

Stress in Music Teaching: Identifying the Level and Sources of Stress in the Context of Malaysian National Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine the level of stress according to selected stressors experienced by primary school music teachers. The stressors undertaken in this study were categorized into six sub-scales which are 'student characteristics', 'teacher characteristics', 'administrative procedures', 'social support', 'facilities and equipment' and 'music syllabus contents'. Respondents for this study consisted of 326 trained and untrained music teachers in Selangor. Music Teacher Stress Inventory was developed based on problems faced by Malaysian music teachers, with 44 stressors extracted from 99 sources of stress, collected from various sources. Findings of the present research indicate that music teachers in this study were generally experiencing mild stress in teaching music. Among particular item of stressors, 'lack of trained music teacher', 'lack of music resources and books', 'lack of skill in playing musical instrument', 'inadequate allocation to buy costumes for music performance' and 'lack of recognition for music education' were rated by the teachers as the main sources of their stress.

Keywords: Stress, music teaching, Malaysian National Primary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Music teaching in school is a challenging task. The variety of tasks required as a school music teacher may cause stress in their profession. Music teachers are required to teach both theoretical and practical components of music, and each component requires a different set of teaching skills and strategies. In music teaching, knowledge is transmitted in both oral and literal forms, which involve various transmission mediums including audio recording, live sound, written words, and music notation. They is a vast array of equipment one needs to handle in the music classroom as well, ranging from musical instruments, audio visual devices,

computers, to teaching aids like charts, diagrams and so on. Meanwhile, music teaching is also complicated by various issues related to cultural representation. Among these issues are the differences between the music taught in school and the music preferred by students, the social perceptions towards music as a subject of education, and the global trend of multiculturalism in education.

School music teachers in Malaysia are not exempted from the work characteristics mentioned above. While the working environment of a school music teacher varies depending on the school type, school characteristics and the location of the school, some concerns are commonly shared by the society. Teachers'

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competency in guiding both theory and practical components in the music class hour has been a concern held by the education departments, parents, and music related organizations. Some teachers may have problems in understanding, as well as implementing the syllabus of the music curriculum. Teachers who are untrained in the music education being assigned to teach music has become a common practice in many states in Malaysia. Many teachers, both in urban and rural area, have to cope with inadequate facilities and equipment to teach music. The negative perceptions towards music education held by certain groups of parents are a well known fact in the country. Under such circumstances, are the music teachers in Malaysia experiencing stress in their teaching career? How stressful are they? What are the main sources of their stress? This study was designed to examine the level of occupational stress experienced by the school music teachers in Malaysia, and determine the stressors associated to their profession of music teaching.

In Malaysia, the concern over job-related stress, experienced by school teachers, has been periodically raised by the National Union of the Teaching Profession or NUTP (Abdul Muin Sapidin, 2005). From local research literature that covers both primary and secondary schools, the percentages of teachers who experienced high stress, in each research, were 36.8% (Suseela Malakolunthu, 1994), 17.5% (Mokhtar Ahmad, 1998) and 21.3% (Mohd Razali Othman and Abd. Mat Abg. Masagus, 1998), with various sources of stress identified including students' attitude, workload, and having to teach poorly motivated students. Nevertheless, there is yet an attempt to measure the stress involved in music teaching in the country.

Stress is the outcome of a psychological process that involves stages of stress accomplishment. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) viewed this process in six stages, progressing from 'potential stressors', to 'appraisal', 'actual stressors', 'coping mechanism', 'teacher stress', and finally, 'chronic symptoms'. On the other hand, the source of stress, or stressor, is what may predict the possibility of stress

accomplishment. Dorman's (2003) Model of Teacher Burnout, which was extended from Byrne's (1994) Maslach Burnout Inventory, depicts eight predictors to different stages of stress manifestation, namely 'role overload', 'role conflict', 'classroom environment', 'school environment', 'work pressure', 'teaching efficacy', 'self-esteem' and 'external locus of control'. Stress predictors in Dorman's model were referred to in identifying the actual stressors of the present study.

Past studies of music teacher's stress covered a wide range of stress factors. As early as 1987, job-related factors unique to music teacher burnout were examined, and these covered items like workload, deadlines, desire to change careers, career contentment, administrative support, job recognition, and lack of peer support (Hamann, Daugherty and Mills, 1987). In a more recent study, Bechen (2000) covered the categories of classroom management, environmental factors, personal concerns, and program management. Meanwhile, Scheib (2003) covered role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, underutilization of skills, resource inadequacy, and non-participation.

Among various stressors, students' behaviour was found to be the main stressor to band directors (Heston, Dedrick, Raschke and Whitehead, 1996), and this finding is consistent with other research which discussed students' apathy (e.g. Brown, 1987; Hamann, 1985), students' disruptive behaviour and violence (O'Hair, 1995), and negative attitudes and inappropriate behaviour of the students (Brown, 1987; Gordon, 1997), with the latest addition to this by Gordon's (2002) paper that focuses on classroom discipline.

Gordon's research in 1997 was unique among the research literature for her inclusion of physical stress manifestation in her instrument, in addition to the usual items of job related stressors. In all the literature reviewed, a 5 to 7 point Likert scale was used to determine the stress level. Meanwhile, past research also looked into the demographic characteristics of the teachers, such as gender, training background, teaching experiences, location of schools, in relation to

their stress manifestation, as shown in Bechen's (2000) study.

Existing stress inventories to measure teacher's stress had been applied to the Malaysian context. Suseela (1994) adapted the Occupational Stress Inventory for Teacher or OSIT of Okebukola and Jedge (1989), which in its original form was a 31-item questionnaire covering the five factors of 'student characteristics', 'teacher characteristics', 'school environment', 'administrative procedures' and 'conditions of service'. Vickneasvari's (1997) research on stress of science teachers in Malaysia adapted another instrument from Okebukola and Jedge (1992), which is the Science Teacher Stress Inventory or STSI. The STSI consists of the same sub-scales of the OSIT but has 40 items.

As for the demographic characteristics, studies in Malaysia showed that there were no significant differences between the male and female teachers in term of their level of stress (Suseela, 1994; Mokthar, 1998). However, various findings were obtained concerning years of teaching experience. Siti Rohani Sharif (1991) found that experienced teachers were more stressful compared to less experienced teachers. In contrast, Mokthar Ahmad (1998) found that teachers with more than 21 years of teaching experience to be less stressful compared to novice teachers. However, experience was not found to be a stress factor in Suseela's (1994) research.

METHOD

A questionnaire survey was used in this study. The dependent variable is the stress level experienced by music teachers according to the selected stressors. The independent variables are the demographic characteristics of the respondents, namely gender, training, teaching experience, and music qualification.

A total of 326 music teachers from the government primary schools in the state of Selangor were involved as the respondents in this study, of which 50% or 163 specialized in music during their teacher training. 23.9% of

the respondents were males and 76.1% were females. At the time this study was carried out, the total population of the teachers who were teaching music in the Selangor was 3200, out of which 163 were trained with specialization in music (Selangor Education Department, 2006).

The questionnaire consists of both structured questions and open-ended questions, and is termed as Music Teacher Stress Inventory (MTSI) by the researcher. The construction of the questionnaire went through a few stages. First, a total of 99 sources of stress in music teaching were identified by analyzing the sources below:

- Research report on the implementation of music education in KBSR, produced by the Ministry of Education (EPRD, 2000).
- Resolution of the First Malaysian National Conference for Music Education 2002 (MusEd, 2002).
- Localized version of Okebukola and Jedge's (1989) Occupational Stress Inventory for Teachers or OSIT by Suseela Malakolunthu (1994).
- Localized version of Okebukola and Jedge's (1992) Science Teacher Stress Inventory or STSI by Vickneasvari Krishnasamy (1997).

The list of stressors was put through a screening process conducted with five school music teachers. By extracting items that scored an average mean of 3 (moderate stress) and above, 44 stressors were short-listed. These 44 stressors were then grouped into six sub-scales, namely 'students characteristic', 'teachers characteristic', 'facilities and equipment', 'administrative procedures', 'social support', and 'syllabus content'. In the following sections, these sub-scales are also expressed using initials as SC, TC, FE, AP, SS, and SyC. Social support and syllabus content were the categories which were derived from the EPRD (2000) report and the MusEd (2002) resolution, reflecting the current problems of music education in Malaysia. The respondents

were asked to indicate the degree of stress caused by each stressor on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, with '5' as extreme stress, '4' as much stress, '3' moderate stress, '2' mild stress, and '1' no stress.

A pilot test was conducted utilizing 20 music teachers from five primary schools in Puchong district, Selangor. It was found that the music teachers did not have any difficulty in understanding the items and did not find any of these items irrelevant. The internal consistency reliability of the MTSI sub-scales was determined by using the Cronbach-alpha analysis. The C value for each sub scale was 0.7211 (SC), 0.7606 (TC), 0.8800 (FE), 0.7796 (AP), 0.8948 (SS), and 0.8860 (SyC), respectively. The questionnaire was found reliable as the value for all the sub-scales exceeded 0.70, which is the standard acceptance point for the reliability adapted for this study. The data were first analyzed by calculating a mean score for the overall and each MTSI sub-scale. This was followed by the t-test conducted for each demographic variable against each sub-scale. The stress level was interpreted according to the Likert scale description, which were referred to as 'extreme', 'much', 'moderate', 'mild', and 'no' stress.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the sections that follow, numbers appearing in brackets refer to the mean value, unless otherwise mentioned. The overall means for all the sub-scales recorded a mild stress level for the respondents, ranging between 2.56 to 2.81, with the 'syllabus contents' as the lowest and 'social support' the highest (refer to Table 1a for the discussion on the results for the sub-scales of SC, TC, FE, and AP). 'Student characteristics' appear to be the second lowest in its overall mean (2.63), indicating that students are not among the most prominent stressors for music teacher. The two highest individual items within this sub-scale, however, deserve attention, and these are 'students too noisy during teaching' (2.78) and 'not interested in music theory' (2.74). It is a challenge for the teachers to retain their students'

attention on the learning topic during their music classes. The reason that students were noisy in music class could be that they were relaxed as music hour in school is the time of relief for students to break away from the pressure of studying the examination subjects, or that they were restless when they were not motivated to learn, or having difficulty to understand what is being taught. The reason for the low interest in music theory learning is plain, i.e. the current approach in the curriculum that teaches theory as knowledge aims mainly at imparting the rudiment of music notation to the students, instead of understanding and experiencing the principles of musical sound, will not motivate the students to learn the subject.

The sub-scale 'teacher characteristics' (2.79) reveals the problem pertaining to the lack of expertise in music teaching in the government primary schools. The problem seems applicable to both specialized and non-specialized teachers. There is a need for music teachers to improve their proficiency in instrumental and ensemble teaching, as shown in the items, 'lack of skill in playing musical instrument' (2.98) and 'lack experience to train choir and brass band' (2.90). Meanwhile, teacher training in *maktab* or teacher training college was found not sufficient (2.87) to equip the teachers to teach music with confidence.

Among the eight items listed under the sub-scale 'facilities and equipment', the 'lack of music resources and books' has the highest mean (3.06, moderate stress), but its standard deviation is also large (2.57). This means some were concerned over the lack of resources for music teaching, but there are differences among them regarding how serious this matter is. Among the items with a smaller standard deviation, i.e. around 1.00, are 'inadequate musical instrument and facilities' (2.71), 'inadequate allocation to buy additional musical instrument' (2.72), 'inadequate cassette supply' (2.78) and 'inadequate of teaching aids for music subject' (2.60). The standard deviations for these four items are smaller, i.e. at around 1.00. A conducive music room, equipped with sufficient number of instruments for the class size, is also

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TABLE 1a
Music teachers' stress according to selected stressors

Sub-scales and items	N	Mean	Std. dev
Student Characteristics (SC) (overall)	320	2.63	.75
Students do not give full attention in class	325	2.36	1.01
Music is not an important subject	326	2.61	1.00
Students do not respect musical instrument	324	2.56	1.11
Not interested in the music theory	326	2.74	1.01
Take longer time to master	325	2.66	.91
Too many students in a class	325	2.67	1.04
Students too noisy during teaching	325	2.78	1.20
Teacher Characteristics (TC) (overall)	326	2.79	.87
Lack of skill in playing musical instrument	326	2.98	1.15
Too dependent on radio and cassette to assist	326	2.58	1.01
Lack experience to train choir and brass band	326	2.90	1.05
Lack of confidence in teaching music	326	2.55	.99
Teachers' training in Maktab is not sufficient	326	2.87	1.15
Having to teach others who are not trained	326	2.87	1.15
Facilities and Equipments (FE) (overall)	313	2.71	.86
Inadequate musical instrument and facilities	326	2.71	1.00
Inadequate allocation to buy additional musical instrument	321	2.72	.99
Inadequate cassette supply	323	2.78	1.06
Inadequate of teaching aids for music subject	326	2.60	1.02
Lack of music resources and books	326	3.06	2.57
Musical instrument are not well maintained	324	2.66	1.10
No special room for music lessons	326	2.56	1.35
Music room is not suitable for teaching and learning music	323	2.58	1.21
Administrative Procedures (AP) (overall)	310	2.78	.78
Having to teach different subject than music	326	2.62	1.21
Having to cover lessons for absents teachers	326	2.58	1.11
Having to cope with too much workload	326	2.85	1.06
Having to cope with non-music duties	319	2.86	1.06
Weaknesses from impartial administration system	326	2.67	.98
Inadequate allocation to buy costume for music performance	326	2.98	.90
Not enough time to practice for music performances	322	2.91	.99
Lack of co-operation and support from headmaster, colleagues, parents and students	326	2.59	1.37
Lack of trained music teachers	319	3.04	1.04
Lack of opportunity given to attend related courses	326	2.88	1.03

vital to make the music learning enjoyable and hence effective for both teachers and students.

As for the sub-scale 'administrative procedures', the mean value for the item, 'lack of trained music teacher' is the highest (3.04), contributing moderate stress to music teachers. This reflects the present situation of the state of Selangor, whereby only 163 out of 3200 teachers who are teaching music

specialized in music education. This finding is consistent with the problem in term of the lack of expertise in music teaching revealed by the sub-scale, 'teacher characteristics' discussed in the earlier paragraph. On the other hand, when only a handful of teachers are trained and are therefore capable of teaching music, 'having to teach others (teachers) who were not trained' (2.87, item listed under the sub-scale 'teacher

characteristics’) has become a source of stress to them.

(Refer to Table 1b for the discussion of results for SS and SyC). Among the items under the sub-scale ‘social support’, the ‘lack of recognition for music education’ (2.98) and the ‘society’s negative perception towards music education’ (2.95) have the highest mean values. This confirms the presence of negative social perception towards music education, which is related to religious practice, as shown in the item, ‘fear of music for going against the Islamic values’ (2.89, standard deviation 1.05).

Finally, the lowest mean score for the overall stressors was obtained for the sub-scale of ‘syllabus contents’ (2.56, standard deviation .81). The stressors with the highest mean score within this sub-scale are ‘most of the songs in the syllabus are not attractive to students’ (2.69) and ‘music education curriculum contents do not consider current development’ (2.61), revealing room for improvements in curriculum planning and design for the *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah* Music.

As for the comparison of demographic characteristics, the t-test analysis (Table 2) shows that no significant difference exists between the male and female teachers in the overall level of stress, which has a significant value of .31 that is larger than .05. This outcome is consistent with the findings by Suseela (1994) and Vickneasury (1997).

The t-tests were also run to determine the difference between the male and female teachers for each sub-scale (not shown in table). Similarly, there were no significant differences found for all the sub-scales, except for ‘social support’ (Table 3), which has a significant value of .04, therefore smaller than .05, indicating that the male music teachers felt significantly more stressful as compared to their female counterpart in terms of social support. This finding implies that the male teachers are more concerned with or are more aware about the recognition and social support they receive as music teachers. The male teachers may feel out of place with their career as there are only a few male music teachers, who made up only 23.9% of the total

TABLE 1b
Music teachers’ stress according the selected stressors (continued)

Sub-scales and items	N	Mean	Std. dev
Social Support (SS) (overall)	320	2.81	.80
Lack of recognition for music education	326	2.98	1.03
Society’s negative perception towards music education	326	2.95	1.01
Fear of music for going against the Islamic values	325	2.89	1.05
Lack of recognition and support from headmaster to implement music in school	325	2.67	1.00
Lack of recognition and support from parents	326	2.81	1.02
Lack of co-operation from other teachers to allow students to practice for performance	324	2.62	.93
Student are not allowed by parents to attend rehearsal	324	2.73	.96
Syllabus Content (SyC) (overall)	322	2.56	.81
Difficult to understand, actualize and realize the objectives of music education	325	2.54	.90
Most of the songs in the syllabus are not attractive to students	326	2.69	1.08
The songs supplied are of low quality	323	2.52	1.03
Music education curriculum contents do not consider current development	326	2.61	.98
Music syllabus cannot be completed within one year	326	2.53	.88
Difficult to follow the topics in guidebook	326	2.48	.93

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TABLE 2
T-test comparisons for demographic characteristics in the overall stress level

Demographic characteristic		N	Mean	Std. dev.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender	Male	69	2.79	.73	1.03	98.25	.31
	Female	212	2.69	.59			
Training as music teacher	Trained	151	2.66	.56	-1.44	249.67	.16
	Untrained	130	2.77	.69			
Teaching experience	Novice	205	2.75	.61	1.72	279	.09
	Experienced	76	2.61	.66			
External qualification	With	21	2.48	.57	-1.78	279	.08
	Without	260	2.73	.63			

TABLE 3
T-test comparisons of male and female music teachers in the level of stress related to social supports

Gender	N	Mean	Std. dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	75	2.99	.90	2.07	108.62	.04
Female	245	2.75	.76			

number of respondents, as compared to the females. In addition, negative perceptions towards music career that are associated with religious perspectives held by the society (discussed in the earlier paragraph) also affect their self-esteem as music teachers.

As for their training background, no significant difference was found between the trained and untrained music teachers in their overall level of stress (Table 2, sig. = .16). The t-test for each sub-scale (not shown in table) for the trained and untrained teachers also revealed no significant difference in the stress level, except for the sub-scales of 'teacher

characteristics' (Table 4, sig. = .00). Meanwhile, the trained music teachers indicated a mild stress (2.50) for this particular sub-scale, and the untrained teachers revealed a moderate level of stress (3.09). This finding indicates that as far as teacher's efficacy is concerned, the untrained music teachers do feel significantly more stress compared to the trained music teachers. This is because many of the untrained music teachers do not have the skills required in playing musical instruments and they have to depend on cassette players as a substitute for live accompaniment in delivering their teaching. Moreover, the untrained music teachers also felt stressful

TABLE 4
T-test comparisons of trained and untrained music teacher in the level of stress related to teacher characteristics

Training	N	Mean	Std. dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Trained	163	2.50	.74	-6.56	314.21	.00
Untrained	163	3.09	.89			

because they lacked confidence in teaching music and had no experience to train students for choir and brass band.

On the other hand, there was no significant difference found between novice music teachers (below three years of teaching experience) and experienced music teachers in the overall stress level (Table 2, sig=.09). Significant differences were however observed in the t-test results for the sub-scale, ‘teacher characteristics’(Table 5, sig=.00) which concerns classroom management and music teaching skills, as well as ‘facilities and equipment’ (Table 6, sig=.01) which concerns the availability and application of equipment and resources. The findings indicate that the novice music teachers do feel more stressful in these two areas of music teaching as compared to the more experienced music teachers.

The t-test conducted to compare between teachers with external qualification of musical instrument proficiency and those without it

yielded a similar result with the comparison of trained and untrained teachers (Table 2, sig.= .08). No significant difference was found in the overall stress level, but teachers without external music qualification indicated to feel more stressful for the sub-scales, ‘teacher characteristics’ (Table 7, sig.= .00) as well as ‘facilities and equipment’ (Table 8, sig.= .01).

The results gathered from open-ended questions revealed matters that teachers regarded as stressful to them in music teaching. 43.9% of the respondents responded that the ‘lack of skills in teaching music’ was stressful to them. Other items given were relatively small in their response rate, including the ‘lack of co-operation from students’ (10.4%), ‘problem with student’s discipline’(7.1%), ‘no special room for music’(6.4%), ‘too much teacher’s workload’(3.7%), ‘not enough time’, ‘lack of recognition and support’ (3.1%), ‘inadequate musical equipments’, and ‘lack of music teaching aids’ (1.5%).

TABLE 5
T-test comparisons of teaching experience in the level of stress related to teacher characteristics

Training	N	Mean	Std. dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Novice	246	2.89	.89	3.74	158.44	.00
Experienced	80	2.51	.74			

TABLE 6
T-test comparisons of teaching experience in the level of stress related to facilities and equipment

Training	N	Mean	Std. dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Novice	234	2.79	.82	2.82	311	.01
Experienced	79	2.48	.94			

TABLE 7
T-test comparisons of external qualification in the level of stress related to teacher characteristics

Training	N	Mean	Std. dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
With	22	1.71	.66	-6.44	324	.00
Without	304	2.87	.83			

TABLE 8
T-Test Comparisons of External Qualification in the Level of Stress Related to
Facilities and Equipment

Training	N	Mean	Std. dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
With	22	2.24	.80	-2.66	311	.01
Without	291	2.75	.86			

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the prevailing problems in music teaching in Malaysia, in terms of teaching competency, facilities and school support which are evident in the literature such as the EPRD report (2000) and the MusEd resolution (2002), the findings revealed that music teachers experienced mild stress in music teaching in general, as only three out of the 44 items were rated with a mean above 3.0 which is a moderate stress level. This means that music teachers in the primary school are somewhat contented with their work demand and work environment. A possible reason for this is that music teachers do not face pressures from the school management to produce results as in other examination subjects. As music is not an examination subject in the primary school, a measurable outcome is not emphasized for this particular subject. It is a well-known fact that music hours have been frequently used to give supplementary tuition for other examination subject in Malaysia, indicating that music is perceived as a less important subject in school. The low demand for music teaching explains well why the music teachers only have mild stress despite half of them are untrained music teachers. In other words, teacher's stress level, in the case of Malaysia, is very much dependant on the demand of the teaching results imposed by the school authorities towards the teachers, beside other factors. While the result of mild level of stress shown in this study implies a comparatively good state of the music teachers' well-being, this is not to be confused with a high level of teaching effectiveness. As much as the music teachers are only as stressful as the level of demand on the subject given by the school, the quality of music teaching is most probably also only as high as the level of demand on

the subject, judging by the fact that teaching competency, or lack of expertise has been repeatedly found to be one of the main problems in music teaching in this study.

By looking at the items with higher means, i.e. with a cutting point of 2.75 and above, it is found that there are three main stressors in music teaching, namely 'teacher characteristics', 'administrative procedures' and 'social support'. If one is to apply loosely Kyriacou and Sutcliffe's (1978) model of stages of stress to the findings of this study for a better picture of understanding music teachers' stress, the three items mentioned above can be considered as equivalent to the 'actual stressors' while the other sub-scales like 'student characteristics', 'facilities and equipment' and 'syllabus content' may well be considered as 'potential stressors'.

Teacher characteristics, which deal with teachers' competency in music teaching, appeared to be the common stressor both in quantitative rating and in open-ended questions. Among the items with the highest means, several are related to teaching competency and have a small standard deviation value of <1.15, these include the 'lack of trained music teacher', 'lack of skill in playing musical instrument', 'lack experience to train choir and brass band' and 'teacher training in Maktab is not sufficient'. By associating these items to the findings of the open-ended question (where 43.9% rated 'lack of skills in teaching music' as stressful to them), it is obvious that teachers' competency is one of the common stressors. This also reflects the report of EPRD (2000) that only 65% of the music teachers in its research are able to prepare proper music lessons plan.

In addition, teaching competency is also the determining stressor for inexperienced

teachers with limited training, as there were significant differences found between the trained and untrained, the novice and the experienced, as well as those with and without external music qualifications. In other words, teaching competency is a factor which causes the teachers who are lacking training and experiences to feel more stressful than the other music teachers.

However, two questions can be raised from the results related to teaching competency mentioned above. Why are teachers who are untrained in music education assigned to teach music in school? As for the trained music teachers, "why was the training program provided by the teachers' training colleges not sufficient to equip them to teach music effectively in school?" The first question is related to the administrative procedure of posting of music teachers to schools by the School Division (*Bahagian Sekolah*) of the Ministry of Education. It is necessary to investigate if the problem is due to the lack of music teachers or the ineffectiveness found within the administrative system of teacher posting. This is especially so when one observes that there are graduate music teachers who are posted to secondary schools and not assigned to teach music at all, which is irony to the situation of the primary schools where there are not enough music teachers around.

The second question is related to the effectiveness of music teacher training program provided under the management of Teacher Education Division (*Bahagian Pendidikan Guru*) by the Ministry of Education. The problems of recruiting candidates with little prior background in music into teachers' training program have been a known practice in the teachers' training colleges, as revealed in Mah's (2003) research where more than 50% of the teacher candidates recruited into *Kursus Diploma Perguruan* Malaysia were without prior music training or background. Although the teachers' training institutions are upgraded to offer Bachelor of Education degree at present, the problem of irrelevant candidates for music education must be studied and solved as this is the root cause for many other problems that follow concerning the applicability of the teachers' training program

and teachers' competency in teaching music, which cover their confidence in teaching both practical and theoretical components of music, the usage of music instrument, music equipments and other resources, as well as the confidence in classroom control during the music hour.

Administrative procedures was found to be stressful to music teachers irrespective of their gender, training background and teaching experience. Among items that have higher means are 'too much workload' and 'having to cope with non music duties' which are related to work assignment, whereas 'inadequate allocation to buy costume for music performance' and 'not enough time to practice for music performances' reflect the pressure faced by music teachers upon school's request to give performance.

Meanwhile, items with higher means in the sub-scales of social support gave clear reflections of certain problems pertaining to music teaching in Malaysia as compared to other countries. They are 'lack of recognition for music education', 'society's negative perception towards music education', 'fear of music for going against the Islamic values', as well as 'lack of recognition and support from parents'.

By referring to the Dorman's (2003) Model of Teacher Burnout, the main stressors experienced by music teachers in this study are 'teaching efficacy' (teacher's characteristics) and 'school environment' (administrative procedure). On the other hand, if Dorman's category of 'external locus of control' includes social perceptions as a kind of indirect control from outside parties in its definition, the stressors of 'social support' in this study may be grouped under it. Social support is revealed as a stressor to music teachers in Malaysia, and this stressor is also unique to the subject of music within the local social context. Social support was not included in other local studies of teacher stress as in Suseela's (1994) and Vickneasvari's research (1997). It is clear that the study of teacher stress, in certain subjects such as arts and music, requires an instrument of survey which reflects the requirements of the subject nature and its dynamic relationship with the society's culture at large. On the practical side, the social image of the music teachers, as

well as music professionals at large, needs to be improved through advocacy through means of public education and mass media in order to make music teachers feel that the value of their career is recognized in Malaysia.

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