimes you get a very difficult class or a very naughty child that makes your environment just more stressful. It has happened before that I would think to myself 'if this one child is not in my class anymore my life would be a lot easier'."*

- *"I have experience work stress with regards to the environment I work in. This year I have very strong children in my class in terms of personalities and their personalities seem to clash. They are not afraid to say what they think to one another and that sometimes feels as if I cannot handle my class. That automatically makes me stress a lot. I then think about the kids that are calm and relaxed. I lose them along the way when explaining work. The parents then come to me and say that there is specific children that are very naughty and that I cannot handle them. Sometimes I feel that we have to teach the parents and not the kids. They are sometimes even a bigger stress than the children. The children is a true reflection of their parents. The parents sometimes ask why the children does not do something. I then want to tell them it is because the parents are not an example. It is actually very bad for me because I studied for a long time and therefore I know what I know. And that creates a stressful environment."*

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The environment the individual works in also seems to influence the experience and the perception of work stress as identified by the participant. Various factors play a role within a specific environment. These factors will then influence the individual with regards to how work stress is perceived. The following open codes were identified during the data analysis phase:

- Difficult and naughty children
- Negative people
- School management
- Parents

These are all factors that are part of the environment of a teacher. One of the participants mentioned that there are no environmental aspects that influences his/her perception of work stress. Because the participant has never had a negative work stress experience within that environment, it might be perceived that the environment does not play a notable role. However, it is possible that positive influences from the environment take place without the individual noticing these influences. Therefore, the participant mentioned that there are no environmental aspects that play an influencing role in their work stress experience.

Axial code: Consequences

Examples of participant responses:

- *"I think it can influence my children when I am stressed. They realise it very quickly if I am stressed or if I am not feeling very well. I also think that if you stress a lot you can influence your colleagues because you talk to them and see them during the day. So you can influence the children and colleagues in a negative way if you are stressed and you behaviour shows it."*
- *"I try to stay positive. It is sometimes hard. Some children are very difficult and then you need to call in the parents and have a chat. My work stress perception might then influence the school"*
- *"It sometimes happens that unplanned situations arises during the day. You already then have a tight schedule to get through everything with the kids and then there*

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will be stuff that you have to attend as well. This all leaves you stressed and irritated. I will then get irritated with the children because of stress and time where it is actually not at all their fault."

The Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman indicates business and human consequences as the next step in the model. The sample group all agreed that the work stress they experience and how they experience it, will influence the environment they work in. This is a significant indication that the work stress experienced by the teachers will influence their school environment.

The pupils can possibly observe when the teacher is stressed and behave in a certain way based on their experience. Colleagues can also be influenced by the individual that is experiencing work stress. It is therefore significant that the work stress experience and perception of the teachers will influence the environment they work in, as indicated by the Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman.

As the environment, as well as the person, are influenced by the work stress that is experienced and perceived by a specific individual, the individual adapts his/her behaviour accordingly. Based on the interviews, the interviewees will adapt their behaviour in order to decrease any negative influences on the environment. Various methods and ideas were discussed of how an individual can manage work stress in order to minimise the negative impact on the school environment.

This model clearly shows that time, personality aspects and environmental aspects influence one another. Keeping in mind that time has a direct relational influence on all factors and aspects, the personality aspects together with the environmental aspects have an influence on the individual as well as the business. Based on the different environments, influencing factors and consequences, different adjustments will take place within this model.

4.2.2   THE TRANSACTIONAL STRESS MODEL OF COX AND MACKAY

The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay is based on the perception a person has of his/her environment and how the environment has a direct influence on the person's work stress definition (Ottermann, 1990). This model refers to the transaction between an individual and the environment they work in (Cox & Mackay, 1981).

Interview questions based on the Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay

- Has it ever happened that you have certain expectations within your work environment and then it turns out to be different than what you expected? Please explain and give an example.
- Would you say that it caused work stress?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where you expected that you had the ability to fit into the required job and then it does not realise? Please explain and give an example.
- Did you experience stress because of that?
- When you respond to work stress that you have experienced, what happens to you physically?
- When you respond to work stress that you have experienced, what happens to you emotionally?
- When you respond to work stress that you have experienced, what goes through your mind? Please explain and give an example.

The above questions are all based on the Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay. The questions are focused on the expectation the person has of his/her working environment compared to the reality of the working environment. According to this model, cognitive judgment takes place after the person has realised that there is a difference between the perceived work environment and the reality of the work environment. Emotional, physical and psychological aspects are also taken into account within this model of Cox and Mackay and therefore questions with regards to these aspects are also included.

Within this selective coding theme six axial coding sub-themes are identified, namely: Perceived vs Real expectancy, Perceived vs Real ability, Physiological responses, Emotions and Psychological responses, Cognitive Judgement, Cognitive Defence.

Axial code: Perceived vs Real expectancy

Examples of participant responses:

- *"I expected that I would need to do planning as we were taught when we studied. I was also unsure of the themes and lessons we would have to present. But then when I arrived here at this school it was all worked out already. So I just basically had to fall in with the other teachers. That really helped my stress levels as I worried about that the most. Some schools sit together to plan but our school's work was planned already last year so we just continued with the work. What we learned at university and what I know now is very different. I wouldn't say in a negative way. It's just what you learn you don't really practically do."*
- *"Many have a very great and likeable expectation of being a teacher. They also think that it is a half day job and a very easy job when actually working in the field it is not entirely like that. You then realise that what you have studied from the books and what you experience in reality is completely different. Once in the reality you realise that it is not all great and easy. You need to run through a lot of work that you yourself don't even always understand. The university teaches based on the perfect situations but when you arrive in the reality there are situations that cannot be taught by a book and how to handle such a situation."*

A significant link is indicated between what the participant expected compared to the real situation presented and the perceived stress that is experienced because of this. The perceived expectancy differed from the real expectancy in every example given. Therefore, it was identified as an axial code that was linked to the selective code (the theory).

It seems that the difference between the participants' expectation and what actually happens within the school system influences the way the participant experiences and perceives work stress. Various reasons for the work stress experienced exist, but are

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beyond the scope of this dissertation. This sub-theme links to the selective code: The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Perceived vs Real ability

Example of a participant response:

- *"I had an experience at a school with socio-economic problems. I was not used to handling such situations. I quickly had to learn to handle the people and the children. It was very different to the type of people that I was used to in my own environment. Some of the children are rough diamonds and I had to learn to handle them. It was an eye opener for me. I worked there for 10 years, but looking back to the first day, I had no idea. I started working at the school that I am at now and it was amazing. It was such a lovely experience to teach children and all of them listen and all of them do the work correct. At the previous school, the parents were also very difficult and were not even worried about their children and the fact that school was important."*

Another significant link is indicated between the perceived ability compared to the real ability of the participant and the work stress that is experienced. The participants perceive their ability in a certain way, only to realise that their real ability differs from what they expected it to be. It seems that the difference between the perceived ability and the real ability of the participant will influence the way he/she experiences and perceives work stress. This sub-theme links to the selective code: The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Physiological responses

Examples of participant responses:

- *"I was diagnosed with cancer a year ago. I don't want to blame it on teaching completely, but so many teachers get cancer these days. The cancer is also traced back to stress. I have experienced times where I feel that it is getting a little bit too pressured. That is when I will drink my calming meds. I did not get cancer because*

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of smoking or unhealthy habits. I ran the comrades and lived a healthy life and therefore it might have been stress that caused this."

- *"My hands will sweat or I will breathe faster. I got cancer in 2009. I got it 2 times. In 2013 again. The chemotherapy was really bad and extremely stressful. I didn't want to lose my job so I stressed about that because I had chemo for 18 months. And then during that time you stay at home and you can't do anything. It wasn't just physically bad and stressful, but emotionally as well. I did not know if I will live or die and that was really stressful. I am so blessed that I still had a job after this process. The doctors said that it was stress that probably caused it together with genes."*

- *"I get very tired so I would sleep a lot when I stress. I would also get sick after a stressful period. I will also get sick because of the children that is sick".*

When there is an imbalance between the expectations of the external and internal factors and the ability of the individual to cope with these expectations, stress will be experienced (Cox & Mackay, 1981). It seems that the participants respond physiologically, in a significant manner, to the work stress they perceive. Each participant indicated a different response and therefore it appears that the physiological response to perceived and experienced work stress will differ from person to person. This sub-theme links to the selective code: The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Emotions and Psychological responses
Examples of participant responses:

- *"I get very difficult as a person and I will get angry. This morning for example when my son told me that his arrangements changed. I have planned around his programme and he did not let me know that it changed. So I wasn't very friendly this morning. Stuff like this stress me. I had come to me and told me about it I would have been less stressed. So I reacted worse than was needed to because of the stressful situation".*

- *"I cry. Not in front of people though. I will go home and cry. I don't hold back. My family will also tell me I should cry when I am stressed and just let it go and cry. The problem however is I will push people away and I would not want people to come*

close to problems or me being emotional. I will also become mad when I am stress because I did not plan if that was the reason. I can also become terrified when I stress."

It seems that psychological stress responses occur when an imbalance is experienced. It also appears that these responses can be related to emotional experiences. This emotional condition is accompanied by the change in the individuals physiological condition, as well as the cognitive and behavioural attempts to decrease the stress that is experienced (Ottermann, 1990). Each participant indicated a different type of emotional response and therefore it appears that the psychological response to perceived and experienced work stress will differ from person to person. This sub-theme links to the selective code: The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Cognitive Judgement

Examples of participant responses:

- *"When I experience stress I will first think back if it is really that bad. I will base this thought on all my years of experience. I will also think that life goes on and also consider whether it will really influence me. I do not think too much about a specific thing. I do more than I think and I like to take every day as it comes by."*
- *"I will first think why can't it be different and why did the situation turn out to be this way. And I will also first blame myself for getting myself in the situation"*
- *"I don't think I think of something. It is just confusing in my mind. My mind is chaotic."*

Considering the answers of the participants, it seems that cognitive judgement has taken place once an imbalance occurred. According to Cox & Mackay (1981) this is also the moment that stress is experienced. Through the responses of the participants, a clear moment where they 'reflect' can be established. This can also possibly refer to the moment of 'cognitive judgement'. One of the participants did mention that no structured thinking takes place. It seems that even though the individual is not aware of the actual

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moment of 'cognitive judgement', it does not necessarily mean that cognitive judgement did not take place. This sub-theme links to the selective code: The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Cognitive Defence

Examples of participant responses:

- *"I think a lot. And that is probably why I am so silent. I think of solutions. What I will do, what I will tell people, different types of plans. Plans to get out of the stress situations."*
- *"I will start thinking of options and what steps I should take next."*

Ottermann (1990) stated that when an emotional condition is experienced by an individual, together with changes in the individual's physiological condition, it will lead to cognitive and behavioural attempts to decrease the stress that is experienced. It seems that the participants had a possible experience of cognitive defence when experiencing work stress. This sub-theme links to the selective code: The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

4.2.3   THE FIVE FACTOR STRESS MODEL OF MONTGOMERY AND EVANS

The Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans refers to the interaction of the five factors during the stress experience as well as the variables that can possibly influence such an experience (Pienaar, 1998). The five factors that are explained by this model are:

- Factor 1 – The stress experience that is instigated from various causes of stress.
- Factor 2 – The cognitive process taking place after the causes of stress have been experienced. This includes thoughts and previous experiences. An individual's expectation to cope with the stressful situation plays an essential role during cognitive processes (Pienaar, 1998). The extent to which stress is experienced can be determined by the expectation of the individual to cope with the possible stressors (Gerber, 1988).

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- Factor 3 – Behavioural responses that follow after stress causes have been experienced. This includes communication, exercising, eating and aggressive behaviour (Gerber, 1988).

- Factor 4 – Positive and negative emotional responses can take place which includes satisfaction, happiness, anxiety, depression and fear (Gerber, 1988).

- Factor 5 – Physiological responses refer to the biological changes that take place in an individual's body during the attempt to adapt to stress experiences that can cause possible changes (Gerber, 1988).

Interview questions based on the Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans

- Name three things that you do when you stress (behavioural).
- Name three emotions that you experience when you stress (emotional).
- Have you ever experienced changes in your body when you stressed? Please explain and give an example.
- What external factors play a role that make you stress? Please explain and give an example.
- Do you think that you can cope with stress? (your expectancy to cope with stress)
- Once you experienced stress, were you able to cope with it?
- Give an example when you experienced a lot of stress and what the consequences were.

The above questions are all based on the Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans. The questions are based on the five factors that are part of the stress process that can possibly be experienced by an individual. Within this selective coding theme, five axial coding sub-themes were identified, namely: External events, cognitive process, behavioural reactions, emotional reactions and physiological reactions.

Axial code: External events

Examples of participant responses:

- *"It might be easier to handle stress if there is nothing from the outside that also plays a role. But the moment external things play a role together with other responsibilities, stress will go up."*

- *"After school activities stresses us all. My husband also has his own business so that also creates stress. In the new South Africa it is not easy to run a business. His stress will then become my stress. The kids' stress becomes my stress. When they are unhappy I will be unhappy. When I see that my child is in a situation that is difficult for them it will influence me. The stress that I experience at home will become part of my work stress. If I had a feud with my husband in the morning before school I might not be on top of my teaching game as I should be. My worries will also have an influence on my work stress experience. My worries about a job, my children, my husband etc."*

- *"In the beginning of the year it was difficult as we did not know what times to leave the house and what time to drop off the kids. That caused stress. Even if it does not feel like it, it does cause stress in your unconscious mind when we don't even realise it. It is also stressful because I cannot be late. The routine also works easier now than it has been working. And every year it gets better in terms of external factors because you learn to handle them with time. When I started to teach I worked at a school where the children struggled. We had no extracurricular activities which was nice but the children struggled with the academics. So it was stressful to get them up to standard. We moved to the Cape. I resigned even before becoming pregnant. And during that time I helped my husband with his business. I said I would never go back to teaching but it seems like it is in me because I did go back. It is not about the money and it never was for me. I enjoy the kids."*

- *"My boyfriend and traffic causes a lot of stress for me. I live quite far and that stresses me in the morning as I am hurried to be on time. My boyfriend goes on a lot of 4x4 holidays a lot and whenever I go with him I would be able to completely relax and switch off. That is an external factor that really reduces stress."*

- *"At home my children play a role because they also have a lot of things that requires my attention and time. Then at the same time you have your own work and*

a full class of school children to also pay attention and time to. It can be difficult as a parent and it is important to have a fine line and balance between the two. My husband is also an external factor because sometimes he doesn't like it if I am at night at school for functions or meetings. Thinking back when I was single it was a lot easier as you had only responsibilities with regards to yourself. Getting married and getting children definitely increased the stress experience as the responsibilities increases and the time you have in a day stays the same."

- *"Boyfriends add to my stress experience as I don't have one. I however had a few issues with them before. That will then influence me as I get very emotional. I will bring that feelings to school. I will be very tired and have no motivation to teach. I know I should not be that way. I know I should leave such stuff at home and smile and be a good teacher at school but it is very difficult."*

According to Gerber (1988) the stress process experienced by individuals are caused by external events. In view of the responses of the participants, it seems that there are external events that cause an experience of stress, whether it is a positive experience or a negative experience. The external events can be caused by many different things in an individual's life. It seems that the participants do not only experience external stress events at work, but also at home and in other areas of their lives.

These events influence the individual in an integrative manner, meaning that when the external event occurs it may influence the individual in other areas of his/her life as well. This sub-theme links to the selective code: The Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Cognitive process

Examples of participant responses:

- *"Sometimes you don't have a choice and that pushes you to handle it no matter what. I also believe you need to do other stuff besides work to handle stress. I love to knit and do scrapbooking and also colouring in. That helps me to handle my work stress."*

- *"Because I have other things to do when I get home like reading or doing hand work it helps me to handle my work stress. It is my way to get rid of stress, as well as getting active. Otherwise I will gather up all the stress and eventually explode. Sometimes during the day I feel that I don't do enough for myself. My whole day is focused on the kids at school and then when I get home I have to focus my children. So at the end of the day I will realise that I haven't done anything for myself and that adds to stress or takes relaxation away."*
- *"I learned through the years with experience how to handle stress so I definitely think I can handle work stress. When I just started I did not really know how to handle it."*
- *"The after school activities is really stressful for me. I am not a person that stresses too hectically about something. I am also very organised and that helps me to not be too stressed."*
- *"The most stress I experienced was when I started at this school. I only started in the second quarter. They started a new class as there were too many children in the other classes. So you could just imagine how many unhappy parents and children there were because of their children moving classes. I therefore had to perform and show the parents what I am capable of. During the first week when I started at this school they said that I was head of the grade 3's athletics. I did not know anything so I was very stressed. I went to people to ask for help and to give me information on how to handle the situation. So I made a choice to do something about it and ask people to assist me."*
- *"So there are many times that you are put under pressure to perform a task in a certain amount of time. Which will then cause work stress. You sometimes get class visitors. It can be a head of department or the principal. It was not planned for which causes more stress. You then need to get stuff ready in a very short period of time. So in order to handle such a situation I really plan the stuff that I am aware of so that I don't slip up on the things that was in my control. I will also try to prepare to always have all documentation ready. I get really stressed in such a situation but in such a situation I will turn around and take a deep breath, pray and calm myself."*
- *"There is this one parent which we had a little situation with. Eventually I had to show her that I am the teacher and you are the parent. I eventually had to ask her*

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to give me permission to teach her child. I had two or three such parents. They
turned their children against me and that did not help. She had a problem that I
played music in my class. She had a problem with all the small things. I talked to
her in a very calm and professional manner and then stuff went better. If I think
back to how I handled it last year it would have been more childish than this year so
I can already see how much I have learnt in one year."

Pienaar (1998) explains that an individual's expectation to cope with a stress process plays an essential role during the cognitive process. It seems that the participants all went through a cognitive process when experiencing work stress. Considering the participants' responses, it seems that they go through a process of thinking and considering options to handle the stress. It appears that the participants each had some expectation of coping with stress, as well as reflecting back on previous experiences to assist with handling current stress experiences. This sub-theme links to the selective code: The Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Behavioural reactions

Examples of participant responses:

- *"My voice will go higher or I will start shouting. I will start working at a faster pace*
  and then there will be some children that will not be able to keep up. I also might get
  a little more irritated with my situation that I am in."
- *"I get mad and sometimes sad as well when I stress. The principal called me in the*
  beginning of this year and said that the department wouldn't be able to pay me
  anymore. So it means that they don't have work for me anymore. That put a lot of
  stress on me as I had to pay my car, house etc. So my stress was basically to
  survive. I thought about it a lot and I prayed a lot. I was worried and sometimes sad
  as well. I also ate more and got fat."

The observed behaviour of an individual to cope with stress refers to behavioural responses. Communication, exercising, eating and aggressive behaviour are examples of behavioural responses (Gerber, 1988). It appears that the participants show specific

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behaviour that can possibly be linked to the work stress that they experience. They specifically mentioned that the behaviour they present is because of the work stress that they experience and therefore this sub-theme links to the selective code: The Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Emotional reactions

Examples of participant responses:

- *"I get mad and sometimes sad as well when I stress. The principal called me in the beginning of this year and said that the department wouldn't be able to pay me anymore. So it means that they don't have work for me anymore. That put a lot of stress on me as I had to pay my car, house etc. So my stress was basically to survive. I thought about it a lot and I prayed a lot. I was worried and sometimes sad as well."*
- *"I get very difficult as a person and I will get angry. This morning for example when my son told me that his arrangements changed. I have planned around his programme and he did not let me know that it changed. So I wasn't very friendly this morning. Stuff like this stress me. I had come to me and told me about it I would have been less stressed. So I reacted worse than was needed to because of the stressful situation".*
- *"I cry. Not in front of people though. I will go home and cry. I don't hold back. My family will also tell me I should cry when I am stressed and just let it go and cry. The problem however is I will push people away and I would not want people to come close to problems or me being emotional. I will also become mad when I am stress because I did not plan if that was the reason. I can also become terrified when I stress."*

It appears that the participants react emotionally in various ways towards work stress that they experience. Positive and negative emotional responses can take place which includes satisfaction, happiness, anxiety, and depression and fear (Gerber, 1988). The participants specifically mentioned that the emotional behaviour they present is because of the work stress that they experience and therefore this sub-theme links to the selective code: The

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Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Physiological reactions

Examples of participant responses:

- *"I get tired when I stress."*
- *"I would always start to shiver when I am stressed or when I have to talk in front of people. My voice would also start shivering when I am stressed. When I have parent evenings, I stress a lot but then I just put the projector in front of me as a way of feeling more secure and getting a block between me and the parents."*
- *"I would sleep when I stress as I get very tired"*

It appears that the participants reacted significantly in a physiological manner when experiencing work stress. Gerber (1988) explains that physiological response refers to the biological changes that take place in an individual's body during the attempt to adapt to the stress experience, which can cause possible changes. Therefore, this sub-theme relates to the selective code: The Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

4.2.4   THE INTERACTIONAL STRESS MODEL OF SUTHERLANDS AND COOPER

According to Pienaar (1998), this model presents the interaction between an individual and the environment of the individual. Pienaar states that stress is created because of the relationship of the individual and the individual's environment. This model also focuses on the expectancy and the ability to handle work stress with regards to the reality of the situation and the individual's observed point of view.

Within the environment the sources of stress, the background and the conditions of the environmental situations are present. The environment then influences the individual, referring to the real personal abilities of the individual, as well as the cognitive judgement

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which refers to the observed expectancy and ability. The response will follow as a result from the interaction between the environment and the individual. Once an imbalance occurs, in this framework, work stress is experienced (Pienaar, 1998).

Interview questions based on the Interactional Stress Model of Sutherlands and Cooper

- Explain a situation where you were able to cope with stress? How did you feel and how did you react? Please explain and give an example.

- Previous experiences, exposures, learning, development, successes and failures play an important part in the approach the individual adopts to observe the stress event. Do you think this is true? Please explain your opinion and give an example.

- Does the environment that you are currently in (work situation) influence how you experience work stress? Please explain and give an example.

- Has it ever happened that you have certain expectations within your work environment and then it turns out to be different than what you expected? Please explain and give an example.

- When you respond to work stress that you have experienced what happens to you physically?

- When you respond to work stress that you have experienced, what happens to you emotionally?

- Previous experiences, exposures, learning, development, successes and failures play an important part in the approach the individual adopts to observe the stress event. Do you think this is true? Please explain and give an example.

- What external factors play a role that makes you stress? Please explain and give an example.

- What do you think causes stress?

The above questions are all based on the Interactional Stress Model of Sutherlands and Cooper. The questions are based on the five aspects that form part of this specific stress model. Within this selective coding theme, five axial coding sub-themes were identified, namely: External factors, individual aspects, judgement of stress event and emotional, psychological and physiological response.

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Axial code: External factors (causes of stress, background and conditions)

Examples of participant responses:

- *"Time definitely has an influence because there is deadlines that we need to adhere to. Especially at the end of the quarter because you need to hand in your marks and you struggle to get it done. You then feel that you are under pressure and that then causes more stress."*
- *"Sometimes you get a very difficult class or a very naughty child that makes your environment just more stressful."*
- *"At the previous school the situation was more stressful and it was because of people in management positions."*
- *"With regards to my environment I have experienced work stress caused by the difficult children I work with. This year I have very strong children in my class in terms of personalities and they seem to clash. They are not afraid to say what they think to one another and that sometimes feels as if I cannot handle my class."*
- *I think the extra mural activities causes the biggest stress. I am also the head of the grade now and my love lies there. I am also on the events team so when there is competition taking place at our school I need to assist with arranging the food. I am also part of the mini netball. And I must admit, I hate netball."*

Observing the responses of the participants, it seems that there are sources of stress present within the environment that they currently work in. It appears that each individual experiences various sources of stress in various ways which will then influence the final reaction to the work stress that is experienced. Therefore, this sub-theme links significantly to the selective code: The Interactive Stress Model of Sutherlands and Cooper and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Individual aspects (attitudes, personality, experience etc.)

Examples of participant responses:

- *"Knowing how to react, time and experience walks hand in hand. Like the situation I explained, if I did not go through that experience I would not have known how to*

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handle the next. If you are not in that situation you will never know how to handle the next situation."

- *"…because my previous experience helped me to know how to handle situation today."*
- *"Yes, because you learn out of the things that happen to you. You learn how to handle such situations or next situations that come up."*
- *"You then handle the situation based on what you already know. You then deal with it in a better way or differently based on what you have experienced before.*
- *"Younger people that get into stress situations need to handle it for the first time not really knowing exactly what to do. But when you have experience you know that you can make a plan."*
- *"My previous experience with the smaller children was however more informal. But it taught me to handle more informal and noisy situations. Now being older I can also say that experience really helps me because I am a lot more organised. I have a better routine and I am aware of what works and what does not work. I started to work at a school that was less privileged and there I learned how hard it is for some people in life. Some of the children were in really bad situations."*
- *"I think a lot of the stress that you experience comes from your personality. Two people in the same situation might perceive the situation differently with regards to work stress. I might perceive it as no stress where another person might perceive it as very stressful."*
- *"I especially think that when you are younger your outlook on teaching is different. They might think that teaching is not what they have imagined. I think with experience the experience of work stress gets better."*
- *"I think every person experiences work stress differently."*

Considering the responses of the participants, it seems that each individual might experience work stress differently. People possibly experience work stress in different ways because of various individual aspects. One of the participants mentioned that, because of her work experience, she believes that people will experience work stress differently. Another participant states that two people with different personalities might also experience work stress differently from each other. It seems therefore that this

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sub-theme relates to the selective code: The Interactive Stress Model of Sutherlands and Cooper and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Judgement of stress event (cognitive judgement)

Examples of participant responses:

- *"The most stress I experienced was when I started at this school. I only started in the second quarter. They started a new class as there were too many children in the other classes. So you could just imagine how many unhappy parents and children there were because of their children moving classes. I therefore had to perform and show the parents what I am capable of. During the first week when I started at this school they said that I was head of the grade 3's athletics. I did not know anything so I was very stressed. I went to people to ask for help and to give me information on how to handle the situation. So I made a choice to do something about it and ask people to assist me."*

- *"So there are many times that you are put under pressure to perform a task in a certain amount of time. Which will then cause work stress. You sometimes get class visitors. It can be a head of department or the principal. It was not planned for which causes more stress. You then need to get stuff ready in a very short period of time. So in order to handle such a situation I really plan the stuff that I am aware of so that I don't slip up on the things that was in my control. I will also try to prepare to always have all documentation ready. I get really stressed in such a situation but in such a situation I will turn around and take a deep breath, pray and calm myself."*

- *"There is this one parent which we had a little situation with. Eventually I had to show her that I am the teacher and you are the parent. I eventually had to ask her to give me permission to teach her child. I had two or three such parents. They turned their children against me and that did not help. She had a problem that I played music in my class. She had a problem with all the small things. I talked to her in a very calm and professional manner and then stuff went better. If I think back to how I handled it last year it would have been more childish than this year so I can already see how much I have learnt in one year."*

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- *"When I experience stress I will first think back if it is really that bad. I will base this thought on all my years of experience. I will also think that life goes on and also consider whether it will really influence me. I do not think too much about a specific thing. I do more than I think and I like to take every day as it comes by."*
- *"I think a lot. And that is probably why I am so silent. I think of solutions. What I will do, what I will tell people, different types of plans. Plans to get out of the stress situations."*
- *"We always stress if we will finish on time or not. And together with the assessments it is an immense amount of work to assess."*
- *"Yes I think I can handle work stress. Sometimes you don't have a choice and that pushes you to handle it no matter what. I also believe you need to do other stuff besides work to handle stress. I love scrapbooking and also colouring in. That helps me to unload my work stress."*
- *"I learned through the years with experience how to handle work stress so I definitely think I can handle work stress. When I just started I did not really know how to handle it."*

With regards to the responses of the participants, it seems that judgement takes place when experiencing work stress. The participants indicate that they engage in a thinking process when experiencing work stress. It is not clear what the cognitive judgement process of the situation entails, but as it falls beyond the scope of this dissertation, the information will not be take into account. Each participant indicated that she engaged in a judgement process when experiencing the work stress. It seems that the expectancy of the ability to handle work stress also forms part of the cognitive judgment that takes place. It seems therefore that this sub-theme relates to the selective code: The Interactive Stress Model of Sutherlands and Cooper and presents a link between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Emotional, psychological, physiological response
Examples of participant responses:

- *"I get tired when I stress."*

- *"I would always start to shiver when I am stressed or when I have to talk in front of people. My voice would also start shivering when I am stressed. When I have parent evenings, I stress a lot but then I just put the projector in front of me as a way of feeling more secure and getting a block between me and the parents."*

- *"I would sleep when I stress as I get very tired"*

- *"I get mad and sometimes sad as well when I stress. The principal called me in the beginning of this year and said that the department wouldn't be able to pay me anymore. So it means that they don't have work for me anymore. That put a lot of stress on me as I had to pay my car, house etc. So my stress was basically to survive. I thought about it a lot and I prayed a lot. I was worried and sometimes sad as well."*

- *"I get very difficult as a person and I will get angry. This morning for example when my son told me that his arrangements changed. I have planned around his programme and he did not let me know that it changed. So I wasn't very friendly this morning. Stuff like this stress me. I had come to me and told me about it I would have been less stressed. So I reacted worse than was needed to because of the stressful situation".*

- *"I cry. Not in front of people though. I will go home and cry. I don't hold back. My family will also tell me I should cry when I am stressed and just let it go and cry. The problem however is I will push people away and I would not want people to come close to problems or me being emotional. I will also become mad when I am stress because I did not plan if that was the reason. I can also become terrified when I stress."*

- *"I was diagnosed with cancer a year ago. I don't want to blame it on teaching completely but so many teachers get cancer these days. The cancer is also traced back to stress. I have experienced times where I feel that it is getting a little bit too pressured. That is when I will drink my calming meds. I did not get cancer because of smoking or unhealthy habits. I ran the comrades and lived a healthy life and therefor it might have been stress that caused this."*

- *"My hands will sweat or I will breathe faster. I got cancer in 2009. I got it 2 times. In 2013 again. The chemotherapy was really bad and extremely stressful. I didn't want to lose my job so I stressed about that because I had chemo for 18 months. And*

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then during that time you stay at home and you can't do anything. It wasn't just physically bad and stressful but emotionally as well. I did not know if I will live or die and that was really stressful. I am so blessed that I still had a job after this process. The doctors said that it was stress that probably caused it together with genes."

- *"I get very tired so I would sleep a lot when I stress. I would also get sick after a stressful period. I will also get sick because of the children that is sick".*

From the responses of the participants, it appears that they all have a specific response pattern when experiencing work stress. This might be an emotional, psychological or a physiological response. It therefore seems that this sub-theme relates to the selective code: The Interactive Stress Model of Sutherlands and Cooper and presents a relation between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

4.2.5 THE ASSET MODEL OF COOPER AND MARSHALL

The original model of Cooper and Marshall (1976) was explained by Johnson et al. (2005) as the ASSET Model. This model presents work stress with regards to five sources of stress in the business environment. These five sources are: intrinsic sources to the job, the role of the individual in the organisation, relationships at work and organisational climate and structure (Johnson et al. 2005). The ASSET Model also takes the following additional sources into account:

- The impact an individual's working life has on his/her personal life
- The degree of satisfaction an individual receives from his/her job
- The amount of autonomy an individual has in the workplace
- The degree of commitment an individual has towards his/her job

Interview questions based on the ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall

- Do you think that your perception and definition of work stress is influenced by relationships at work between you and your colleagues? Please explain and give an example.

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- Do the physical working conditions (classroom, chair, toilets etc.) influence you work stress experience? Please explain and give an example.
- What role, other than a teacher do you play in this school? (Involvement, decision making) and does it influence your experience of stress? Please explain and give an example.
- Do you feel that you have future development opportunities here at this school with regards to your job? Does this influence your experience of stress?
- Do you experience role conflict (home and work) and do you think this influences your work stress experience?

The above questions are all based on the ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall. The questions are specifically based on the relationship the respondent has with co-workers, the physical working conditions of the organisation, future foresight, roles of the respondent at the organisation and possible role conflict experiences. Within this selective coding theme, four axial coding sub-themes were identified, namely: relationship at work, physical school environment, individual's role at work and the organisational climate.

Axial code: Relationships at work

Examples of participant responses:

- *"Some of our co-workers are so negative and then it will influence my environment and how I perceive work stress."*
- *"We have a new principal for three years now and my work stress decreased so much since he is here. I feel that I am a better teacher and I don't have so much stress anymore. He creates an environment for us to flourish in. It was different with the previous principal. It happened that I needed handbooks. We had a budget for stuff like that and when I would go to the principal he would shout at you and say that you are taking others people money. Now the principal asks us what handbooks we need, he gives us examples and asks what we would prefer. It created a whole new environment for us to work in."*
- *"At the previous school the situation was more stressful and it was because of people in management positions."*

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- *"I was part of a specific activity at school, helping after school. But the teacher that managed this activity was very dominant and rude. What she said was law and you couldn't ever disagree with her. I knew everything about her children and what they did because she took it out on me. I had terrible nightmares some nights and funny enough but she was always in those nightmares. At the end of last year I was taken away from that activity and you won't believe it but I haven't had even one nightmare about her since then. I really didn't need that extra stress from a colleague. She really made the experience bad and the stress worse."*
- *"It sometimes happens that other people makes me stress more than I usually would because some people are more tensed than me. Some people will make a huge fuss of something very small and then it will influence me and eventually I will then also stress more than was necessary. I will be relaxed and when people are too stressed I will also eventually be stress."*

Based on the responses of the participants, it seems that the relationships they have at work with co-workers do have an influence on their perception of work stress. These relationships include poor relationships with the headmaster or other co-workers, as well as an extreme case of being bullied by co-workers. It seems therefore that this sub-theme relates to the selective code: The ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall and presents a relation between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Physical school environment
Examples of participant responses:

- *"We are in a very lucky position to not have a problem with physical grounds etc. The ideal will be to have the kids sit each on their own table. There is not enough space so now there is more conflict in class as they need to sit together on a table. If there are too many children in a class it might also influence work stress experience. The physical school premises does not influence work stress experience at all."*

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- *"I think we are very lucky because I know of schools that doesn't have water or chairs."*
- *"The toilets do bother me. The other day I was a little mad and then I realised that I cannot do anything about it. It does not really affect me."*
- *"In this school the physical conditions are very good. We cannot complain. We have everything we need. We now even have electric projectors and computers so we can prepare presentations or show relevant videos. There is toilets that are cleaned and the tables and chairs are also very appropriate for the children."*
- *"We are at a school where the physical conditions are really good compared to other schools. I must however add that when I got to my class in the beginning of the year it was in no shape to start teaching. There wasn't a black board, no tables, no chairs. I had to organise everything myself which just adds to the stress."*

It seems that the participants are mostly satisfied with their physical environment. Some of the participants stated that the physical environment does not bother them at all. However, they also mentioned that they are in a fortunate position to teach at a school that has good physical conditions. Reponses also indicated that poor physical conditions could cause work stress. It seems that this sub-theme relates to the selective code: The ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall and presents a relation between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Individual's role at work
Examples of participant responses:

- *"At home my children play a role because they also have a lot of things that requires my attention and time. And then at the same time you have your own work and a full class of school children to also pay attention and time to. It can be difficult as a parent and it is important to have a fine line and balance between the two. My children expect things and time from me as well as the school. My husband is also an external factor because sometimes he doesn't like it if I am at night at school for functions or meetings. Thinking back when I was single it was a lot easier as you had only responsibilities to yourself. Getting married and getting children the stress*

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- "We have after school activities that we need to attend to. I am also head of administration for Grade 3. It does influence my experience of work stress because we already have so much work and now we have to do this extra work as well. We don't always have time for it. I plan my day very specifically and then suddenly I will be requested to do something immediately that can turn my whole day around."

- "I am part of the extra mural activities after school. I am at the netball and tennis. I also assisted the oral speeches last year. I also help children after school with work that they struggle with. It does add to my stress but I like to do it."

- "I was the head of the grade for 10 years. During that time it was very stressful because you have a lot of extra administrative work. I was also part of the cultural activities like the choir and the orchestra which also took a lot of time. I also coached hockey and netball. I hated it because it is just not me. Sometimes we would need to do the course to be a referee and it is then very stressful."

- I am part of the choir where I assist in coaching the choir. I also coach two teams hockey. It does increase my stress as I do want to do well in it all. I like the extra mural activities because I did it in school so I enjoy it. That decrease my stress again."

- "My children would usually say that I am much more strict when I am with them at home than being at school. I have two daughters that make it very easy for me and I also have a great marriage so I haven't experienced a lot of conflict. I know however that I bring home stress to work and work stress stuff I will take home."

- "Between being a mother and a teacher I definitely experience role conflict. My children told me the other day that I would be cross with them in public when they do something wrong. I will sometimes get mad at other people as well and tell them what they should not do. I try in class to also be a mother figure for some of these children as they don't really get it at home. That is not necessarily conflict but a very positive thing."

With regards to roles in the organisation, including role ambiguity and role conflict, it seems that the participants do take on more than one role and therefore experience

role conflict. Some of the participants indicated that multiple roles might decrease their work stress, as they enjoy the extra role. However, other participants indicated that it adds to role conflict as well as to their experience of work stress. It seems therefore that this sub-theme links to the selective code: The ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall and presents a relation between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Organisational climate

Examples of participant responses:

- *"I can see how the school develops again, which has a positive impact on how I feel. However when previously a colleague might lose their work it might affect me negatively with regards to future development."*
- *"We lost a few departmental jobs and we would never know if we aren't maybe next. This was definitely a stress factor a few years ago."*
- *"I definitely believe I have a future here in terms of development as well as having a job. These are one of the top schools in Pretoria. The good quality teachers are getting scarce which worries me."*

It appears that the climate of the business that the participants function in might add to their work stress experience in various ways. Whether it is the external economic environment, possible job losses or other future development aspects, it adds to the perception of work stress. It seems therefore that this sub-theme links to the selective code: The ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall and presents a relation between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

4.2.6   LAZARUS AND FOLKMAN'S COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH THEORY

The Cognitive Behavioural Theory of Lazarus and Folkman explains stress as a perceptive process (Devereux et al., 2009, p. 565). According to this theory a stimulus only becomes a stressor when it is perceived as a stressor. It is assumed that this theory contributes to reasons why individuals experience and perceive stress in different ways. Furthermore,

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the theory explains that the psychological stress an individual experiences develops from the relationship between the individual and the environment. Mitchell (2004) states that no event or situation in itself is stressful. It is rather the cognitive judgement by the individual that causes the individual to perceive the event or situation as stressful.

Interview questions based on Lazarus and Folkman's Cognitive Behavioural Approach Theory

- How do you think stress occurs? What steps take place from where you experience no stress to where you experience a lot of stress?
- What process do you think stress follows?
- Do you think stress comes from how you perceive and experience things or is stress the situation itself? Explain your point of view.
- Think about yourself. How you react and how you handle situations. Would you say that the person that you are (your personality) has an effect on how you experience work stress? Please explain and give an example.

The above questions are all based on Lazarus and Folkman's Cognitive Behavioural Approach Theory. The questions are specifically based on the process that takes place when work stress is experienced, as well as how work stress is perceived and experienced. Within this selective coding theme, three axial coding sub-themes were identified, namely: subjective stressor judgement, cognitive appraisal and primary appraisal, secondary appraisal and reappraisal.

Axial code: Subjective stressor judgement
Examples of participant responses:

- *"I think the stress that you experience comes from your personality. Two people in the same situation might perceive the situation differently with regards to work stress. I might perceive it as no stress where another person might perceive it as very stressful."*
- *"I think it is how you experience stress and what you make of it. Last quarter it was netball season and because I really do not like netball it has become a big stressor"*

to me. It is just an hour in a week but I must tell you it feels like a week in a week. I feel this way as it is how I perceive it."

- *"I would say that the stress that I experience comes from my side. Someone would stress about something that I would not necessary stress about."*
- *"I don't think the situation itself is the stress but how I, as a person perceive it rather. It has happened before that I stress so much about something and when the situation has passed I will look back and realise that it was not that bad. I therefore realised that the stress originated form my side and not the event or the situation."*
- *"I think it comes from me because it depends on how I handle stress or how I perceive stress."*

Considering the participant responses, it seems that the experience and the perception of work stress possibly originates from a subjective cognitive judgement and not necessarily from the environment or situation itself. It also appears from the participant responses that individuals will experience and perceive work stress different from one another. It seems therefore that the sub-theme links to the selective code: Lazarus and Folkman's Cognitive Behavioural Approach Theory and presents a relation between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Cognitive appraisal

Examples of participant responses:

- *"When I experience stress I will first think back if it is really that bad. I will base this thought on all my years of experience. I will also think that life goes on and also consider whether it will really influence me. I do not think too much about a specific thing. I do more than I think and I like to take every day as it comes by."*
- *"I will first think why can't it be different and why did the situation turn out to be this way. And I will also first blame myself for getting myself in the situation"*
- *"I don't think I think of something. It is just confusing in my mind. My mind is chaotic."*

It seems that cognitive appraisal takes place when the participants are experiencing work stress. The participants indicated that they engage in a thinking process when experiencing work stress. It is not clear what the cognitive judgement of the situation entails, but as it falls beyond the scope of this dissertation the information will not be taken into account. It seems therefore that this sub-theme relates to the selective code: Lazarus and Folkman's Cognitive Behavioural Approach Theory and presents a relation between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

Axial code: Primary appraisal, secondary appraisal and reappraisal

Examples of participant responses:

- *"The speech teacher and I coach hockey together. She was in Cape Town last week. We had to hand out letters with regards to arrangements over the weekend. We realised that some of the information was wrong. In a week's time I had to retype the letters, send it out and get it back. I also had to arrange the speech competition that week and I was alone with no one to help. It all just happened at the same time. I decided to delegate and ask people to assist me and it all went really well. I was very happy about that and proud of being able to handle it."*

- *"I would experience stress, then go take a moment to think about solutions and plans. And then I will go rest. I would feel better after I have thought for a while. I will also think of the pros and cons of different solutions."*

- *"I think a lot. And that is probably why I am so silent. I think of solutions. What I will do, what I will tell people, different types of plans etc. I will make plans to get out of the stress situation."*

- *"I am very worried when I experience work stress. I will think fast in order to be able to do something fast to solve the problem."*

- *"When I think back I can't believe that I allowed the situation to influence me so much."*

- *"I will first think why can't it be different and why did the situation turn out to be this way. I will also first blame myself for getting myself in the situation. And then I will start thinking of options and what steps I should take next to solve the problem."*

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According to the responses of the participants, they engaged in a primary appraisal where a thinking process took place to determine whether the situation is stressful or not. A primary appraisal can take the form of judging a harm/loss, a challenge or a threat. It is significant that each of the participants experienced some kind of situation where work stress was involved. During the second appraisal the individual will judge the situation on the grounds of evaluations, plans and solutions, relating to the goals of the individual. It appears that the participants think about possible plans and solutions after realising that work stress is being experienced.

During the reappraisal, the individual will make a judgement based on new information. Some of the participants indicated that they referred back to the occurrence of events to be able to reflect and learn. It seems therefore that this sub-theme relates to the selective code: Lazarus and Folkman's Cognitive Behavioural Approach Theory and presents a relation between the work stress perceptions of the teachers and the work stress model.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of work stress experienced by a group of Grade 3 teachers and its relations to theoretical explanations of work stress. In this chapter, concluding commentary is made with regards to the stated results that originated from the data. Recommendations for future research possibilities together with aspects that might have limited the study are also discussed.

This study indicated that most of the teachers' perceptions seemingly relate to the theoretical explanations of work stress. Significant meaningful links were found between the work stress perceptions of the Grade 3 teachers and the theoretical work stress explanations. Links could be established to all theories that were included in this study. There are however certain aspects, regarding the perceptions of the teachers, that could not be linked to some of the theories. These theories and aspects are:

- Within the Work Stress Model of Behr and Newman, no significant link was found for the data from one of the teachers with regards to the influence work stress will have on the business or organisational environment. The teacher indicated that the work stress she experiences will not influence the school that she is employed at in any way.

- Within the Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay and the Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans, no link was found for data from two of the teachers with regards to cognitive judgement and physical reactions. One teacher indicated that work stress has never influenced her in a physical manner. Another teacher also mentioned that when she experiences work stress, cognitive judgement does not take place. She mentioned that she is not bothered with the work stress that she experiences and therefore tend to not think about the work stress experience and other related aspects. It might be that these teachers are not aware of cognitive judgement or physical reaction that takes place. Further investigation of these aspects is outside the scope of this study.

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- Within the ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall, no link was found from the data of two of the teachers with regards to the effect a relationship with co-workers will have on one's own perception of work stress. These teachers indicated that other teachers do not affect their perceptions of work stress at school.
- Within the ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall, no link was found from the data of one teacher with regards to the physical working conditions and the influence it has on the perception of work stress. This teacher specified that the physical working environment of the school does not influence her perception of work stress. The physical working environment might not influence the teacher's work stress perceptions, as the teacher might not have worked at a school that has a negative physical working environment. Further investigation of these aspects is outside the scope of this study.
- Within the ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall, no links were found from the data of four teachers with regards to role conflict and the influence it will have on their perception of work stress. These teachers stated that they do not experience any role conflict between external factors and their work. As there were six participants in this study, it is significant that four teachers indicated that they do not experience role conflict.
- Within Lazarus and Folkman's Cognitive Behavioural Approach Theory, no significant links were found from the data of one teacher with regards to work stress originating from the perception of work stress rather than from the situation itself.

Even though there were cases where no significant relation was found between the work stress perception of the teacher and the theoretical work stress models, all theoretical work stress models had more than one link identified between the model itself and the responses of the teachers. It therefore seems that there is an overall significant relation between the work stress perceptions of a group of Grade 3 teachers and the theoretical explanations of work stress. The following theoretical explanations selected to be a part of this study are associated to the responses of the Grade three teachers:

- The Work Stress model of Behr and Newman
- The Transactional Stress Model of Cox and Mackay

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- The Five Factor Stress Model of Montgomery and Evans
- The Interactional Stress Model of Sutherland and Cooper
- The ASSET Model of Cooper and Marshall
- Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Cognitive Behavioural Approach Theory

Other aspects to be considered did surface during the data collection phase, but was found not to necessarily contribute to the findings of this study. It is however worth mentioning, as it might be significant contributing factors towards the pupils and the teachers in the educational system. It is significant to take into account that all six teachers commented on the following aspects, although it is not necessarily applicable to all children in the specific school. As part of the teachers' responses, the following secondary information were noted as significant:

- The pupils' inability to keep up with the pace of work in the classroom, as well as the pupils' inability to understand the work that is taught.
- Some of the pupils go home to bad circumstances where they are not fed properly or where they do not receive any time, attention or love from their parents. Pupils arrive at school hungry with a need for love and attention. Furthermore, this can lead to a pupil that does not pay attention to what is being taught. The pupil might also demonstrate disruptive behaviour as a mean to get attention.
- Pupils can be very impolite and treat the teachers with little respect. The teachers feel they do not have any authority anymore to discipline children and therefore the children believe they are allowed to do and say what they want.
- The teachers mentioned that they experience that parents believe that their children should be disciplined at school. The teachers indicated that there is not time to discipline every child when needed, as the children are mainly there for educational reasons. An unruly pupil leads to a disrupted class, which will then disadvantage the other pupils.
- The majority of the teachers mentioned that the activities taking place after school hours significantly adds to their work stress experience. Most of the after school activities that they are involved in are activities that the teachers have no real

interest in. They also believe that they do not have the ability to teach children the specific sport activities as they are not necessarily experienced enough to do so.

- The teachers believe that a gap exists between what was taught during their years of study and what actually takes place in the classroom with regards to teaching. The teachers also mentioned that they are not prepared well enough during their studies to support children on an emotional level.
- It was mentioned by one of the participants that there are teachers that experienced situations where other teachers intimidate and torment them during school hours.
- The school went through a retrenchment process. The teachers that were not retrenched now experience fear and uncertainty with regards to job security, as they do not know when a retrenchment process might be instituted again.
- The teachers mentioned that the management of the school is decent and respectable. The teachers believe that they are allowed to make their own decisions which contributes to job satisfaction.
- The school facilities are up to standard and well taken care of. The school also resides in a safe environment.
- The school is progressing well and reaches many successes each year. The teachers mentioned that it is satisfying to work for a school that moves forward and strives for predetermined goals and objectives.

From an educational point of view, it is important to consider the above mentioned aspects. It is recommended that stakeholders within the educational system discuss these aspects and plan on possible interventions or strategies to overcome possible challenges. Further research is necessary when considering any of the above aspects with regards to improvement in the educational system.

Sager and Wilson (1995) mentioned that it is difficult for researchers to study work stress without a standardised work stress definition. As found in this study and also stated by Firth (1985), work stress is based on personal perceptions and experiences. It therefore seems that it will be challenging to find a standardised work stress definition for all occupations. Firth (1985) also stated that existing work stress theories and models can be used to create a better understanding of the concept. Linking the work stress perceptions

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of the Grade 3 teachers with the theoretical explanations of work stress therefore creates a better understanding of the work stress concept of these teachers specifically.

The study of work stress is of great importance to the employees and employers of any business (Fevre & Kolt, 2008). It is recommended that this study is used in other investigations of work stress within the educational system. The perceptions and experiences of work stress of Grade 3 teachers can be of significant importance when future research is conducted on this topic.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

The following limitations can be mentioned:

- A qualitative approach was used in this study in order to seek a deeper truth (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997). The results and findings of this study can therefore not be generalised to the larger population.
- The teaching industry was the only industry that was included in this study, which limits the application of results and findings to other industries.
- Only six teachers were included as the sample group in this study, which limits the application of results and findings to other teachers or employees in other industries.
- Only Grade 3 teachers were included in this study which, limits the application of results and findings to teachers teaching other grades.
- Only female teachers were included in this study which limits the application of results and findings to male teachers.

5.3 SUMMARY

This study focuses on the relation between the work stress perceptions of Grade 3 teachers and the theoretical explanations of work stress. According to the data gathered from the teachers, there are significant links between the work stress perceptions of Grade 3 teachers and the theoretical explanations of work stress specifically included in this study. Recommendations are made based on the findings of the study, as well as secondary notable information. Aspects that limit the results and findings of the study are

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listed and briefly discussed. In addition to this, Kinman and Jones (2005) assert that stress does not exist in a vacuum and thus cannot be studied by extracting the individual from his or her cultural and social context. It was therefore essential to investigate a specific group of employees with a qualitative approach in order to determine whether the theoretical explanations of work stress relate to the individuals experiencing the work stress themselves.

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