**Stress and wellbeing: Qualitative exploration of senior secondary school teachers’ symptoms, management and use of digital support tools**

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**Background**

- The working population’s experience of stress is of particular interest due to the individual and the economic consequences.
- In a study of 26 professions teaching came in the bottom six on measures of physical health, psychological well-being and job satisfaction (Johnson et al 2005).
- The current wellbeing emphasis in schools is almost entirely on that of students (Future in Mind, 2015; Kidger et al 2016). Teachers are expected to meet the needs of student wellbeing with little provision for managing their own stress.
- Web and mobile applications (apps) and wearables (together ‘mHealth’) have been shown to increase the psychological determinants of wellbeing, and in particular help to manage stress (Calvo 2014).
- Yet mHealth usefulness in specific contexts in the wild has received little scrutiny.
- The ubiquity of consumer available mHealth tools provides an exciting opportunity to explore their potential for targeted stress reduction.

**Aims**

The aims of this study were to engage with senior teachers from state secondary schools and
- (1) identify their psychosocial and contextual stress symptoms
- (2) understand their current stress management behaviours in the context of their work and
- (3) explore their familiarity with and current use of mHealth to ascertain potential receptivity to technology support for stress reduction.

**Method**

Senior secondary school teachers were recruited through the researcher’s networks. Inclusion criteria were:
- i) comprehensive state secondary school teacher;
- ii) in a position of leadership (e.g. senior leadership team, head of department or head of house) or
- iii) staff member who had previously held one of these roles.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with N=14 teachers for the purpose of qualitative exploration and analysis.

**Identified categories and themes so far**

**COVERT**

- Some might (be interested in my FitBit) but I mean I try not to talk about…. Well, some... Some of my colleagues... Not all my colleagues know of my past history

**OVERT**

- I do have an app on my phone which is called MindShift... one of my colleagues recommends people give it a go and I use it all the time now. It’s brilliant...

**EMBEDDED**

- Patterns... So it is about patterns... I write a diary everyday on My Wonderful Days - it’s an app - I do use another app!... I’m shocked at how much I would have forgotten if I haven’t written it down

**RELENTLESS**

- You feel stressed. You know you should be doing something else... You’re always rushing against the clock... It makes you anxious and anxiety leads to stress and stress leads to depression... you can’t really talk to people because you’re just... you’re talked out. You’re also on edge.

**CONSTRAINTS**

- I do (take my phone to school) but it’s in my coat.
- My phone is good for when I leave work.
- I just don’t have the time.

**Conclusion**

Teachers’ symptoms of stress included indirect indicators that might be considered proxy measures of the stress experienced. Many of those with prior stress-related major crises had clear, defined stress alleviation strategies. Contextual constraints includes inaccessibility of smartphone and apps during the day, which needs to inform potential mHealth interventions and approaches. Stigma around admitting stress is still prevalent, so the variation in willingness to use or di mHealth stress support tools requires consideration. These themes will be explored in further studies.

**REFERENCES**